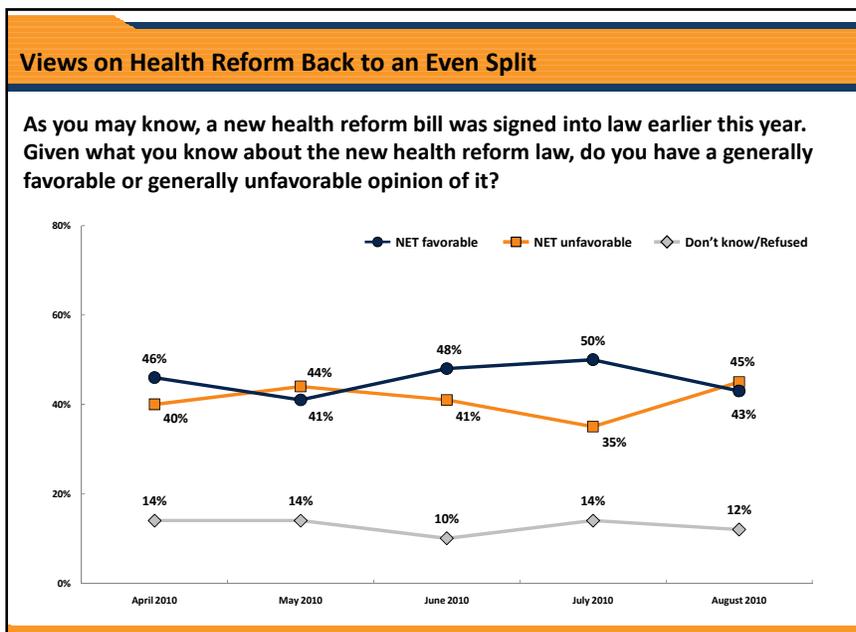


Health reform lost some luster in the public mind over the past month, dropping from a 50 percent favorability rating in July and leaving public opinion split on the law this month with 43 percent holding favorable views and 45 percent unfavorable. The proportion of the public saying the law would benefit the country also fell this month, again with equal shares of the public now saying the country will be better versus worse off. But as the November midterm elections creep closer the new law seems to divide voters in much the same way as it did earlier this summer, driving a third to say they would be more supportive of a candidate who backed the bill, a third less supportive, and not impacting the vote of the rest. And most of those who claim to be 'angry' about the law say that their frustration is less about reform specifically and more about a broader array of frustrations with government. Meanwhile, opinion on the law continues to be highly partisan, with Republicans having intensity of opinion on their side even as Democrats are somewhat more likely to say health reform will be a factor in their vote. Many of the short term deliverables beginning to be implemented remain popular and several even lead a majority of the law's opponents to feel more favorably toward reform. And most Americans approve of the basic concept of extending subsidies and expanding the Medicaid program in order to expand coverage to more people. The individual mandate continues to be unpopular, even as the survey suggests that opinion on this issue remains somewhat malleable.

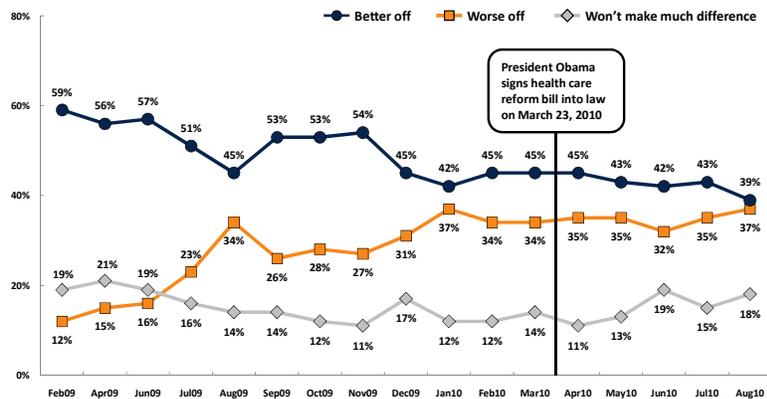
August tracking poll finds opposition to health reform up from last month.

