

HARVARD  
School of Public Health

*Chartpack*

**Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health  
The Public's Health Care Agenda for the  
New President and Congress**

January 2009

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## Methodology

The Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health Survey, *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress*, was designed and analyzed by researchers at the Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard School of Public Health. The Kaiser/Harvard survey research team included Drew E. Altman, Ph.D., Mollyann Brodie, Ph.D., and Claudia Deane, M.A. from the Kaiser Family Foundation; and Professor Robert Blendon, Sc.D., and John Benson, M.A. of the Harvard School of Public Health.

The survey was conducted December 4-14, 2008 among a nationally representative random sample of 1,628 adults ages 18 and over. Telephone interviews were carried out in English and Spanish by ICR/International Communications Research.

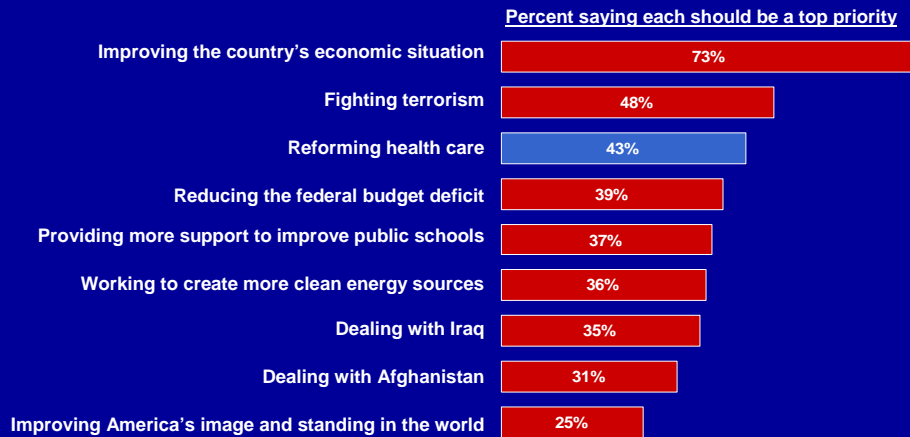
The margin of sampling error for results based on the full sample is plus or minus 3 percentage points. For results based on smaller subsets of respondents the margin of sampling error is somewhat higher. Note that sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error in this or any other public opinion poll.

Values less than 0.5% are indicated by an asterisk (\*). "Vol." indicates that a response was volunteered by respondent, not an explicitly offered choice. Percentages may not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

Chart 1

## Priorities for President and Congress

I'm going to read you a list of some different things the new president and Congress might try to act on next year. As I read each one, tell me if you think it should be one of their top priorities, very important but not a top priority, somewhat important, or not that important.



Note: Asked of half sample.  
Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



Chart 2

## Partisans Agree: It's the Economy - After That Priorities Diverge

Percent among each group saying each should be a top priority

<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Independents</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
<b>Economy (79%)</b>	<b>Economy (73%)</b>	<b>Economy (66%)</b>
<b>Health care (61)</b>	<b>Terrorism (47)</b>	<b>Terrorism (61)</b>
<b>Public schools (45)</b>	<b>Budget deficit (40)</b>	<b>Iraq (46)</b>
<b>Clean energy (43)</b>	<b>Clean energy (37)</b>	<b>Budget deficit (39)</b>
<b>Terrorism (41)</b>	<b>Health care (36)</b>	<b>Afghanistan (37)</b>
<b>Budget deficit (36)</b>	<b>Public schools (36)</b>	<b>Clean energy (28)</b>
<b>Iraq (33)</b>	<b>Iraq (31)</b>	<b>Public schools (24)</b>
<b>Afghanistan (31)</b>	<b>America's international image (29)</b>	<b>Health care (23)</b>
<b>America's international image (29)</b>	<b>Afghanistan (23)</b>	<b>America's international image (13)</b>

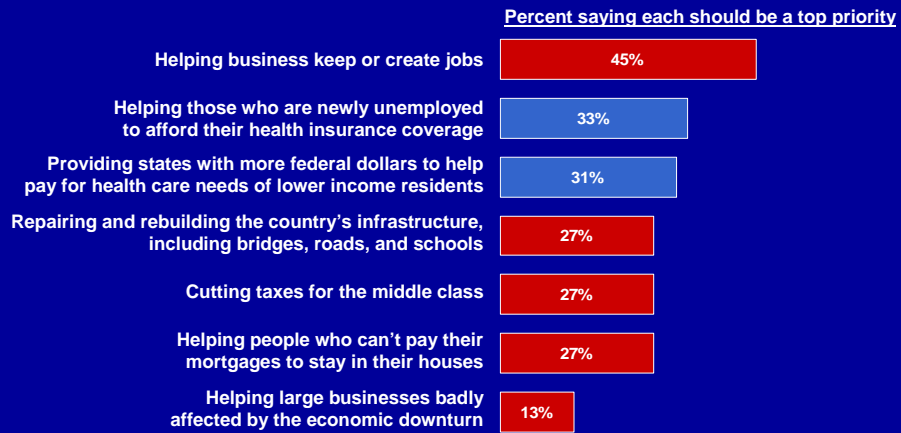
Note: Asked of half sample.  
Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



Chart 3

## Economic Priorities for President and Congress

Now I'm going to read some proposals for dealing with the current economic recession. For each, tell me if you think it should be a top priority for the new president and Congress, very important but not a top priority, somewhat important, or not that important.



