## The Pulse of the Public on Health in the Election and Health Policy

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## KFF At A Glance

- The new KFF, established in 1991
- Our Mission: "Filling the need for trusted information on national health issues"
...subtext: a counterweight to the money and politics in health and a voice for people
- We do this in three main ways: policy analysis; polling/survey research; journalism (KHN)
- California based, with a substantial DC presence
- We are an endowed non-profit operating organization (a "public charity"), not a foundation, supported $70 \%$ by our endowment, $30 \%$ by external funds
- No connection to Kaiser Permanente, the big HMO (we call ourselves "KFF" to avoid confusion)
- Good brand, bad name


## Why We Poll

1. Filling a need for independent, unbiased polling data in health that's in the public domain and in the public record
2. Give the public a voice in the system, especially groups who don't often have one
3. Show where leadership is necessary and where public information is low and education challenges exist
4. Go beyond opinion, and document the public's experiences and problems
5. We poll ourselves and with news organizations

KFF is "the gold standard of health care polling" (Washington Post)

## Health As An Election Issue

## Health Care Is a Top Issue for Voters

Most important issue facing the country among 2018 voters


## Top Issue Does Not Generally Mean Top Factor To The Vote

| Major Factors in 2018 Vote |  |
| :---: | :---: |
| Percent who say each of the following is a major factor in their decision about who <br> to vote for Congress: |  |
| The candidates' character and experience | $73 \%$ |
| The candidates' support for or opposition to President <br> Trump | $66 \%$ |
| Which party controls Congress, the Republicans or <br> the Democrats | $66 \%$ |
| The candidates' political party | $51 \%$ |
| The candidates' gender | $6 \%$ |

Figure 7

## Democrats And Independents In "Blue Wall" States Say Defeating President Trump Is Their Top Motivation To Vote In 2020 Election

Percent who say each of the following will be the one thing that will motivate them to vote in the 2020 presidential election:

| RANK | TOTAL | DEMOCRATS | INDEPENDENTS | REPUBLICANS |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 1 | To defeat Trump (21\%) | To defeat Trump (39\%) | To defeat Trump (20\%) | To re-elect Trump/Don't want to see a Democrat elected (21\%) |
| 2 | It is my civic duty (9\%) | Health care (9\%) | It is my civic duty (8\%) | It is my civic duty (12\%) |
| 3 | Health care (8\%) | It is my civic duty (7\%) | Health care (7\%) | The economy (7\%) |

## Health Care And The Economy Are Top Issues For Blue Wall Voters; Other Priorities Differ By Partisans

Percent who say each of the following issues will be the most important in deciding their vote for president


| Democrats | Independents | Republicans |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 27\% | 23\% | 11\% |
| 13\% | 21\% | 30\% |
| 25\% | 16\% | 3\% |
| 14\% | 11\% | 15\% |
| 7\% | 9\% | 13\% |
| 4\% | 8\% | 15\% |
| 4\% | 7\% | 7\% |
| 1\% | 1\% | $\square 1 \%$ |

SOURCE: KFF/Cook Political Report Blue Wall Voices Project (conducted Sept. 23-Oct.15, 2019). See topline for full question wording and response options.

## Majority Of Likely Democratic 2020 Voters View All Progressive Platforms As Good Ideas

Do you think each of the following is a good idea or a bad idea?

■ Good idea


NOTE: Among likely 2020 Democratic voters.
SOURCE: KFF/Cook Political Report Blue Wall Voices Project (conducted Sept. 23-Oct.15, 2019). See topline for full question wording and response options.

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## Swing Voters Split As To Whether Progressive Policies Are Good Or Bad Ideas

AMONG SWING VOTERS: Do you think each of the following is a good idea or a bad idea?