Americans are about evenly divided on health reform this month, with 43 percent holding favorable views of the new law and 45 percent unfavorable views. This represents a 7 percentage point drop in support from July, and a 10 percentage point uptick in opposition, closing the gap that had opened over the past two months and returning to the closely split views of late spring. Roughly one in ten Americans (12 percent) still have no opinion on the law. And overall, roughly three in ten Americans (31 percent) continue to support repeal.



Narrowing Gap Between Those Seeing National Benefit vs. Harm

Do you think the country as a whole will be better off or worse off under the new health reform law, or don't you think it will make much difference?



Note: "Depends" (vol.) and Don't know/Refused answers not shown.

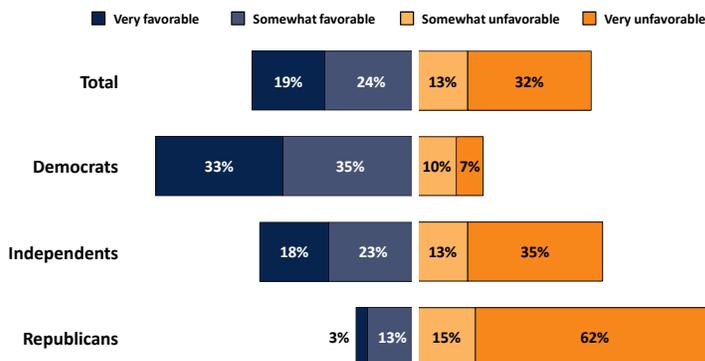
Meanwhile, the proportion who think the country as a whole will be better off with health reform moved in the same direction, dropping to 39 percent, roughly the same proportion who think the country will be worse off (37 percent). And the share of Americans who report feeling "disappointed" in health reform now stands at 51 percent, up from 42 percent last month.

Enduring party divisions; Republicans have more intensity on issue.

Most Democrats (68 percent, about the same as the 73 percent who said so in July), continue to support the law, most Republicans to oppose it (77 percent, up from 69 percent last month), and independents are divided 41 percent in favor and 48 percent opposed. Intensity remains on the side of Republicans in the sense that 62 percent of this group say they feel "very" unfavorably toward the bill, compared to 33 percent of Democrats who say they feel "very" favorably.

Views on Health Reform Continue to be Strongly Partisan

As you may know, a new health reform bill was signed into law earlier this year. Given what you know about the new health reform law, do you have a generally favorable or generally unfavorable opinion of it?



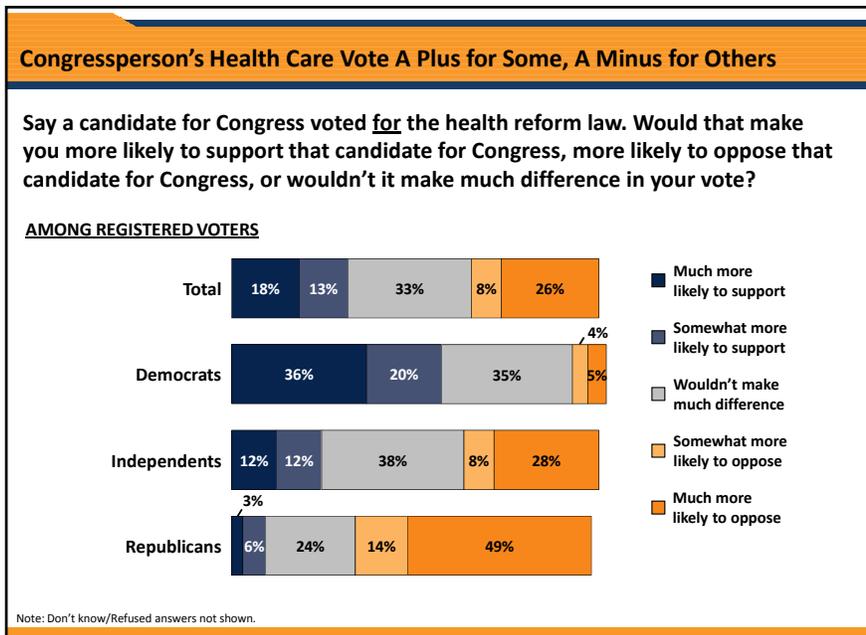
Note: Don't know/Refused answers not shown.

