Medicare

Medicare Reform

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Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, Inc.

Means Testing

Currently seniors of all income levels pay the same premium for Medicare. Would you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose means testing Medicare which would raise the premiums for Medicare for seniors with over $75,000 in income?

✓ **61%** support (45% strongly +16% somewhat)
35% oppose (26% strongly +9% somewhat)

One proposal would have all seniors with incomes over $50,000 pay a higher premium. Currently all beneficiaries pay $43.80 per month. This proposal would have those with annual incomes of greater that $75,000 pay $110 per month and those with incomes over $100,00 would pay $175 per month. The additional revenue would be used to strengthen the Medicare trust fund.

✓ **74%** support (53% strongly +21% somewhat)
22% oppose (12% strongly +10% somewhat)

Some people say this will turn Medicare into a second class health care system. They argue that it will encourage some seniors to leave the program, which will decrease funds in the Medicare system overall. Given this do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose means testing for Medicare?

✓ **64%** support (33% strongly +31% somewhat)
33% oppose (18% strongly +15% somewhat)

43% say that this is something simple, and legislation should be passed now to implement means testing to help keep the Medicare system financially stable. **48%** say that means testing should be addressed by the Medicare Commission and that no proposal should be discussed until the commission releases its findings in 1999.

Buying into Medicare at 60

Americans ages 60 to 65 are one of the hardest to insure populations. They often lose their health care coverage to layoffs from downsizing, health-related issues or by choice and often do not have sufficient health care. One proposal would allow 60-65 year olds to buy into the Medicare program, helping provide much needed coverage for this group. Do you do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose allowing uninsured 60-65 year olds to buy into Medicare?

✓ **85%** support (57% strongly +28% somewhat)
10% oppose (5% strongly +5% somewhat)

23% say that this will attract the sickest most costly individuals from this age group, raising the costs of Medicare at a time when we are trying to devise ways to reduce the costs of this program. **75%** say that although these people are the most needy, allowing them to buy into Medicare is better than letting them to go without health care or forcing them into the Medicaid system.

Long Term Care/Chronic Prescription Coverage

Currently Medicare does not cover long term care for chronically ill seniors. Would you do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly requiring Medicare managed care plans to cover **long term care/ chronic prescription drugs?**

Long Term Care
✓ **84%** support (53% strongly +31% somewhat)
13% oppose (8% strongly +5% somewhat)
Chronic Prescription Drugs
✓ **82%** support (52% strongly +30% somewhat)
11% oppose (7% strongly +4% somewhat)

64% say that coverage of long term care and prescription drugs for chronically ill seniors are necessary because of the skyrocketing costs of medicine and care. They argue that these benefits would only be required for the more expensive Medicare managed care plans and not the fee-for-service plans.
26% say that this will be an unfair burden on managed care plans and that it will attract the sicker beneficiaries to enter managed care.

Argument against Endorsing Proposals

Some people say that this it is just another attempt of the government to take over the health care system. There should be no federal regulations, there should be voluntary compliance among the health plans to make these rights real.

Even after this argument over two-thirds support (**71/26%** support/oppose) the President endorsing some or all of these proposals.

✓ **71%** support (39% strongly +32% somewhat);
26% oppose (14% strongly +12% somewhat).