■ Good idea

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## Majorities Across Partisans Name Costs And Maintaining PreExisting Protections As Top Health Priorities For Congress

Percent who say each of the following should be a top priority for Congress:

|  | DEMOCRATS |
| :---: | :---: |
| $\Rightarrow$ Lowering prescription drug costs | 81\% |
| Maintaining ACA's pre-existing condition protections | 87\% |
| $\square$ Lowering what people pay for health care | 72\% |
| Protecting people from surprise high out-ofnetwork medical bills | 68\% |
| Expanding government financial help for those buying coverage on the ACA marketplace | 49\% |
| Implementing a national Medicare-for-all plan | 44\% |
| Repealing and replacing the ACA | \% |

INDEPENDENTS



28\%

REPUBLICANS
62\%
51\%
51\%

42\%
15\%
$13 \%$
46\%

## Democrats: More Want Their Leaders To Focus On Improving And Protecting The ACA Than Passing Medicare-for-all Plan

Do you think Democrats in Congress should focus their efforts on improving and protecting the 2010 Affordable Care Act or should they focus their efforts on passing a national Medicare-for-all plan?


What Is The Health Issue, And Do Democrats Emphasize The Wrong Message?
"We say to the private health insurance companies: whether you like it or not, the United States will join every other major country on earth and guarantee healthcare to all people as a right." - Bernie Sanders, 2019

## The vast majority of Americans are insured, and many uninsured people are eligible for ACA coverage




SOURCE: Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of 2017 American Community Survey (ACS), 1-Year Estimates.

## Health Costs for Families with Employer Coverage Now Exceed the Cost of a VW Beetle



Note: Health spending includes employee and employer premium contributions for family coverage as well as family out-of-pocket spending. Large employers are those with one thousand or more employees. Auto prices are the MSRP for the lowest cost model/trim that year. Source: KFF analysis of IBM MarketScan Commercial Claims; Encounters Database and KFF Employer Health Benefits Survey; and newcartestdrive.com and motortrend.com.

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Cumulative Increases in Family Coverage Premiums, General
Annual Deductibles, Inflation, and Workers' Earnings, 2009-2019


Figure 17

## Half Say They Would Have Trouble Paying Unexpected \$500 Medical Bill

Suppose you had an unexpected medical bill, and the amount came to $\$ 500$. Based on your current financial situation, how would you pay the bill?


NET Would not be able to pay without borrowing/going into debt: 51\%

## Increasing Share Of Insured Americans Report Difficulty Affording Health Care

AMONG THE INSURED: Percent who say it is difficult to afford to pay...


## The Consequences Of Medical Bills

AMONG THOSE WHO HAD PROBLEMS PAYING MEDICAL BILLS: Percent who say they or someone else in their household did each of the following in the past 12 months in order to pay medical bills:


## 4 In 10 Adults Ages 18-64 Living In A Household With A Serious Medical Condition Have Had Problems Paying Medical Bills

Percent who say they or a household member had problems paying medical bills in the past 12 months:


Serious medical condition in household, such as cancer, stroke, heart disease, diabetes, or serious mental health illness


No serious medical condition in household


Figure 21
Share Of Income Spent On Premium Contributions And Out-Of-Pocket Costs By Families Making 199\% FPL Or Less, 2017


Figure 22

The silent affordability crisis facing sick people

Percent who say they or a family member have done the following in the past year

|  | NO CHRONIC CONDITION in FAMILY $\downarrow$ | WITH CHRONIC CONDITION |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  | All | Highest deductible |
| Postponed or put off care | 23\% | 42\% | 60\% |
| Treated at home instead of seeing doctor | 28 | 41 | 58 |
| Avoided doctor-recommended test or treatment | 15 | 31 | 44 |
| Not filled a prescription or skipped doses | 12 | 23 | 35 |
| Yes to any | 40 | 60 | 75 |

[^0]People with major medical illnesses are having serious problems paying for the health care they need - a crisis th is flying under the radar while attention is focused on hot policy issues like the Affordable Care Act and "Medicar All."