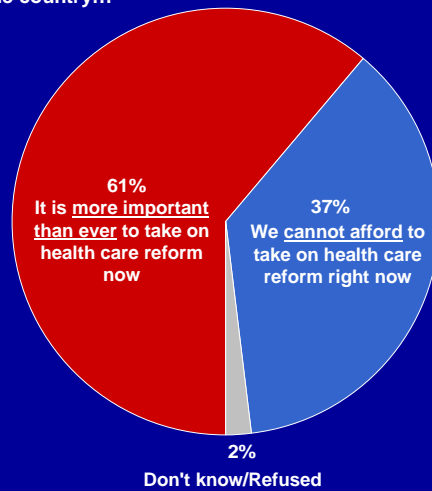
Note: Asked of half sample.  
Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



Chart 4

## Health Care Reform in Economic Hard Times

Which comes closer to describing your own views? Given the serious economic problems facing the country...



Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)

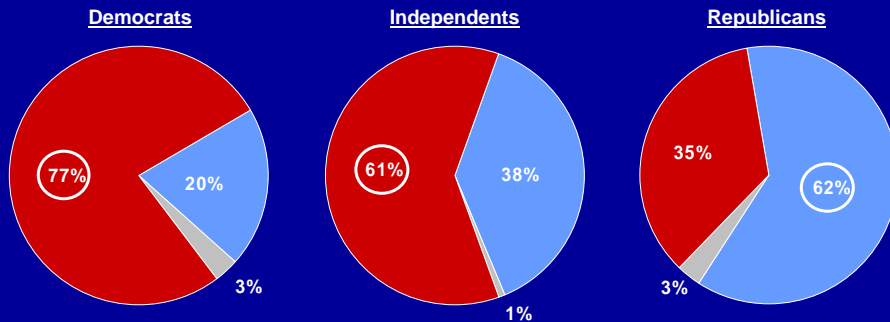


Chart 5

## Affording Reform: Partisans Differ

Which comes closer to describing your own views? Given the serious economic problems facing the country...

- It is **more important than ever** to take on health care reform now
- We **cannot afford** to take on health care reform right now
- Don't know/Refused



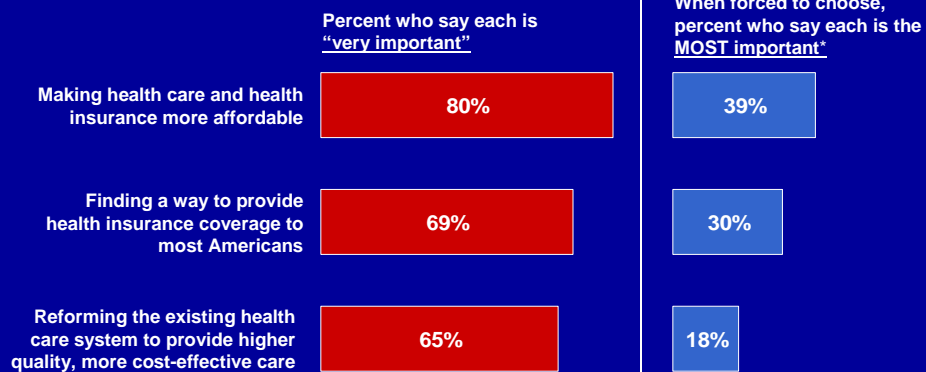
Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



Chart 6

## Goals of Health Care Reform

If the new president and Congress decide to take on health care reform, how important is each of the following as a goal of any health care reform plan?



\*Note: Includes those who said only one factor was "very important."  
 "Combination/All of these," "Other/None of these," and "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.  
 Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)

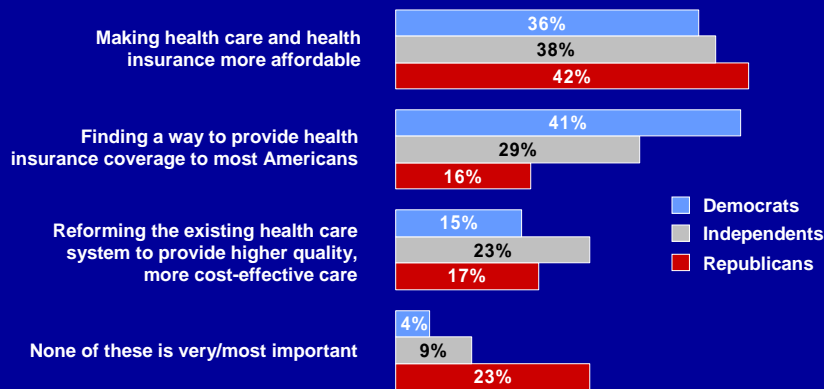


Chart 7

## Goals of Health Reform by Party

If the new president and Congress decide to take on health care reform, how important is each of the following as a goal of any health care reform plan?

When forced to choose, percent who say each is the **MOST important\***



\*Note: Includes those who said only one factor was "very important."

