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ABORTION PLAYS SMALL ROLE IN HEALTH REFORM OPPOSITION

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Though Most Oppose Public Funding

ABORTION PLAYS SMALL ROLE IN HEALTH REFORM OPPOSITION

While most Americans oppose government funding of abortion, a new Pew Research Center survey finds that concern about abortion funding plays only a small role in driving opposition to the health care reform legislation under consideration by Congress.

When health care opponents are asked in an open-ended question to describe their main reason for opposing the congressional proposals, just 3% raise the issue of abortion funding.

Even when they are asked to choose among a list of reasons, fewer than one-in-ten (8%) opponents of health care legislation say the most important reason for their opposition is the possibility that government money might pay for abortions. Although a majority of health reform opponents (56%) cite the abortion issue as one of the major factors for them, far greater percentages cite concerns about big government, costs and the impact of reform on people's own coverage.

The new survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life finds the public now divided over the health care proposals in Congress, with 42% in favor and 39% opposed. Earlier this month, before the House voted on its bill, 38% supported the reform proposals and 47% were opposed. The current poll was conducted Nov. 12-15 among 1,003 adults on landlines and cell phones.

Main Reasons For Opposition to Health Proposals Before Congress	
Open ended responses*	%
Too expensive/increase deficit and taxes	27
Don't want gov't involvement in health care	27
Hasn't been explained/Too complex	8
Won't work/Current system works	8
Like what I have/Won't help me	6
Won't be fair/Will worsen care for some	5
Distrust Congress/Obama/politics	3
Will reduce quality/Take away choice	3
Cuts in Medicare	3
Abortion	3
Benefits illegal immigrants	3
Oppose public option	3
Chosen from list of reasons**	%
Too much gov't. involvement in health care	38
Too expensive for country	27
Own health care will suffer	14
Government money might pay for abortions	8
Might cover illegal immigrants	7
Other/none/don't know (Vol.)	7
	100
Percentages based on those who oppose the health proposals. (N=440).	
*Q3 Multiple responses were allowed.	
**Q5 Choice among five offered reasons for opposition. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.	

A 55% majority of Americans say that abortion should not be included as a guaranteed medical benefit if the government health care reform plan passes. Only about half as many (28%) say it should be included. The public was more evenly divided in a comparable Gallup survey conducted during the health care debate in 1994. At that time 42% said abortion should be covered by government benefits while 49% said it should not be. More than seven-in-ten (72%) of those who oppose the legislation say coverage of abortion should not be included in government benefits. Even among Americans who favor health care reform, a 46% plurality says abortion should not be included in government benefits, while 35% say it should be.

Most Say Abortion Should Not be a Benefit in Health Reform		
	Aug	Nov
<i>Abortion included in government benefits...</i>	<u>1994</u>	<u>2009</u>
	%	%
Should be	42	28
Should not be	49	55
Depends/Don't know	<u>9</u>	<u>17</u>
	100	100

Q6. Based on total public. 1994 from Gallup. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

But when respondents in the survey were asked to explain, in their own words, the main reasons for supporting or opposing the reform proposals, few brought up abortion funding. Supporters of reform cite the expansion of coverage to the uninsured (32%), the need for change (17%) and the need to control costs (14%) as most important to them. Opponents of reform mainly cite either the cost (27%) or the increased role that government would play (27%). Other reasons for opposition include the complexity of the legislation (8%) or skepticism that reforms won't work (8%). Few opponents of reform – just 3% – volunteer abortion as a principal reason for their opposition.

Even when respondents were specifically asked about government funding for abortion in the context of health care reform, the issue ranks at the bottom of a list of possible reasons for opposing the legislation. While 56% of opponents say the issue of government funds possibly paying for abortions is a “major reason” they oppose the bill, that ranks far below other arguments against the bill. Fully 85% say that “too much government involvement in health care” is a major reason for their opposition, and nearly as many (78%) say this about the expense of health care reform. Seven-in-ten (70%) say concern that their own health care might suffer is a major reason they oppose the legislation, and nearly as many (67%) say the possibility that reform might cover illegal immigrants is a major reason for opposing it.

