

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Dave Metz
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates

Greg Strimple
GS Strategy Group

DATE: September 30, 2014

RE: Findings of a Statewide Survey on Expanding Access to Health Coverage

A recent bipartisan statewide survey of California voters finds that **a majority support expanding existing health care programs to cover all low-income Californians, regardless of immigration status.** When given the full context for the policy – including the fact that health care providers currently must provide emergency care to all, regardless of ability to pay – 54 percent would support expanding Medi-Cal and Covered California to include all low-income Californians, including those who cannot participate currently because of their immigration status. Support for this proposal holds firm after positive and negative messaging, and voters are more positively inclined toward politicians who take a position in favor of health care expansion.

The bipartisan research team of Democratic firm Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) and Republican firm GS Strategy Group conducted a statewide survey of 800 registered California voters. The research also included an oversample of an additional 154 interviews among African-American voters, and the data have been statistically weighted to reflect the true ethnic composition of the electorate. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish via landline and wireless telephones from August 24-31, 2014. The margin of sampling error for the full study is +/- 3.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups will be higher. Due to rounding, some percentages may not sum to 100%.

Key specific findings of the research include the following:

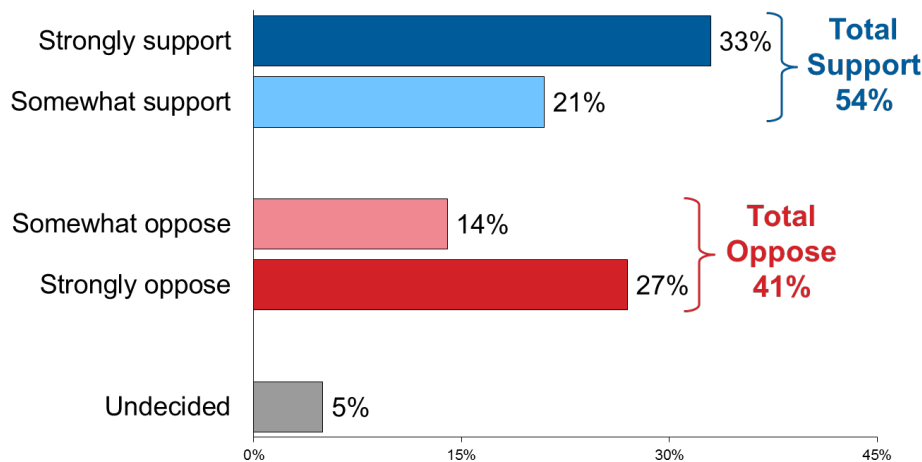
- **Voters view key health care programs more positively than negatively.** Over two-thirds (69%) have favorable views of Medi-Cal, compared to only 16 percent who view it unfavorably. “The health care law named the Affordable Care Act” has a favorable rating of 50 percent and is viewed unfavorably by 35 percent. And Covered California, though less well-known, is viewed favorably by two-in-five California voters (41%) and unfavorably by only one in five (18%).

- **When the issue is explained, a majority supports an expansion of Medi-Cal and Covered California to cover all low-income Californians.** Respondents were offered the following context for the policy:

As you may know, federal health care reform – also known as Obamacare – was signed into law. As a result, a new state program called Covered California now offers individuals affordable private health care coverage for purchase, and also offers discounted rates to those who cannot afford to pay. In addition, Medi-Cal was expanded to cover over one million Californians who didn't previously qualify. However, millions of Californians still are not offered health coverage through these changes – including undocumented immigrants. Currently, health care providers are required by law to provide emergency care to all Californians, including those who are undocumented, whether or not they have health insurance coverage. The costs of this care are currently passed on to other patients and taxpayers. To prevent costly emergency care, some people have proposed expanding access to affordable health coverage through Medi-Cal and Covered California to cover all low-income Californians – including those not currently eligible because of their immigration status.

As shown in **Figure 1**, after hearing this information, a majority of 54 percent supports expanding access to affordable health coverage, including for those who are not currently eligible because of their immigration status.