"Combination/All of these" and "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

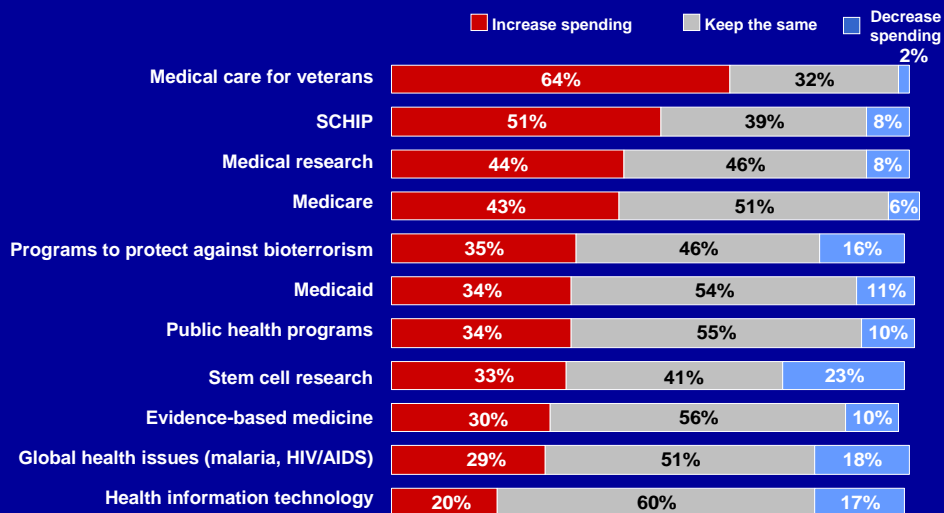
Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



Chart 8

## Federal Spending on Health Care-Related Programs

Thinking about the federal budget, do you want to see the next president and Congress increase spending on each of the following, decrease spending, or keep it about the same?

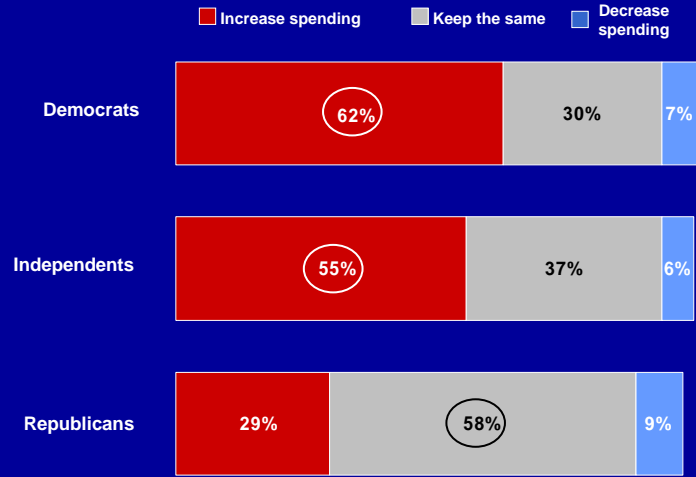


Note: Items asked of separate half samples. Question wording abbreviated. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.  
Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



Chart 9  
**Views on SCHIP Spending Differ by Party**

Thinking about the federal budget, do you want to see the next president and Congress increase spending on SCHIP, decrease spending, or keep it about the same?

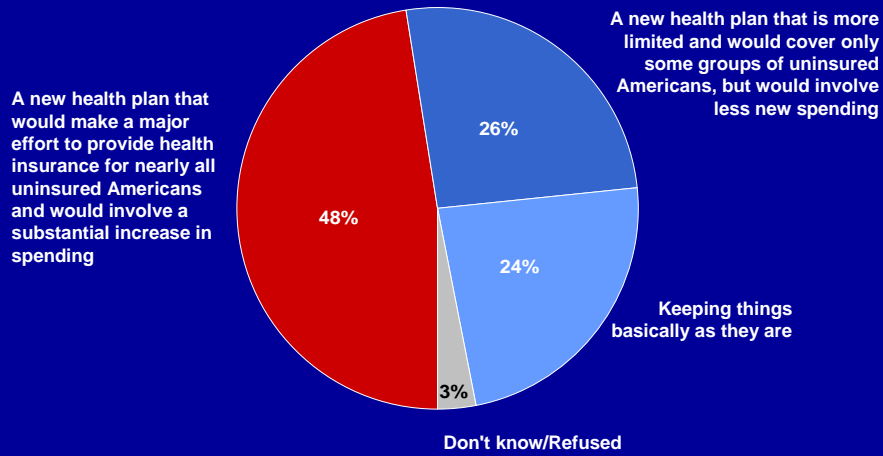


Note: Asked of half sample. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.  
 Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



Chart 10  
**Coverage: How Far to Go?**

Which one of the following three things would you like to see in a health care reform proposal from the new president and Congress? Would you want them to propose...?



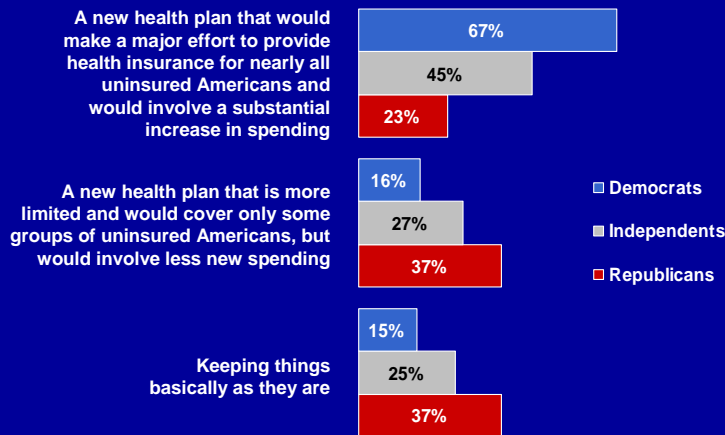
Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



Chart 11

## Most Democrats Favor a Major Coverage Expansion

Which one of the following three things would you like to see in a health care reform proposal from the new president and Congress? Would you want them to propose...?