Reasons for Opposition to Health Care Reform				
	Major	Minor	Not a	DK
	<u>reason</u>	<u>reason</u>	<u>reason</u>	<u>DK</u>
	%	%	%	%
Too much gov't involvement	85	7	7	2=100
Health reform is too expensive	78	13	8	1=100
Own health care may suffer	70	16	13	1=100
It might cover illegal immigrants	67	20	14	*=100
It might pay for abortions	56	21	22	1=100

Q.4a-e. Based on those who oppose the bills before Congress (N=440). Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

White evangelical Protestants (74%) and white Catholics (72%) were more likely than white mainline Protestant opponents of reform to say that abortion funding was a major reason for their views. But even within these religious groups, larger shares list the expansion of government as a major factor. Nearly all opponents of the legislation cited multiple concerns as major reasons for their position, and not one cited abortion as the only major reason they opposed the bills before Congress. In other words, every single person who said abortion funding was a major reason that they opposed the bill also cited one or more other major reasons.

When asked to choose the single most important issue from a list of possible reasons, 8% of opponents selected abortion funding. This translates into just 3% of all Americans who both oppose the legislation and say abortion funding is the main reason for their position. Among opponents, concern about too much government involvement topped the list, with 38% saying it was the most important reason, followed by 27% who cited the expense of reform. Fewer cited the risk to their own health care (14%) or the possibility that illegal immigrants might be covered (7%).

Abortion funding is rarely cited as the key factor behind opposition to the health care bills even among white Catholics and evangelical Protestants. While 84% of white evangelical Protestants say they oppose allowing abortions to be included in government medical benefits, just 10% of those who oppose the bill say this is the most important reason of the five factors asked about. Similarly, 63% of white Catholics oppose the idea of government funding going toward abortions, but just 11% of white Catholics who oppose health legislation say this is the biggest factor in their position. And just 4% of the white evangelicals and 3% of the white

	Total	Religious Affiliation			Church Attendance	
		White Evang Prot	White Mainline Prot	White Cath	Weekly	Less- often
<i>Which is most important reason you oppose?</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Too much gov't involvement	38	43	32	31	36	39
Health reform is too expensive	27	20	36	30	23	29
Own health care may suffer	14	19	13	16	15	13
It might pay for abortions	8	10	3	11	13	4
It might cover illegal immigrants	7	2	6	9	4	9
Other reason (Vol.)	1	2	2	*	2	*
None of these (Vol.)	2	0	5	1	1	3
Don't know	4	4	2	1	6	3
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Percent mentioning abortion in open-ended question	3	4	*	3	5	1
N	440	120	110	94	210	226

Q5 & Q3. Based on those who oppose the bills before Congress (N=440). Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Catholics who oppose the health legislation before Congress volunteer abortion as their main concern in an open-ended question.

The debate over abortion funding and health care flared up just prior to the reform bill’s passage by the House on November 7. Yet, if anything, opposition to health reform has declined somewhat since earlier this month, before the House passed its version. Currently, 39% oppose the health care bills being debated in Congress, down 8 points, while 42% favor them. But a significant number of Americans remain uncertain about the proposals – nearly one-in-five (19%) say they don’t know how they feel about the legislation at this point.

	<u>July</u> %	<u>Aug</u> %	<u>Sept</u> %	<u>Oct</u> %	Early <u>Nov</u> %	Mid <u>Nov</u> %
Favor	38	39	42	34	38	42
Oppose	44	46	44	47	47	39
Don't know	<u>18</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>19</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q. 2. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Results for this report are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a national sample of 1,003 adults living in the continental United States, 18 years of age or older, from November 12-15 (700 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 303 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 92 who had no landline telephone. Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2008 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample is also weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2008 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting.

The error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for the total sample is plus or minus 4 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

ABOUT THE PROJECTS

This survey is a joint effort of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. Both organizations are sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trusts and are projects of the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan “fact tank” that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of the Center's current survey results are made available free of charge.

The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life seeks to promote a deeper understanding of issues at the intersection of religion and public affairs. It studies public opinion, demographics and other important aspects of religion and public life in the U.S. and around the world. It also provides a neutral venue for discussions of timely issues through roundtables and briefings.

This report is a collaborative product based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

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NOVEMBER PSRAI OMNIBUS
FINAL TOPLINE
November 12-15, 2009
N=1003

ASK ALL:

Now thinking about health care...

ASK ALL:

Q.1 How much thought have you given to the debate in Washington over health care reform? **[READ]**

Nov 12-15

2009

55	A lot
32	A little
12	None at all
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

Q.2 As of right now, do you generally favor or generally oppose the health care proposals being discussed in Congress?

