

## High Public Support for Major Overhaul of Health Care

### Partisan Divide over Scope of Health Care Legislation

#### Taxing Health Benefits Strongly Opposed

New York, June 10, 2009 – With President Obama’s push for health care reform stirring debate about the costs of a plan, the Diageo/*Hotline* Poll of 800 registered voters conducted by FD from June 4 – 7, 2009, finds that the majority of voters support a major overhaul of health care.

#### High Public Support & A Sense of Urgency for Health Care Reform

The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll finds that 62% of voters support “the President enacting a major overhaul of the U.S. health care system,” with 38% of voters strongly supporting a major overhaul.

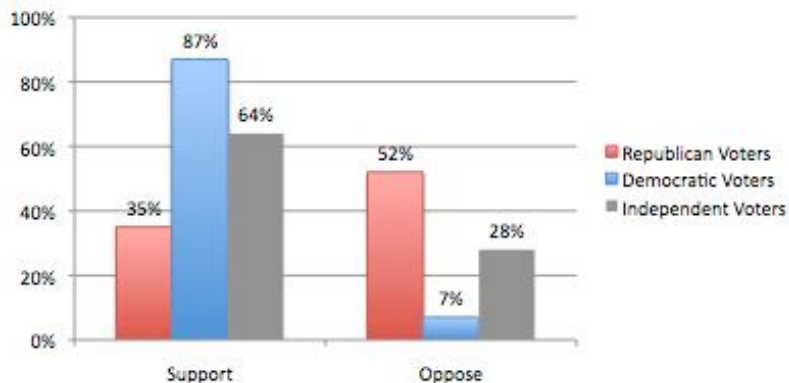
For the most part, support for major reform is strong across the board, though there are differences in support based on partisan affiliation, age, and income levels.

Specifically, one-third (35%) of Republican voters, 64% of Independent voters, and 87% of Democratic voters support a major overhaul of health care.

Among age groups, while a majority all age groups support reforming health care, senior citizens age 65+ are the least supportive, with 56% of them supporting reform.

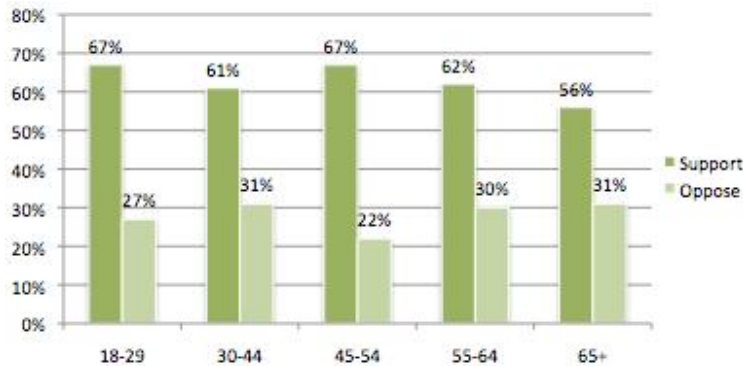
Likewise, a majority of income categories support reform, but those earning \$100K+ in annual income are the least supportive, with 58% supporting reform.

#### Support/Oppose Overhaul of Health Care System Among Partisans

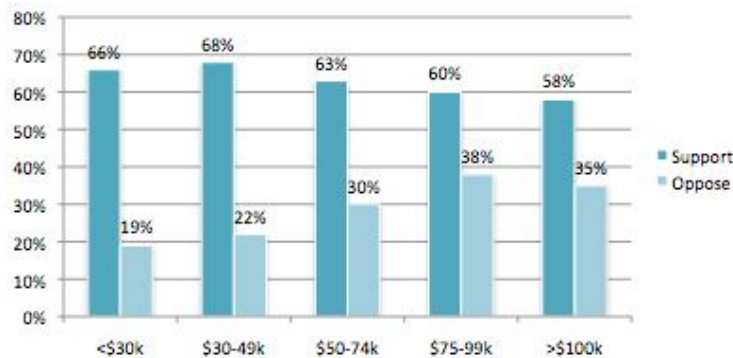


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## Support/Oppose Overhaul of Health Care System by Age Group



## Support/Oppose Overhaul of Health Care System by Income



“President Obama and the Democrats start with strong public support for their desire to make major changes to health care in this country,” commented Amy Walter, Editor-in-Chief of *The Hotline*. “Even so, those who are likely to be the happiest with the status quo – or at least most worried about change (those over 65 and those in the upper income bracket) – are probably the first to abandon reform once the details are revealed.”

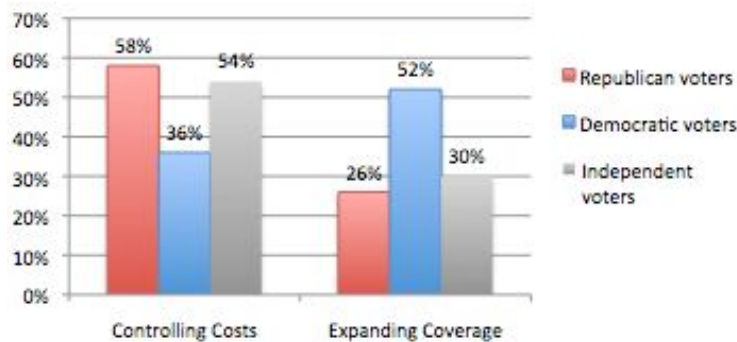
The Poll also finds supporters of health care reform bring a sense of urgency to the issue: among those who *do* support a major overhaul, the vast majority (94%) says that it is “important” for “Congress and the President to pass health care legislation this year.”