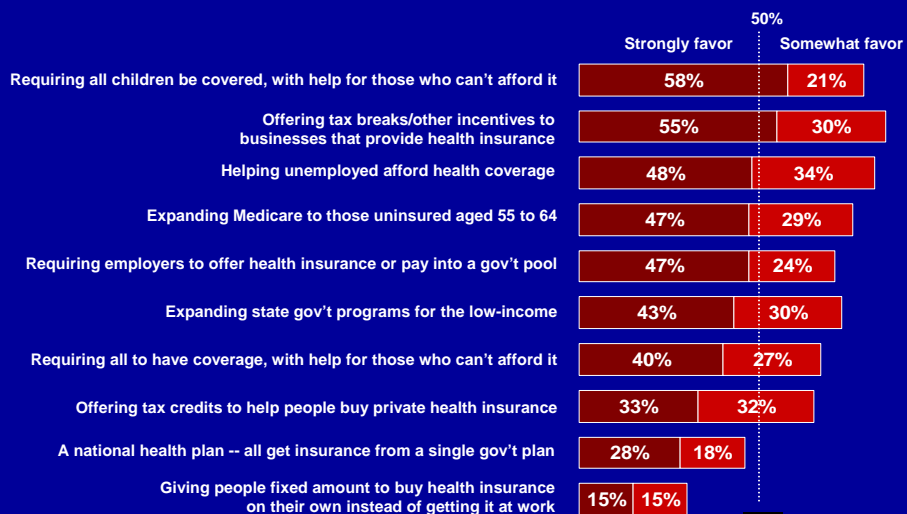
Note: "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.  
Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



Chart 12

## Ways to Expand Coverage

I'm going to read you some different ways to increase the number of Americans covered by health insurance. As I read each one, please tell me if you would favor it or oppose it.



Note: Items asked of separate half samples. Question wording abbreviated.  
Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)

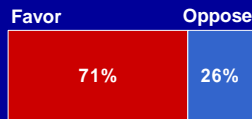




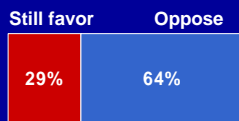
Chart 13

## Mandates Popular but not Immune to Challenges

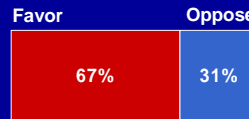
Would you favor or oppose requiring employers to either offer health insurance or pay money into a government pool?



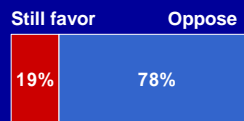
What if you heard that paying for this may cause some employers to lay off some workers?



Would you favor or oppose requiring all Americans to have health insurance with help for those who cannot afford it?



What if you heard that this could mean that some people would be required to buy health insurance that they find too expensive or did not want?



Note: Follow up question asked of those who initially favored. Responses shown on bottom graphs are based on total, where opposed includes those who initially opposed and those who opposed after follow up. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.  
 Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)

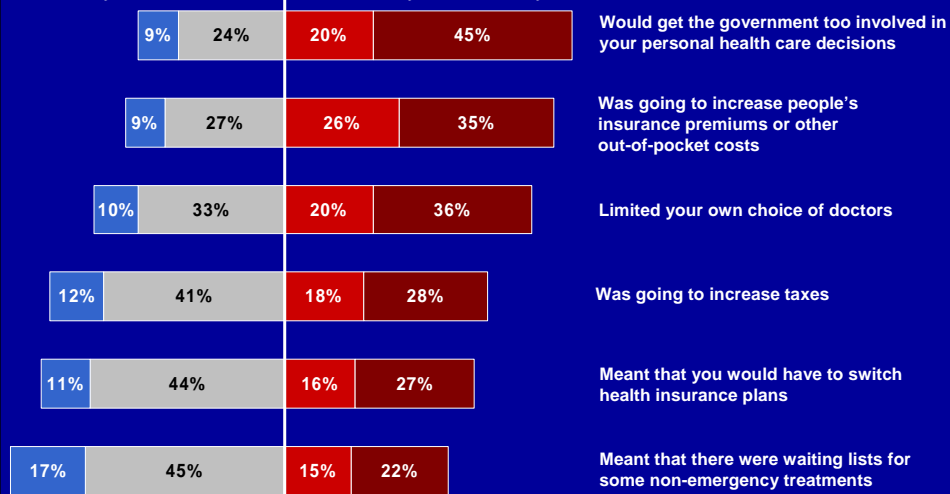


Chart 14

## What Americans Fear in a Reform Proposal

If you heard that a new health care reform proposal would cause each of the following, would that make you more likely to support it, less likely or wouldn't it make a difference?