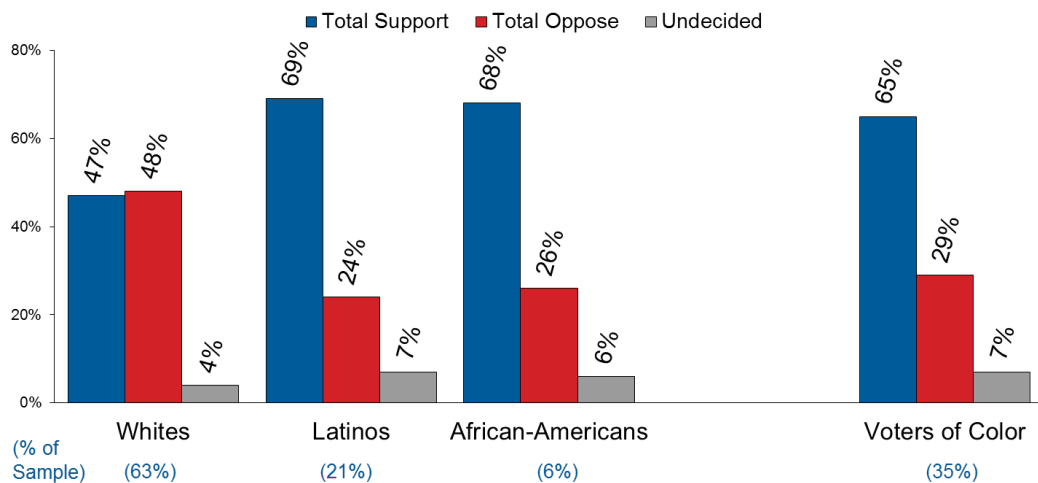
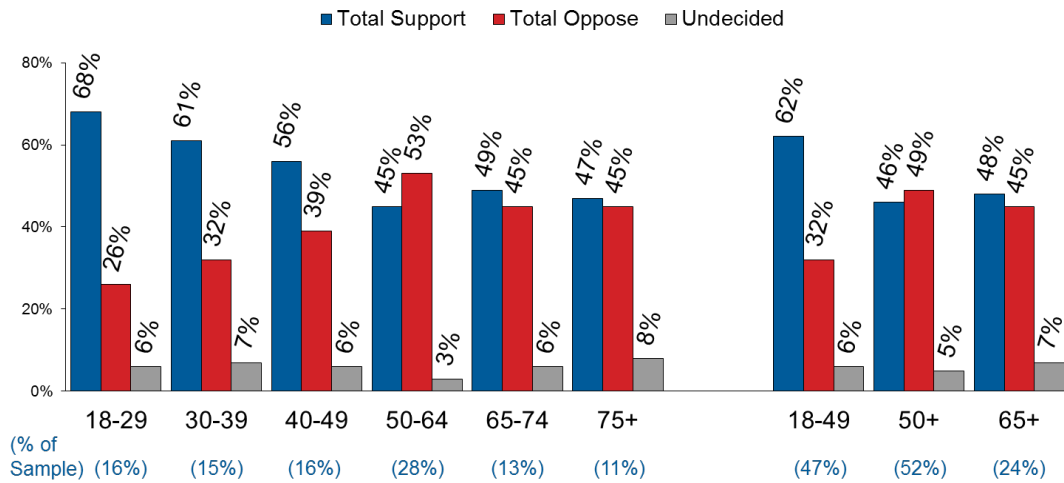
FIGURE 1:
Support for Expanding Access to Health Coverage to All Low-Income Californians



- **The proposal finds support across broad demographic segments of the electorate, including communities of color – one of its fastest-growing segments.** The proposal attracts support from a wide range of key subsets of California voters, including:

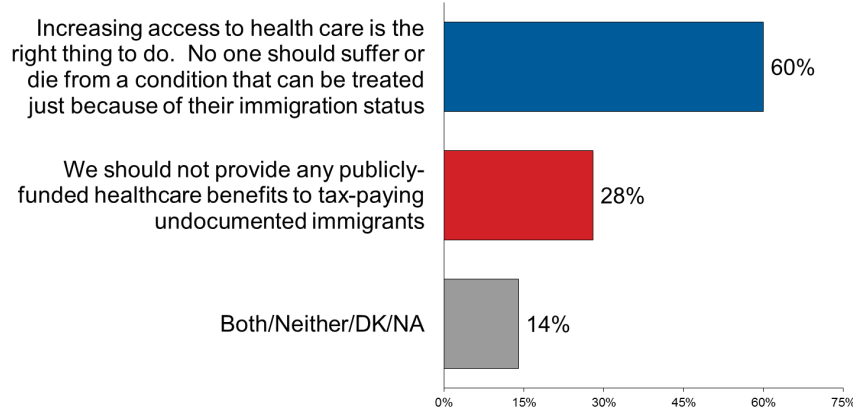
- 70% of Democrats, 56% of independents, and 26% of Republicans;
- 60% of voters in the San Francisco media market, and 57% in the Los Angeles media market;
- 65% of voters of color, including 69% of Latinos and 68% of African Americans (as shown in **Figure 2**;
- 62% of voters under age 50, including 68% of 18 to 29 year olds, (also as shown in **Figure 2**; and
- 55% of women and 52% of men.

