



What Kentuckians Think about *Ways to Increase the Number of Insured Americans*

November 2009



Results From the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky
and The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati



Healthcare reform is in the national news. However, the range of public opinion is not always being heard. To find out what Kentuckians think, the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky and The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati included specific questions about healthcare reform on the 2009 *Kentucky Health Issues Poll*.

One stated goal of healthcare reform is to increase the number of Americans covered by health insurance. There are many ways to do that. The 2009 *Poll* asked Kentucky adults whether they favored or opposed specific strategies to increase the number of insured Americans.

Kentuckians Favor an Individual Mandate

All healthcare reform proposals currently being reviewed in Congress include an individual mandate. This would require that every American have some form of health insurance, either from an employer, from a public program like Medicare or Medicaid, or from another source. All proposals also provide financial assistance or exemptions for individuals and families with lower incomes.

A solid majority of Kentuckians (70%) favored requiring that all Americans have health insurance. This was slightly higher than the percentage of respondents

Do you favor or oppose the following strategies to help increase the number of Americans with health insurance? (Graph presents only those who said they strongly or somewhat favor each strategy.)

Requiring all Americans to have health insurance, either from their employer or from another source, with financial help for those who can't afford it

43% 27% **70%**

Requiring employers to offer health insurance to their workers or pay money into a government fund that will pay to cover those without insurance

45% 25% **70%**

Creating a government-administered public health insurance option similar to Medicare to compete with private health insurance plans

30% 29% **59%**

Offering tax credits to help people buy private insurance

36% 36% **72%**

Strongly favor

Somewhat favor

nationally (66%) who favored the individual mandate.¹

Kentuckians Favor an Employer Mandate

Many healthcare reform proposals currently being reviewed in Congress include an employer mandate. This would require that every employer, with some subsidies and exceptions for small businesses, offer health insurance or pay a fine. The money would help provide low-income people

with financial assistance to pay their health insurance premiums.

A solid majority of Kentuckians (70%) favored requiring all employers to offer health insurance to their workers or pay a fine.

Kentuckians Favor a Public Option

Some healthcare reform proposals currently being reviewed in Congress include a public health insurance option, or an insurance plan offered by the federal government rather than a private insurance company.

¹ National data are from the October 2009 Kaiser Health Tracking Poll, available at: <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/upload/7998.pdf>

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Nearly 6 in 10 Kentuckians (59%) favored creating a government-administered public health option similar to Medicare to compete with private health insurance plans. This was similar to the percentage of respondents nationally (57%) who favored a public option.

Kentuckians Favor Offering Tax Credits to Buy Private Health Insurance

Although some have proposed tax credits for buying health insurance as one way to increase the number of

people with insurance, none of the healthcare reform proposals currently being reviewed in Congress include these tax credits (*as of November 19, 2009*). The tax credits would offset the higher rates people who buy insurance on their own pay compared to those who get their health insurance through an employer. Over 7 in 10 Kentuckians (72%) favored offering tax credits for purchasing private health insurance.