Legend: Somewhat/much more likely (light blue), Wouldn't make a difference (grey), Somewhat less likely (red), Much less likely (dark red)



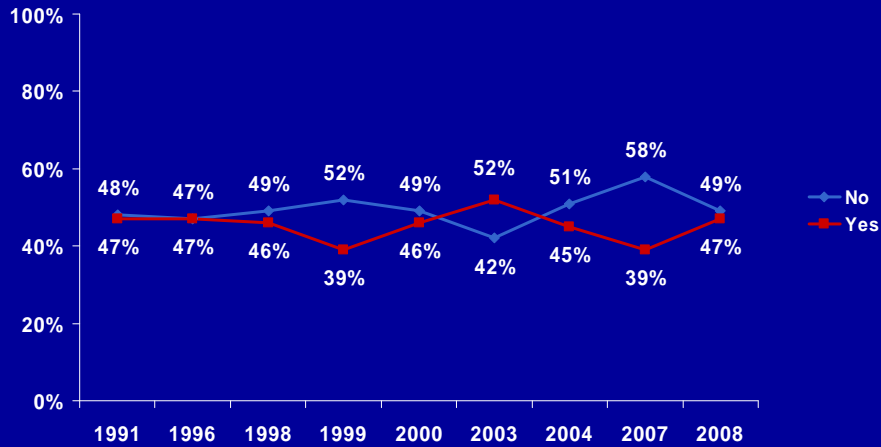
Note: Items asked of separate half samples. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.  
 Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



Chart 15

## Willing to Pay More?

Would you be willing to pay more -- either in higher health insurance premiums or higher taxes -- in order to increase the number of Americans who have health insurance, or not?



Note: "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

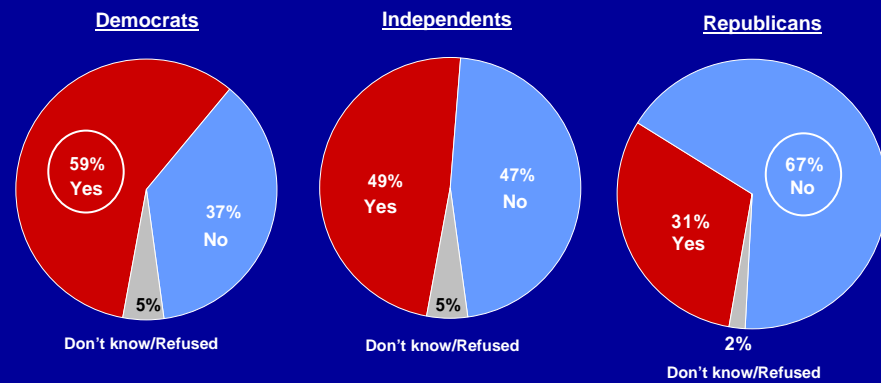
Sources: NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll (Jun. 1991), KFF/HSPH/Harvard School of Public Health Polls (Nov. 1996; Nov. 1998; Oct. 1999; Nov. 2000; Feb. 2003; and Nov. 2004), Washington Post/KFF/Harvard Survey (May 2007), KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (Dec. 2008)



Chart 16

## Willing to Pay More: Partisans Disagree

Would you be willing to pay more -- either in higher health insurance premiums or higher taxes -- in order to increase the number of Americans who have health insurance, or not?



Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)

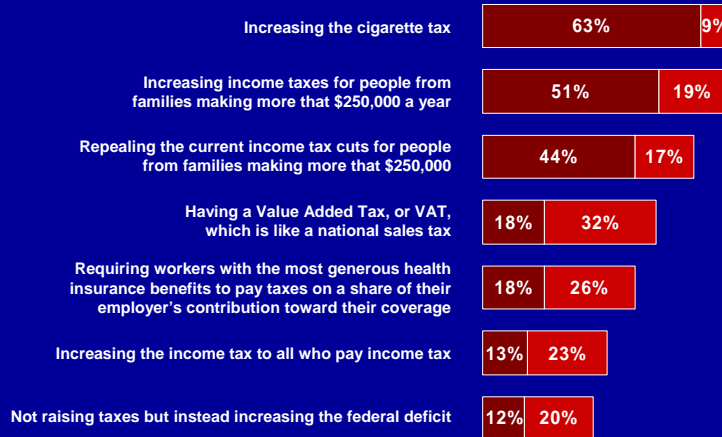


Chart 17

## Taxes: Pick Your Poison

Please tell me if you would favor or oppose each of the following to help pay for expanding health insurance coverage for the uninsured.

Strongly favor    Somewhat favor



Note: Items asked of separate half samples.

Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)

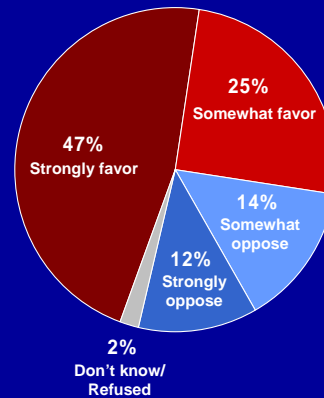
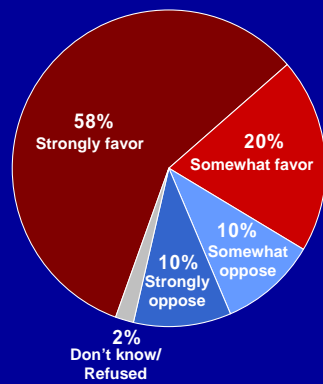


Chart 18

## Requiring Coverage of Preexisting Conditions

Do you favor or oppose the federal government requiring health insurance companies to cover anyone who applies, even if they have a prior illness?