FIGURE 2
Initial Support by Age and Ethnicity



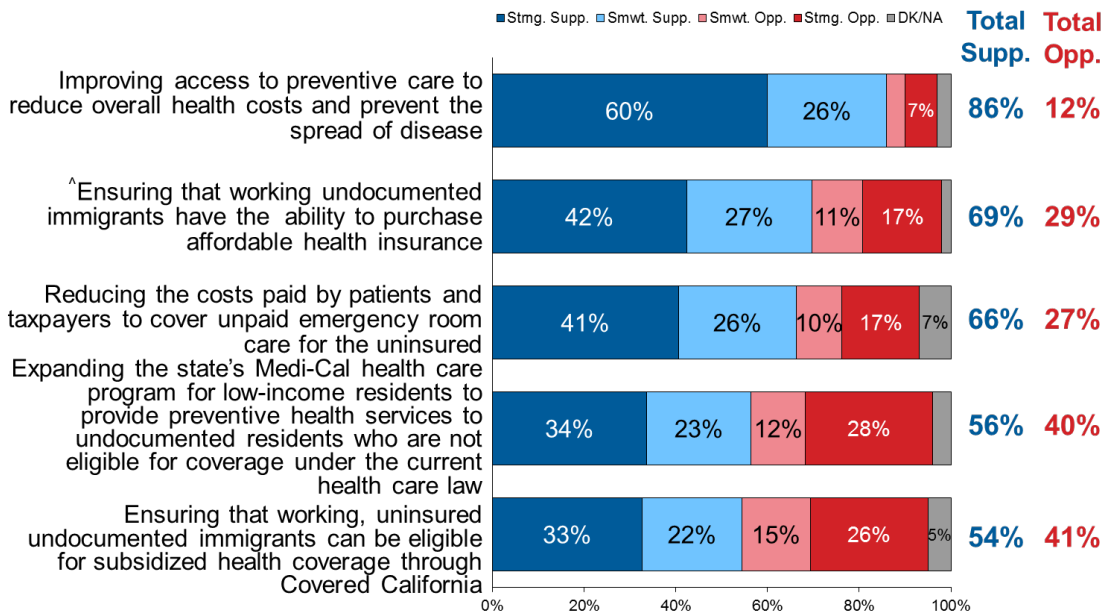
- **A majority of voters believes that extending health coverage to undocumented Californians is “the right thing to do.”** When asked to choose between two perspectives, as shown in **Figure 3**, 60 percent indicate that increasing access to health care is “the right thing to do,” while only 28 percent side with the view that publicly-funded benefits should not go to undocumented immigrants.

FIGURE 3:
Choice of Positions on Health Access and Immigration Status



- **A number of aspects and impacts of the proposal are well-received.** As shown in **Figure 4**, improved access to preventive care, allowing working undocumented immigrants to purchase affordable health insurance, and reducing the costs patients and taxpayers pay for emergency care are especially popular.

FIGURE 4:
Support for Elements and Impacts of the Policy



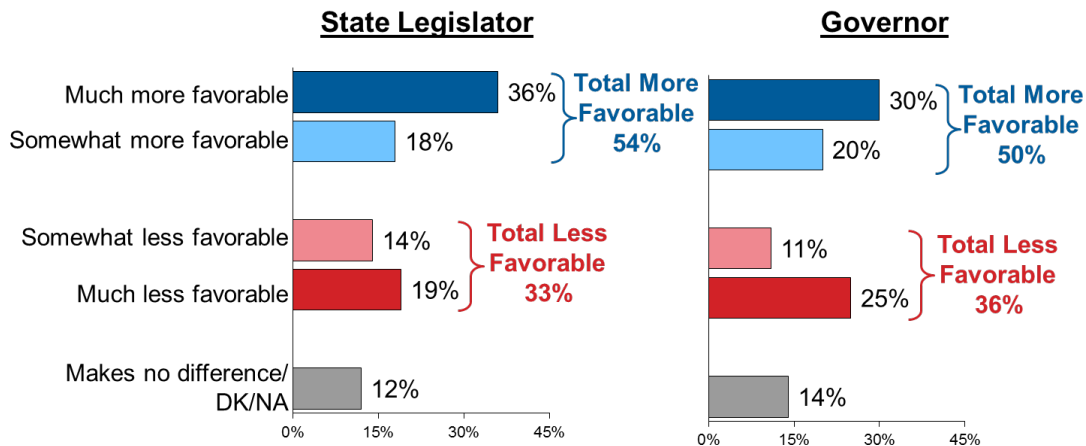
In particular, as **Figure 5** illustrates, expanding access to preventive care stands out as a broadly-appealing priority; solid majorities of voters across the ideological spectrum back the idea, from conservative Republicans to liberal Democrats.