But reported impact on vote hasn't changed, and Democrats somewhat more likely to say health care will factor into their vote.

Meanwhile, however, the way the public divides in terms of reported impact on Congressional vote hasn't changed much over the past month.

The law still splits registered voters into three roughly equally sized

groups, similar to June: a third (34 percent) more likely to oppose a candidate who backed the law; a third more likely to support that candidate (31 percent); and a third saying it won't impact their vote (33 percent).



A candidate's position on health care affects Democratic and Republican voters differently, of course. Roughly six in ten (63 percent) Republicans say a candidate who backed reform would be less likely to get their vote, while 56 percent of Democrats say they would be *more* likely to back such a candidate. Again, intensity is on the side of Republicans, 49 percent of whom hold their view strongly, compared to 36 percent of Democrats.

Among registered voters, at the same time Republicans are more likely to hold stronger views on the issue of reform, Democrats are somewhat more likely to prioritize health care reform as a voting issue. Overall, it

ranks second among Democrats, named by 17 percent as the most important issue to their vote behind the economy and jobs, named by 34 percent. Among Republicans, the economy is about tied with general dissatisfaction with government at the top of the list, named by 21 percent and 22 percent respectively. Health care reform is third, named by 9 percent. For independents, the budget deficit is the third ranking issue, with health care tied with immigration for fourth place.

Meanwhile, the large majority of Americans see the disagreements playing out over health reform in the nation's campaigns more as evidence of political gamesmanship (69 percent) than as evidence of fundamental policy differences (25 percent).

AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: Of the issues you said would be extremely important to your vote for Congress in November, which one would you say will be most important?

<i>Most important issue to their vote</i>	All	Dem.	Ind.	Rep.
The economy and jobs	28%	34%	28%	21%
Dissatisfaction with government	15	7	15	22
<i>Health care reform</i>	11	17	8	9
The budget deficit	9	4	12	9
Immigration	6	5	8	6
The war in Afghanistan	5	3	4	7
Energy policy	1	2	2	–
The Gulf Coast oil spill	1	–	1	3

Frustration seems less about specifics of reform and more about government in general.

Among the three in ten Americans who say they are “angry” about health reform, only 13 percent say they are angry about health reform in particular. Instead, 84 percent of this group (representing about a quarter of the public overall) say they are angry about “the general direction in Washington and health reform is one of many things upsetting [them]”.

And while several different takes on the “most important issue” question in this survey all suggest that health care is clearly in the mix of issues on voters' minds as the fall elections approach, it uniformly lags behind the dispiriting economic and jobs situation. In an item that requires voters to choose just one most important issue, health care reform – named by 11 percent of voters as their most important issue – lags not only behind the economic situation (named by 28 percent) but just behind “dissatisfaction with government” more generally (15 percent).

WHAT VOTERS WANT CANDIDATES TO TALK ABOUT

Asked to name the two issues that they most hope to hear about from their Congressional candidates this fall, voters top their list with jobs, jobs, jobs. Overall, half say they hope those running for the U.S. House and Senate will address economic and job issues. But Americans also want to hear the candidates talk about health care, an issue named by 27 percent of voters. Among voters who say they hope to hear about health care, about a third (32%) have a favorable view of the health reform law and half (51%) have an unfavorable view. Rounding out the list of issues named by voters: immigration (11%), the wars (9%), budget deficit (8%), and education (8%).