Nov 12-15 <u>2009</u>		Oct 28- Nov 8 <u>2009</u>	Sep 30- Oct 4 <u>2009</u>	Sep 10-15 <u>2009</u>	Aug 20-27 <u>2009</u>	July 22-26 <u>2009</u>
42	Generally favor	38	34	42	39	38
39	Generally oppose	47	47	44	46	44
19	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	15	19	14	15	18

ASK IF Q.2=1,2 [N=830]:

Q.3 What would you say is the main reason you (favor/oppose) the health care proposals being discussed in Congress? **[OPEN END; RECORD VERBATIM RESPONSE. PROBE FOR CLARITY—DO NOT PROBE FOR ADDITIONAL MENTIONS. IF MORE THAN ONE MENTION, RECORD IN ORDER OF MENTION; UP TO THREE MENTIONS]**

BASED ON THOSE WHO FAVOR [N=390]

Nov 12-15 <u>2009</u>		July 22-26 <u>2009</u>
32	Support greater/universal coverage	42
17	Need to do something/change/country needs it	13
14	Control costs/Increase affordability/Boost economy	14
9	Personal experiences/reasons	9
6	Help poor/unemployed with health care	7
4	Trust/support Obama/Democrats	1
3	Help elderly with health care	1
2	Insurance companies do a bad job/Reduce insurance companies' influence	1
2	Support public option	--
1	Help children with health care	2
1	Prevents denial for pre-existing conditions	--
1	Abortion	--
6	Other	11
21	Don't know/Refused	11

Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple responses.

July N=558

Q.3 CONTINUED...

BASED ON THOSE WHO OPPOSE [N=440]

Nov 12-15 <u>2009</u>	July 22-26 <u>2009</u>
27 Too expensive/Can't afford it/Will increase deficit and taxes	26
27 Do not want Gov't in health care/Socialism/Bureaucracy	18
8 Hasn't been explained/Too complex/Not well thought out	8
8 Won't work/Current system works	6
6 Will hurt/won't help me/ Like what I have	2
5 Will worsen care for some/Not be fair	3
3 Distrust Congress/Obama/ political process	4
3 Will reduce quality & access/Take away choice	9
3 Cuts in Medicare	1
3 Abortion	*
3 Benefits illegal immigrants ¹	1
3 Oppose public option	*
2 Redistributive/Free-ride/People should earn own health care	6
2 Hurts business/economy/Costs jobs	3
2 Moving too fast	2
-- Does not work in other countries	3
8 Other	16
12 Don't know/Refused	11

July N=688

Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple responses.

ASK THOSE WHO OPPOSE HEALTH CARE REFORM (Q.2=2) [N=440]

Q.4 As I read some reasons people have given for opposing health care reform, please tell me if each one is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason why you oppose the health care reform proposals being discussed in Congress. First **[INSERT AND RANDOMIZE]**. Is this a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason (why you oppose health care reform)?

	<u>Major reason</u>	<u>Minor reason</u>	<u>Not a reason</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
a. Too much government involvement in health care November 12-15, 2009	85	7	7	2
b. Your own health care may suffer November 12-15, 2009	70	16	13	1
c. Health care reform is too expensive for the country November 12-15, 2009	78	13	8	1
d. Government money might pay for abortions November 12-15, 2009	56	21	22	1
e. The plan might cover illegal immigrants November 12-15, 2009	67	20	14	*

¹ In July, category included those saying "Disproportionately benefits immigrants and minorities."

IF MORE THAN ONE ITEM IN Q.4a-e IS GIVEN AS A “MAJOR REASON” ASK:

Q.5 And of the ones you mentioned as major reasons, which is the most important reason why you oppose the health care reform proposals [READ ONLY THE ITEMS MENTIONED AS MAJOR REASON. READ IN SAME ORDER AS IN Q.4]

BASED ON THOSE WHO OPPOSE [N=440]

Nov 12-15	
<u>2009</u>	
38	Too much government involvement in health care
27	Health care reform is too expensive for the country
14	Your own health care may suffer
8	Government money might pay for abortions
7	The plan might cover illegal immigrants
1	Other reason (VOL.)
2	None (VOL.)
4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL:

Q.6 If the government health care reform plan guarantees certain medical benefits for all Americans, do you think that abortion should or should not be included as one of those benefits?