Some have proposed that the federal government require health insurance companies to cover anyone who applies, even if they have a prior illness. This might mean that healthier people would end up paying somewhat more for their health insurance than they do now, while sicker people would pay somewhat less. Do you favor or oppose requiring health insurance companies to cover anyone who applies, even if they have a prior illness?



Note: Questions asked of separate half samples.

Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)

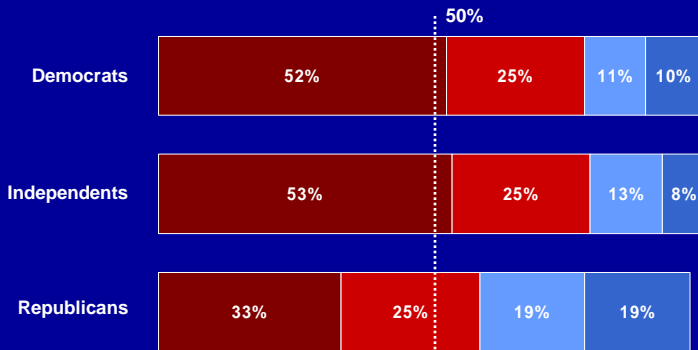


Chart 19

## Pre-Existing Conditions: By Party

Some have proposed that the federal government require health insurance companies to cover anyone who applies, even if they have a prior illness. This might mean that healthier people would end up paying somewhat more for their health insurance than they do now, while sicker people would pay somewhat less. Do you favor or oppose requiring health insurance companies to cover anyone who applies, even if they have a prior illness?

■ Strongly favor 
 ■ Somewhat favor 
 ■ Somewhat oppose 
 ■ Strongly oppose



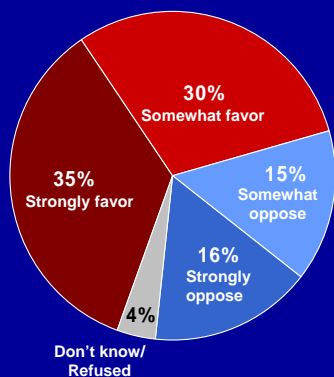
Note: Asked of half sample. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.  
 Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



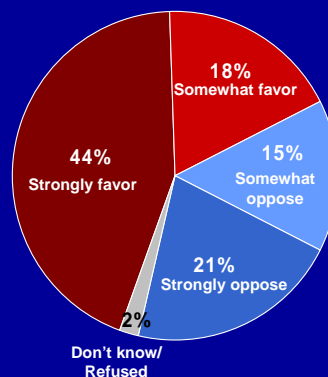
Chart 20

## Federal Regulation of Health Insurance Companies

Do you favor or oppose the federal government imposing limits on the administrative expenses of health insurance companies?



Do you favor or oppose the federal government imposing limits on the profits of health insurance companies?



Note: Questions asked of separate half samples.  
 Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)

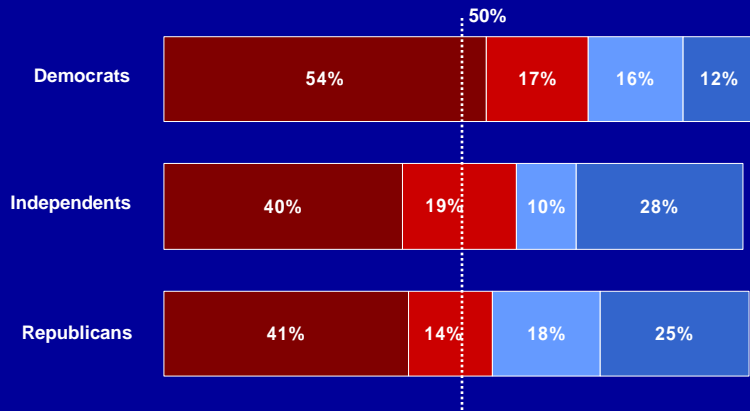


Chart 21

## Regulation of Insurance Company Profits: Bipartisan Support

Do you favor or oppose the federal government imposing limits on the profits of health insurance companies?

Strongly favor   Somewhat favor   Somewhat oppose   Strongly oppose



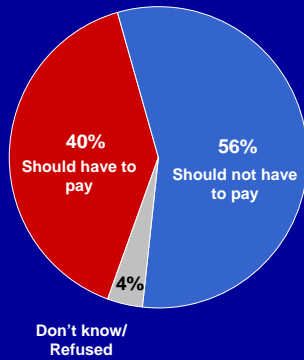
Note: Asked of half sample. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.  
 Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



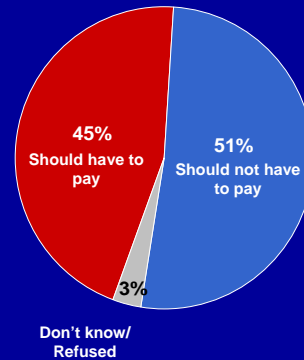
Chart 22

## Should Insurance Cover Treatments Not Proven More Effective?

If an expensive new drug or medical treatment becomes available, but it has not been proven to be more effective than other, less expensive treatments, do you think insurance companies should or should not have to pay for the newer, more expensive treatment?



If a doctor recommends an expensive new drug or medical treatment, but it has not been proven to be more effective than other, less expensive treatments, do you think insurance companies should or should not have to pay for the newer, more expensive treatment?