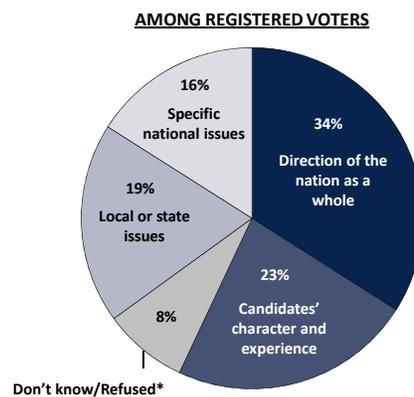
AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS: Thinking about the campaigns for the U.S. House and Senate this fall, what two issues would you most like to hear your Congressional candidates talk about? {open-ended}

	Percent
Economy	49%
Health care	27
Immigration	11
Wars	9
Budget deficit/government spending	8
Education	8
Taxes	6
Dissatisfaction with government	5
Seniors	4

Finally, asked what would make the biggest difference in their vote for Congress, the “direction of the nation as a whole” topped the list, named by 34 percent, twice as many as the proportion who chose “specific national issues”. Roughly one in four said the “candidate’s character and experience” would be the driving factors, and 19 percent named local or state issues. Looking at this question through the prism of health care provides another perspective: At this point, roughly 4 in 5 voters are focused primarily on something besides specific national issues.

Direction of the Country Most Important Factor in Vote

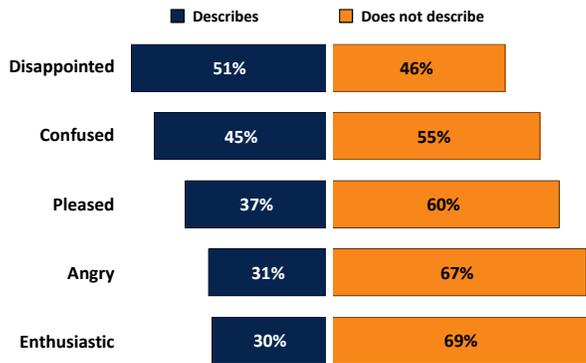
What will make the biggest difference in how you vote for Congress in your district:



* Don't know/Refused includes Don't vote/don't plan to vote, All, None/other, and Don't know/Refused responses.

Disappointment Most Common; Enthusiasm and Anger Balance Out

Please tell me if each of the following does or does not describe your own feelings about the health reform law.



Note: Don't know/Refused answers not shown.

Meanwhile, health reform enthusiasts equal the angry in size, if not in voting fervor.

Overall, three in ten Americans (30 percent) say they feel enthusiastic about the health reform law, the same proportion as feel angry (31 percent). Not surprisingly the two groups have markedly different characteristics, with the enthusiastic group being younger on average, more likely to be a member of a racial or ethnic minority group, less likely to have health insurance, and more likely to self-identify as Democrats. They are also somewhat less likely to report being likely midterm voters (59 percent vs. 74 percent of the 'angry' group).

Law expected to be more successful at some things than at others.

Americans are most likely to perceive health reform as heading for success when it comes to covering more of the nation's uninsured, but are much less sure it will succeed in reducing the amount the country, or they themselves, spend on health care. Overall, roughly seven in ten (69 percent) say they expect the law to be at least somewhat successful in expanding coverage for the uninsured; nearly six in ten (58 percent) expect the law to succeed in instituting stronger consumer protections in the insurance industry, and just over half (54 percent) expect at least some success in improving the quality of care.

When it comes to reining in costs, however, the public splits in terms of their expectations of success: 46 percent expect success vs. 50 percent who don't in terms of national costs; 51 percent vs. 44 percent when it comes to the prices paid by average Americans.

Please tell me if each of the following does or does not describe your own feelings about the health reform law?