		-----Gallup-----		
Nov 12-15		Aug 8-9 ²	July 15-17	June 25-28
<u>2009</u>		<u>1994</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1994</u>
28	Abortion should be included	42	44	34
55	Abortion should not be included	49	48	59
11	Depends (VOL.)			
6	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	9	8	7

NO QUESTIONS 7-9

QUESTIONS 10-20 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:

Q.30 Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose making it more DIFFICULT for a woman to get an abortion?³

	----FAVOR-----			-----OPPOSE-----			(VOL.)
	Strongly			Strongly			
	Total	Favor	Favor	Total	Oppose	Oppose	DK/Ref
Nov 12-15, 2009	40	21	20	43	19	24	16
August 11-17, 2009 ⁴	41	19	22	50	23	27	9
January, 2007	35	17	18	56	27	29	9
March, 2006	37	15	22	56	24	32	7
December, 2004	36	19	17	55	29	26	9
Early February, 2004	36	17	19	58	30	28	6
November, 2003	35	19	16	57	29	28	8
August, 2003 ⁵	36	17	19	57	30	27	7

² Gallup question wording in 1994 was: “If the federal government guarantees certain medical benefits for all Americans, do you think that abortion should or should not be included as one of those benefits?”

³ Questions 30 and 40 were asked later in the survey.

⁴ In August 11-17, 2009 and earlier, the question was asked as part of a list.

Q.30 CONTINUED...

	-----FAVOR-----			-----OPPOSE-----			(VOL.) DK/Ref
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Favor</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Oppose</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	
May, 1993	32	15	17	60	35	25	8
May, 1992	30	--	--	62	--	--	8
May, 1990	38	21	17	55	29	26	7
May, 1987	41	18	23	51	33	18	8
May, 1985	47	--	--	49	--	--	4

Q.40 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

⁵ In August 2003 and earlier the question was worded: "Changing the laws to make it more difficult for a woman to get an abortion."

ASK ALL:

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent? **IF ANSWERED 3, 4, 5 OR 9 IN PARTY, ASK:**

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean	
	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	No	Other	DK/	<i>Rep</i>	<i>Dem</i>	
				<u>preference</u>	<u>party</u>	<u>Ref</u>			
Nov 12-15, 2009	25	38	30	5	1	1	11	12	
Oct 28-Nov 8, 2009	27	35	32	3	*	2	13	13	
Sep 30-Oct 4, 2009	23	34	37	3	1	3	16	14	
September 10-15, 2009	23	34	34	4	*	5	13	17	
August 20-27, 2009	26	32	36	3	*	3	14	16	
August 11-17, 2009	23	33	38	3	*	3	16	15	
July, 2009	22	34	37	5	*	2	15	14	
June, 2009	25	34	34	3	*	3	11	16	
May, 2009	23	39	29	4	*	4	9	14	
April, 2009	22	33	39	3	*	3	13	18	
March, 2009	24	34	35	5	*	2	12	17	
February, 2009	24	36	34	3	1	2	13	17	
January, 2009	25	37	33	3	*	2	11	16	
December, 2008	26	39	30	2	*	3	8	15	
Yearly Totals									
2008	25.3	35.8	31.7	3.8	.3	3.1	10.5	15.4	
2007	25.4	32.9	33.7	4.6	.4	3.1	10.7	16.7	
2006	27.6	32.8	30.3	5.0	.4	3.9	10.2	14.5	
2005	29.2	32.8	30.3	4.5	.3	2.8	10.2	14.9	
2004	29.7	33.4	29.8	3.9	.4	2.9	11.7	13.4	
2003	29.8	31.4	31.2	4.7	.5	2.5	12.1	13.0	
2002	30.3	31.2	30.1	5.1	.7	2.7	12.6	11.6	
2001	29.2	33.6	28.9	5.1	.5	2.7	11.7	11.4	
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4	
2001 Pre-Sept 11	28.2	34.6	29.5	5.0	.5	2.1	11.7	12.5	
2000	27.5	32.5	29.5	5.9	.5	4.0	11.6	11.6	
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5	
1998	27.5	33.2	31.9	4.6	.4	2.4	11.8	13.5	
1997	28.2	33.3	31.9	4.0	.4	2.3	12.3	13.8	
1996	29.2	32.7	33.0	5.2	--	--	12.7	15.6	
1995	31.4	29.7	33.4	5.4	--	--	14.4	12.9	
1994	29.8	31.8	33.8	4.6	--	--	14.3	12.6	
1993	27.4	33.8	34.0	4.8	--	--	11.8	14.7	
1992	27.7	32.7	35.7	3.9	--	--	13.8	15.8	
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	4.5	--	--	14.6	10.8	
1990	31.0	33.1	29.1	6.8	--	--	12.4	11.3	
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--	
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--	