Note: Questions asked of separate half samples.  
 Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)

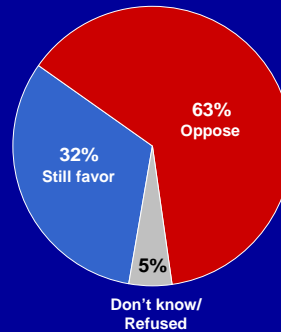
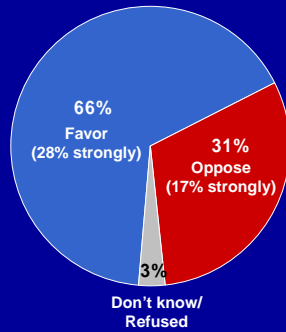


Chart 23

## A Federal Scientific Body to Evaluate Medical Technology

One way that health experts have proposed trying to slow the growth of health insurance premiums is to establish a new independent federal scientific body which would decide whether approved new medical technology, procedures, and drugs should be covered by insurance, based on whether they are proven to be more effective than existing, less expensive treatments. Would you favor or oppose this?

This might mean that in some cases, treatments or drugs recommended by a person's own doctor wouldn't be covered by their health insurance. Having heard that, would you favor or oppose having a new federal scientific body decide whether new treatments and drugs should be covered by insurance, or not?\*



\* Follow up question asked of those who initially favored. Responses shown in the pie chart on the right are based on total, where opposed includes those who initially opposed and those who opposed after follow up.  
Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)

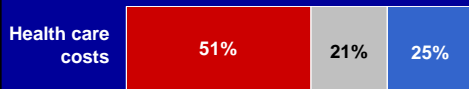


Chart 24

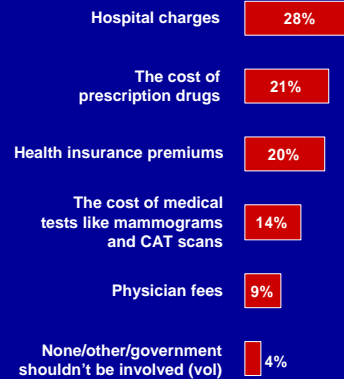
## Government Regulation of Health Care Costs

Overall, do you think there is too much, not enough, or about the right amount of government regulation of...?

■ Not enough   
 ■ About the right amount   
 ■ Too much



Thinking about reducing future health care costs, which one of the following do you think should be the highest priority for government to address? Would it be reducing...?



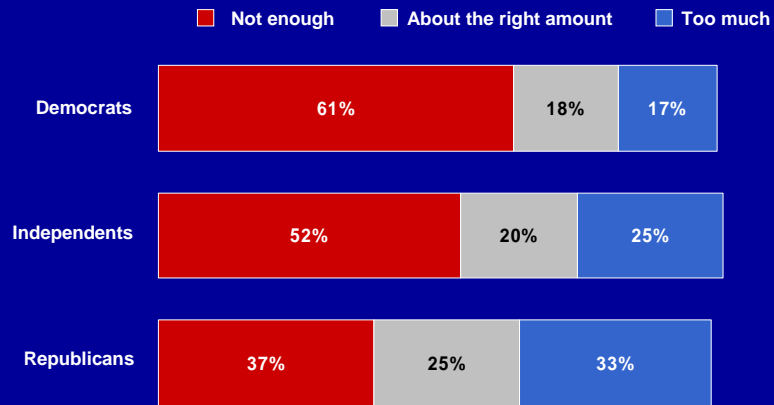
Note: "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.  
Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



Chart 25

## A Majority of Democrats, Independents Say Not Enough Regulation of Costs

Overall, do you think there is too much, not enough, or about the right amount of government regulation of health care costs?



Note: "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

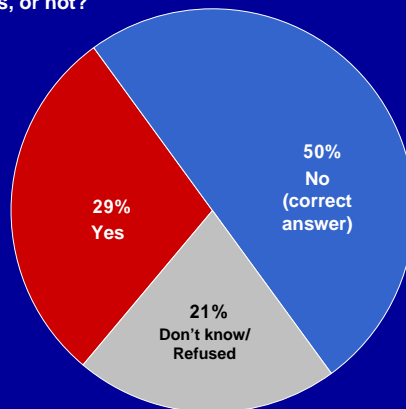
Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



Chart 26

## Tax Treatment of Health Insurance Benefits: What Do Americans Know?

As you know, most Americans pay taxes on the wages they get from their employers. In cases where an employer also puts money into health insurance benefits for a worker, as far as you know, does the worker pay taxes on the amount the employer puts toward those health care benefits, or not?



Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)

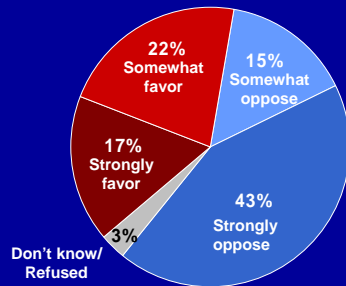


Chart 27

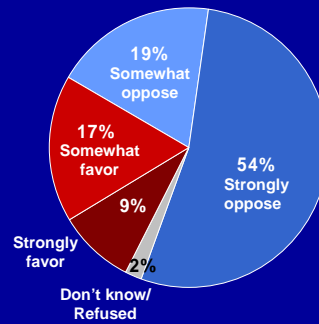
## Changing Tax Treatment of Employer Health Benefits

... Right now, the average worker does not pay taxes on any money that his or her employer puts into his or her health insurance benefits. Some policymakers are proposing that workers who have (very generous) health benefits from their employers should pay taxes on a share of the money the employer puts into that health insurance, with those taxes being used to help pay to cover the uninsured. Do you favor or oppose changing the law so that workers with (very generous) health care benefits would pay taxes on the money their employer puts toward their coverage?