Profile of those who are "angry" versus those who are "enthusiastic" about health reform	Among those who are "angry", % who are:	Among those who are "enthusiastic", % who are:
Ages 18-29	17%	19%
30-49*	29	44
50-64*	33	22
65+*	22	15
White*	85	51
African American*	5	20
Hispanic*	7	25
Other	3	5
Covered by health insurance*	83	72
Not covered by health insurance*	16	27
Democrats*	13	57
Independents	38	30
Republicans*	41	8
Likely midterm voters*	74	59

*indicates statistically significant difference between those who say they feel 'angry' about the health care reform law and those who say they feel 'enthusiastic' about the health care reform law

Please tell me how successful, if at all, you expect the new health reform law to be in accomplishing each of the following goals:

	Very or somewhat successful	Not too or not at all successful
Expanding health insurance coverage for the uninsured	69%	27%
Regulating health insurance companies so that the average person with private insurance will have better consumer protections	58	37
Improving the QUALITY of medical care that the average American receives	54	42
Reducing the amount the average American has to pay for health care and health insurance	51	44
Reducing the total amount the country spends on health care	46	50

Many of the early provisions of reform remain appealing.

Many of the provisions of reform scheduled to be implemented in the shorter term remain quite appealing to large segments of the public. Roughly seven in ten say eliminating pre-existing condition exclusions for children (72 percent), providing tax credits to small businesses (71 percent), and requiring new health plans to provide access to basic preventive care without charging a co-payment (70 percent) each make them feel more favorably toward the law. At least six in ten say the same about limiting insurers’ power to rescind coverage (68 percent), gradually closing the Medicare prescription drug “doughnut hole” (64 percent), and creating short term high-risk pools (61 percent).

For each element I name, please tell me whether it makes you feel more favorably toward the law, less favorably toward the law, or doesn’t it make much difference either way.

Elements of health reform law scheduled to be implemented within the next year	More favorably	No difference	Less favorably
Guaranteed issue for children	72%	8%	19%
Tax credits to small business	71	16	11
No cost-sharing for preventive services in new plans	70	17	11
Prohibit rescission except in cases of customer fraud	68	15	15
Gradually close the Medicare “doughnut hole”	64	19	14
High risk pool for individuals with pre-existing conditions	61	16	20
Medical loss ratio	57	20	21
Eliminate caps on lifetime benefits	56	13	26
Extend dependent coverage until age 26	53	18	26
Federal reviews of health plan premium increases	49	22	27
Limit increases in Medicare provider payments	43	20	34

While all the provisions asked about on the survey made people feel more favorable about the law than unfavorable, the proportions were closest when it came to limiting future increases in certain Medicare provider payments, which made 43 percent feel more favorably even while 34 percent said it made them feel less favorably, and beginning federal reviews of health plan premium increases (49 percent more favorable, 27 percent less favorable).