**FIGURE 5:
Bipartisan Consensus on Access to Preventive Care**

Elements	All Voters	Democrats		Republicans	
		Liberal	Moderate/Conservative	Liberal/Moderate	Conservative
Access To Preventive Care	86%	96%	87%	82%	64%
Ability Purchase Insurance	69%	91%	76%	65%	34%
Reduce Cost By Patients	66%	83%	62%	62%	47%
Expand Medi-Cal Program	56%	83%	55%	45%	18%
Eligible For Subsidized	54%	75%	67%	41%	16%

- Support for increasing health access for all yields more positive perceptions of elected officials.** After hearing an explanation of the policy and some statements from supporters, most voters (54%) would have a more favorable opinion of their state legislator for voting to expand Medi-Cal and Covered California to cover all low-income Californians, including those not currently eligible because of their immigration status. Only 33 percent would look less favorably on him/her. The impact on views of the Governor would be very similar, as shown in **Figure 6**.

**FIGURE 6:
Impact of Support for Health Care Expansion on Perception of Elected Officials**



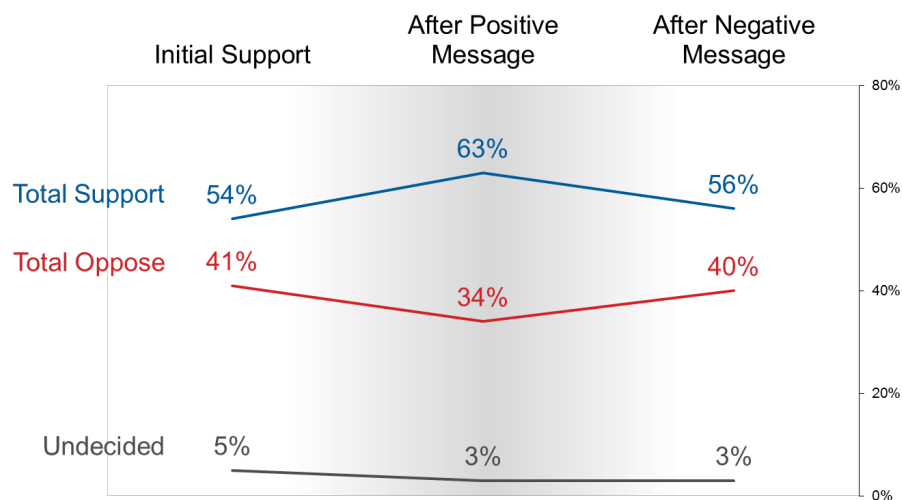
- **Support for expanding access to health coverage remains strong after messaging.** Respondents heard messages in favor of and opposed to the policy proposal, as shown below:

***Supporters** say access to health care is a basic human right, and our economy and communities are stronger when everyone has health coverage. When people lack health coverage, they wait to get treated until their condition worsens and requires expensive emergency care. That’s passed on to the rest of us in a “hidden tax” of lowered productivity and higher medical expenses. In contrast, when people have access to preventive care like vaccines and annual checkups, they avoid expensive illness later on and are more productive on the job. It’s more cost-effective to make sure that ALL Californians have basic access to doctors, hospitals and health clinics, than to wait to treat them after they become sick.*

***Opponents** say that extending health coverage to those here illegally will force California to raise taxes, meaning more jobs leaving the state and more costs for all of us. Undocumented immigrants are breaking the law and should not be rewarded. Besides, the existing health care system is broken—there is a doctor shortage, emergency rooms are crowded, and health care costs continue to rise. The system should work first for those who have legal status before expanding it to others.*

Respondents were asked after hearing each statement whether they supported or opposed expanding health coverage to those not currently eligible because of immigration status. As shown in **Figure 7**, majority support for the concept remained strong after voters heard both pro and con information.

FIGURE 7:
Impact of Messaging on Support for Expanding Access to Health Care



Taken together, the survey results show clear majority support for expanding access to health coverage in California to include those not currently eligible because of immigration status. That support comes from a diverse array of demographic groups and remains strong after pro and con messaging.