When question refers to taxing "workers with very generous health care benefits"



When question refers to taxing all "workers with health care benefits"



Note: Questions asked of separate half samples.  
Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



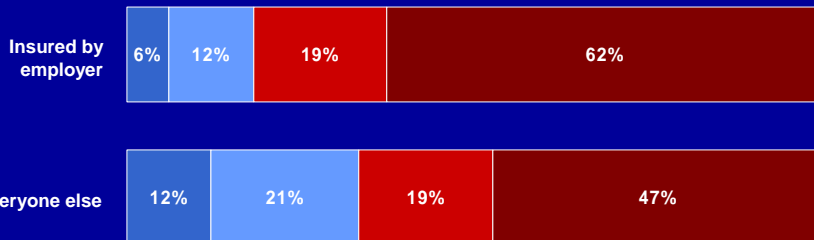
Chart 28

## Changing Tax Treatment of Employer Health Benefits – Opposition Strongest from Those Insured By Employer

Do you favor or oppose changing the law so that workers with health care benefits would pay taxes on the money their employer puts toward their coverage?

When question refers to taxing all "workers with health care benefits"

■ Strongly favor   
 ■ Somewhat favor   
 ■ Somewhat oppose   
 ■ Strongly oppose



Note: Asked of half sample. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.  
Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)

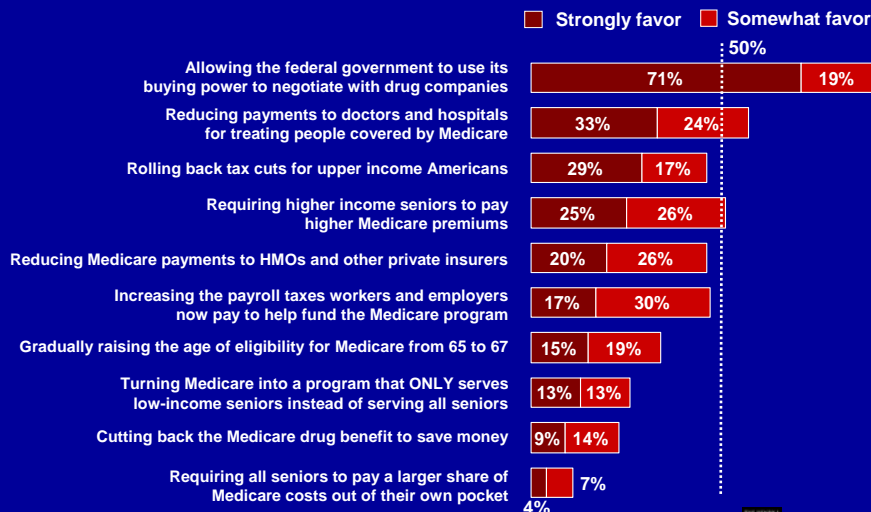




Chart 29

## Keeping Medicare Financially Sound

I'm going to read you some proposals to keep the Medicare program financially sound in the future. Please tell me whether you would generally favor or oppose each one.



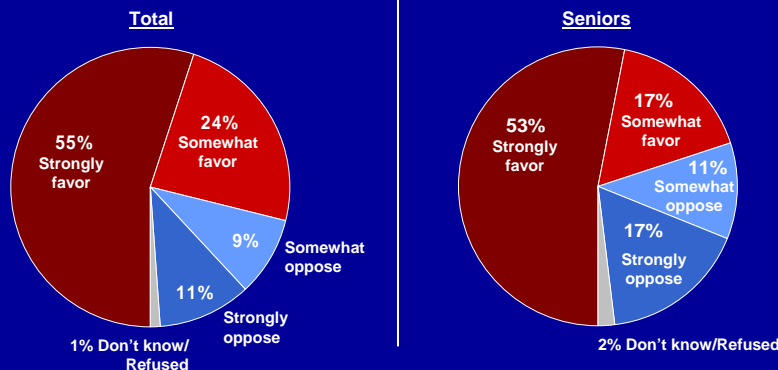
Note: Items asked of separate half samples. Question wording abbreviated.  
 Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)



Chart 30

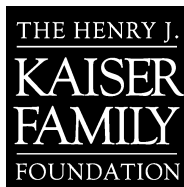
## Filling the Doughnut Hole?

The way the Medicare prescription drug benefit currently works, some seniors with high drug costs hit a coverage gap where they have to pay the full costs of their medications out of their own pockets, up to several thousand dollars for some people. Would you favor or oppose spending more federal money to expand the Medicare prescription drug benefit to help pay the prescription costs for seniors in this situation?



Source: KFF/HSPH *The Public's Health Care Agenda for the New President and Congress* (conducted Dec. 4-14, 2008)





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*The Kaiser Family Foundation is a non-profit private operating foundation, based in Menlo Park, California, dedicated to producing and communicating the best possible information, research and analysis on health issues.*