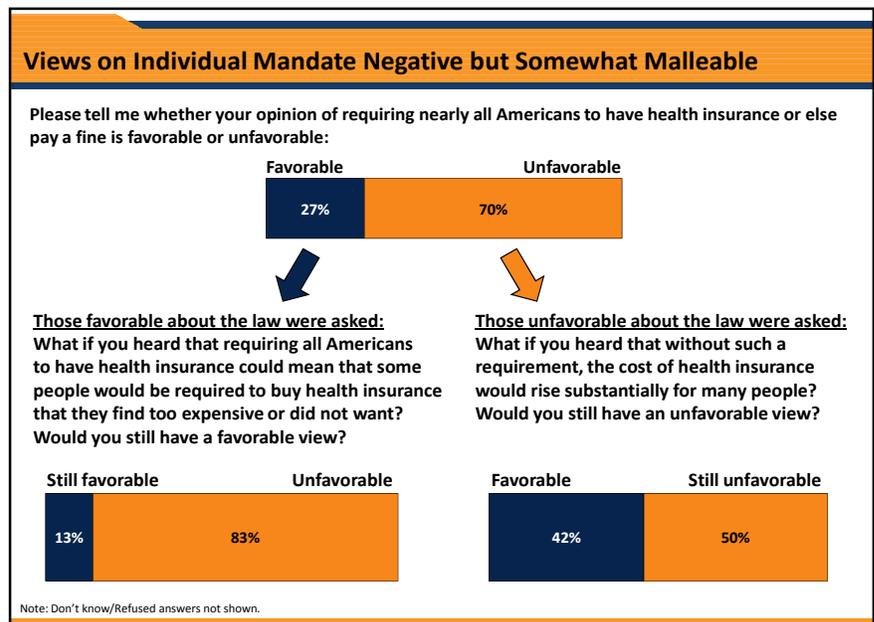
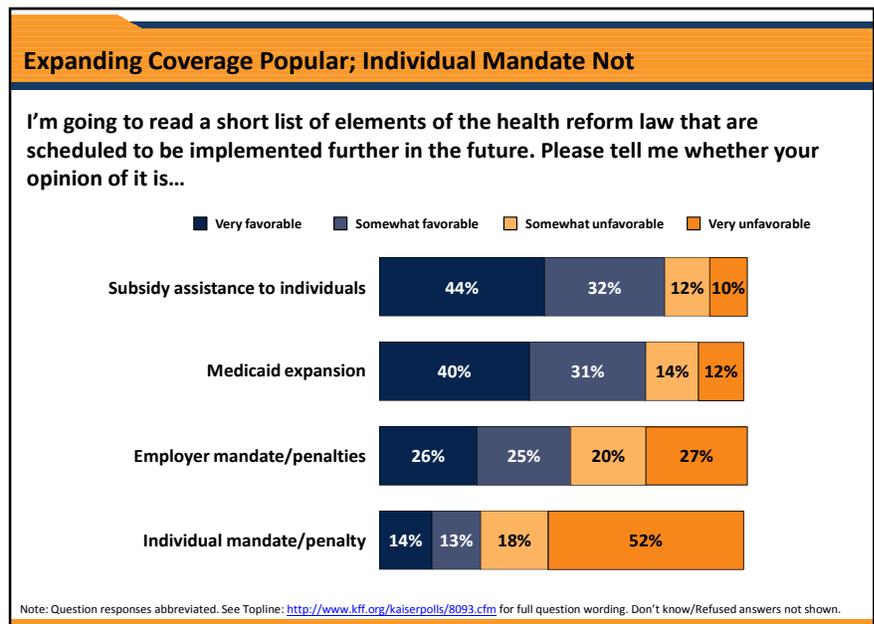
It's worth noting that three of these elements even make a majority of those who hold *unfavorable* views of the law feel more favorably: guaranteed issue for children (62 percent of those with unfavorable views say they feel "more favorably" after hearing about this provision); tax credits for small businesses (57 percent); and a prohibition against rescissions (56 percent).

Among the larger, and longer term, changes, subsidies are popular while individual mandate is not.

When it comes to the major changes that are going to be implemented over a somewhat longer time horizon, most Americans say they have positive views of the mechanisms by which the law will increase coverage, even as they are opposed to the mandates which many experts say are what makes those expansions possible. Currently, three in four Americans (76 percent) support providing subsidies to low and moderate income Americans in need of coverage – including majorities of Democrats, Republicans and political independents – while nearly as many (71 percent) say they have a favorable view of expanding Medicaid.

When it comes to employer penalties, however, the public is split, 51 percent in favor versus 47 percent opposed. And views on the individual mandate are even more negative, with 70 percent saying they look unfavorably on the provision that requires nearly all Americans to have health insurance or else pay a fine. Even among those who have a favorable view of health reform in general, fewer than half (41 percent) have a favorable view of the individual mandate.

The survey suggests, however, that even views on such highly charged subjects as the individual mandate are not set in stone. When those with negative views of the provision were told that without it "the cost of health insurance would rise substantially for many people", opposition fell 20 percentage points, from 70 percent to 50 percent. Similarly, when those with positive views were told that requiring all Americans to have health insurance "could mean that some people would be required to buy health insurance that they find too expensive or did not want", favorability dropped from 27 percent to 13 percent.