1 Drew Altman, Kaiser Family Foundation Sep 26,2019
Employer-based coverage is unaffordable for lowwage workers



Bill Of The Month: Insurance Paid Little Of \$56,000 Air Ambulance Trip
After an accident in an all-terrain venicle crushed a doctor's left arm, he was whisked by helicopter to the closest trouma center for specialized care. soon he was fighting overt the bill.


For toenail fungus, a $\mathbf{\$ 1 , 5 0 0}$ prescription and a cleaned-out health account


## Prescription Drugs

## Majorities Favor Policy Proposals to Keep Rx Drug Costs Down

Percent who favor each of the following actions to keep prescription drug costs down:


## Support For Government Negotiations With Drug Companies Can Shift With Arguments

Would you favor or oppose allowing the federal government to negotiate with drug companies for lower prices if you heard...?

|  | Favor | $\square$ Oppose |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| People could save money on prescription drugs | 89\% | 9\% |
| ederal government could pay less for prescription drugs for people on Medicare | 79\% | 17\% |

It could lead to less R\&D of new drugs

It could limit access to newer prescription drugs
$33 \% \quad 62 \%$

```
29% 65%
```

Medicare-for-all

Figure 28


## Decline In Support For Medicare-for-all Since Peak In March 2018

Percent who favor or oppose a national health plan in which all Americans would get their insurance from a single government plan:


## Large Partisan Divide On National Health Plan

Do you favor or oppose having a national health plan, or Medicare-for-all, in which all Americans would get their insurance from a single government plan?


Democrats

Independents


Republicans


Figure 31

## The < The Change, The > The Support?

Percent who favor or oppose:


■ Favor

■ Oppose


\section*{Public's Views Of Medicare-for-all Can Shift Significantly After Hearing Arguments <br> Do you favor or oppose having a national health plan, sometimes called Medicare-for-all? <br> | $56 \%$ | $42 \%$ |
| :---: | :---: |}

Would you favor or oppose a national Medicare-for-all plan if you heard that it would do the following?
Guarantee health insurance as a right for all Americans

Eliminate all health insurance premiums and reduce out-of-pocket health care costs for most Americans

Eliminate private health insurance companies
Require most Americans to pay more in taxes

Threaten the current Medicare program
Lead to delays in people getting some medical tests and treatments

| 71\% | 27\% | +45 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 67\% | 30\% | +37 |
| 37\% | 58\% | -21 |
| 37\% | 60\% | -23 |
| 32\% | 60\% | -28 |
| 26\% | 70\% | -44 |

## Majorities Think Many Aspects Of Health Care System Would Be Unchanged Under Medicare-for-all

Do you think each of the following would happen under a national health plan, sometimes called Medicare-for-all?


## Most Medicare-for-all Supporters Think They Would Be Able To Keep Their Health Insurance

- Yes, think they and their family would be able to keep their current health insurance
$\square$ No, think they and their family would not be able to keep their current health insurance


Among those who favor having a national health insurance plan or Medicare-for-all


Among those who oppose having a national health insurance plan or Medicare-for-all


## Insights From Nine Years Of Polling <br> On The ACA

## Favorability On ACA Ticked Up Since Repeal, But Remains Divided

Given what you know about the health reform law, do you have a generally favorable or generally unfavorable opinion of it?


## Deep And Persistent Partisan Divide

Percent who say they have a favorable opinion of the health reform law:


## Figure 38

## Partisan Perceptions Of Law's Personal Impact Among The General Public

So far, would you say the health care law has directly helped you and your family, directly hurt you and your family, or has it not had a direct impact?
$\square$ Helped $\quad$ Hurt $\square$ No direct impact
Total

| $18 \%$ | $29 \%$ |
| :--- | :--- |

By Political Party ID


## Sadly, Even Primary Care Physicians' Views Of ACA Divide Sharply On Party Lines

Overall, what is your opinion of the health care law that was passed in 2010, also known as the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or Obamacare?