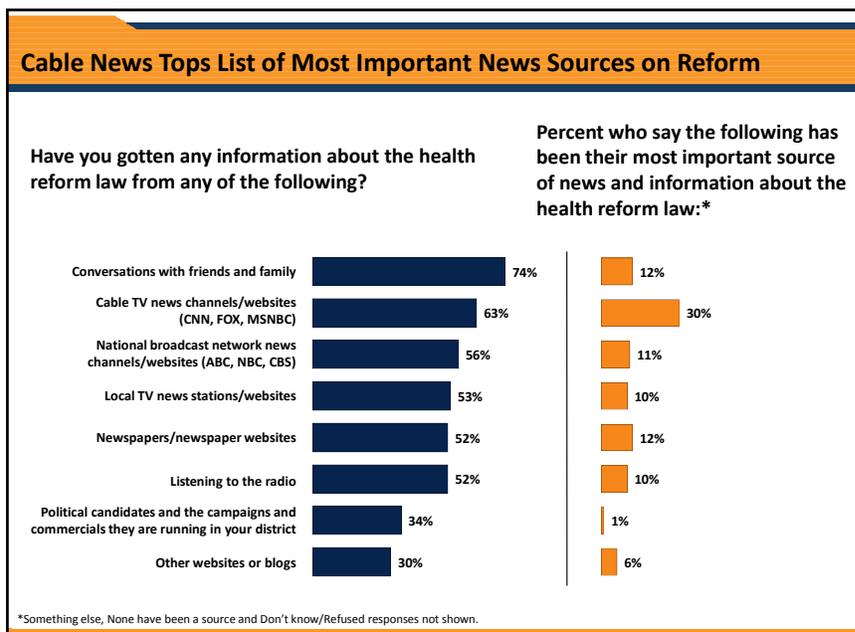
Asked whether they thought the state authorities who are challenging the individual mandate in court are doing so because they believe Constitutional principles are at stake or because they are playing politics with health reform, just over half of Americans (53 percent) said they saw the lawsuits as political, while a third thought they were sincere inquiries. While Democrats by more than three to one saw politics in play here, Republicans were more divided, with 46 percent saying the efforts were based on genuine Constitutional concerns and 44 percent saying they thought politics were involved.

As you may know, some state authorities are challenging the federal government’s right to require all Americans to have health insurance. Would you say they are mainly doing this because they believe Constitutional principles are at stake, or mainly doing this because they are playing politics with health reform?

	ALL	Dem	Ind	Rep
Believe constitutional principles are at stake	33%	20%	38%	46%
Playing politics with health reform	53	66	50	44
Both (vol.)	7	7	7	6

Cable news still tops list of most important news sources.

While conversations with friends and family are the most common means of getting information about health reform – fully 74 percent of Americans say they have gotten at least *some* information via these everyday conversations – when they are forced to choose one most important source of health reform information, cable TV news continues to top the list, named by 30 percent, more than twice as many as name any other individual source of information. Only 1 percent say that the campaigns and commercials being run by Congressional candidates are their most important source of information about health reform.



Methodology

This *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll* was designed and analyzed by public opinion researchers at the Kaiser Family Foundation led by Mollyann Brodie, Ph.D., including Claudia Deane, Sarah Cho, and Theresa Boston. The survey was conducted August 16 through August 22, 2010, among a nationally representative random sample of 1,203 adults ages 18 and older, including 1,066 adults who say they are registered to vote. Telephone interviews conducted by landline (801) and cell phone (402, including 158 who had no landline telephone) were carried out in English and Spanish. The margin of sampling error for the total sample is plus or minus 3 percentage points. For results based on other subgroups, the margin of sampling error may be higher. The full question wording, results, charts and a brief on the poll can be viewed online at <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/8093.cfm>.

Additional copies of this publication (#8093-F) are available on the Kaiser Family Foundation’s website at www.kff.org.