■ Favorable
■ Unfavorable
Among physicians who are:


## Most ACA Provisions Are Popular Across Parties

|  | Total | Democrats | Independents | Republicans |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| \% with a FAVORABLE opinion of each: | $82 \%$ | $90 \%$ | $82 \%$ | $66 \%$ |
| Extension of dependent coverage to age 26 | 82 | 91 | 78 | 71 |
| Insurance exchanges | 81 | 92 | 82 | 63 |
| Subsidies for purchasing individual coverage | 81 | 85 | 82 | 80 |
| Close Medicare Rx drug "doughnut hole" | 79 | 88 | 78 | 68 |
| No-cost preventive services | 77 | 91 | 77 | 55 |
| Medicaid expansion option for states | 69 | 88 | 61 | 56 |
| Employer mandate | 65 | 70 | 66 | 58 |
| No denials for pre-existing conditions | 65 | 77 | 69 | 42 |
| Increase Medicare payroll tax |  |  |  |  |

Figure 41

## Most Unpopular ACA Provision: Individual Mandate

Percent with an unfavorable opinion of the ACA requiring nearly all Americans to have health insurance or else pay a fine:


## Health Care Is Complicated, Public Knowledge About What The ACA Actually Does Is Spotty

Since the 2010 health care law was passed, has the share of people who are uninsured...


## Death Panel Myth Persists

To the best of your knowledge, would you say the health reform law does or does not...establish a government panel to make decisions about end-of-life care for people on Medicare?


## Medicaid: Who Loves Ya?

## Medicaid: More Popular Than Some People Think, Even In Non-Expansion States

Percent who say...


## Majority Of Residents In Non-Expansion States Want Their State To Expand Their Medicaid Programs

■ States without Medicaid Expansion (14 States)
$\square$ States that have Medicaid Expansion


AMONG THOSE LIVING IN NON-EXPANSION STATES: Do you think your state should keep Medicaid as it is today or expand Medicaid to cover more low-income uninsured people?


## Future Of Medicaid?

Which of these two descriptions comes closer to your view of what Medicaid should look like in the future?

## Block Grant

- Medicaid should be changed so that instead of matching state Medicaid spending, the federal government limits how much it gives states to help pay for Medicaid coverage on a per person basis but lets states decide which groups of people and what health services they want to cover


## Keep Medicaid as-is

Medicaid should largely continue as it is today, with the federal government guaranteeing coverage for low-income people, setting standards for who states cover and what benefits people get, and matching states' Medicaid spending as the number of people on the program goes up or down
Total
$\square$

Democrats

Independents


Republicans

$$
57 \%
$$

$$
40 \%
$$

## Most See Medicaid As Government Health Insurance, Half Of Republicans View It As Welfare

Which comes closer to your view? Medicaid is primarily a...
$\square$...welfare program
■ ...government health insurance program that helps people pay for health care Total


Democrats



Republicans


## The Disconnect?

## A Venn Diagram Of Health Policy Priorities?



## The Many Health Cost Problems



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## My Big Takeaways

1. Public is divided sharply on partisan lines, with health care as a symbol/proxy for larger partisan divisions in the country. Partisanship, even more than interest groups, is the driving force in health policy today.
2. The health care problem we don't talk about enough: problems paying health care bills for people who are sick, and lower wage. That's the heart of our health crisis.
3. The Democratic message could be more focused on costs, especially for the general election. (Is Elizabeth Warren re-focusing the message?)
4. All policies have tradeoffs, and it is a safe bet that future legislation will be much more modest than the ideas being debated today
5. What we are debating today might not be what we're debating tomorrow. The Texas ACA case, or a Trump win in 2020, could completely change the agenda.
6. Good luck to us all.

Thank you.


[^0]:    Data: Kaiser Family Foundation; Chart: Axios Visuals