## Controlling Costs vs. Expanding Coverage

The Poll finds that, despite broad agreement on the need for health care legislation, there is some division over which aspect of reform should be more of a priority. In other words, voters (49%) say that “controlling the cost of health care” should be a bigger focus than “expanding coverage for Americans without health insurance” (35%).

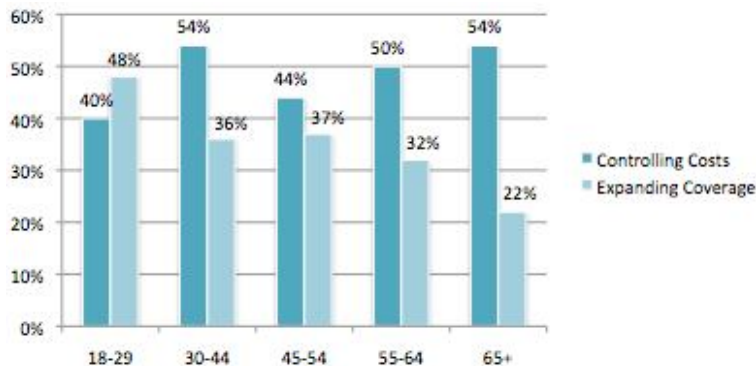
Furthermore, there is some divide on the specifics, based on partisan affiliation. Specifically, 58% of Republican voters say that “controlling the cost of health care” should be a bigger focus than “expanding coverage,” compared with 49% of overall voters, 54% of Independents, and only 36% of Democrat voters. Conversely, 52% of Democrats say that “expanding coverage” should be the larger focus, compared with 35% of overall voters, 26% of Republican voters, and 30% of Independent voters.

## Controlling Costs of Health Care vs. Expanding Coverage among Partisans



The Poll also finds an age dynamic to priorities of reform. Specifically, the older the voter, the less likely they are to put priority on expanding coverage.

## Controlling Costs of Health Care vs. Expanding Coverage by Age Group



## **Taxing Benefits to Pay for Health Care Reform Is a “Non-Starter”**

While public support for health care reform is strong, when it comes to paying for health care reform, voters are decidedly against the idea of taxing health benefits. Specifically, only 26% support taxing health benefits, while 68% of voters oppose, with 51% strongly opposing taxing benefits.

The Poll finds opposition to taxing benefits spans the partisan divide. Specifically, taxing health benefits is opposed by 79% of Republicans, 73% of Independents, and 51% of Democrats.

## **General Direction of the Country, Obama’s Ratings**

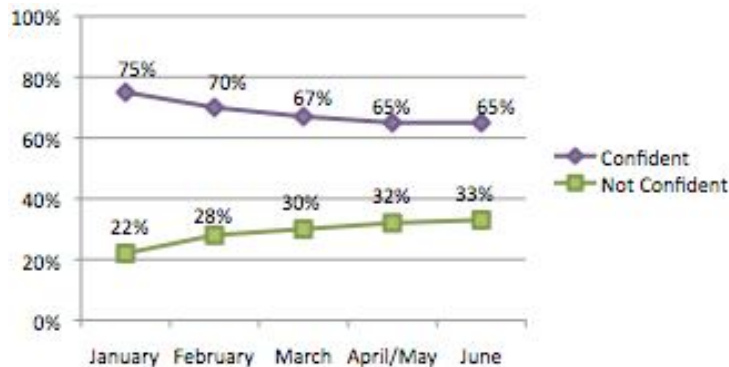
For the first time since the Diageo/Hotline Poll began fielding (January 2005), the percentage of voters who say that the country is generally going in the ‘right direction’ (45%) has surpassed the percentage voters saying it is on the ‘wrong track’ (43%).

President Obama’s ratings have remained high since his Inauguration, with over two-thirds of registered voters (67%) saying they have a favorable opinion of him and 65% saying they approve of the way that he is handling his job as president.

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Despite these high ratings, there is a steadily decreasing sense of confidence around whether Obama “will be able to bring real change to the way things are done in Washington D.C.” In the January Poll, 75% of voters were confident in his ability to bring real change, compared with 65% in today’s Poll. While the current confidence level is still high, it does represent a 10 percentage point drop since the beginning of Obama’s presidency.

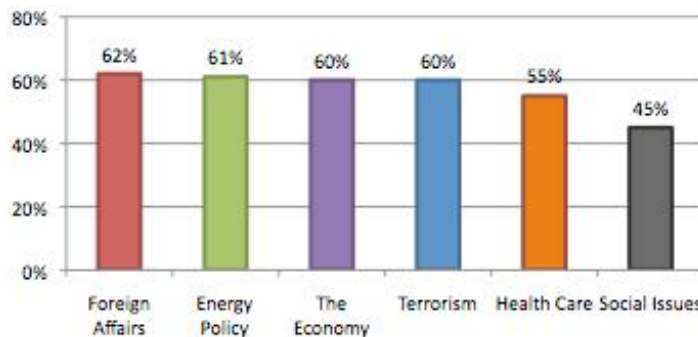
*Confidence in Obama to “Bring Real Change”: January - Present*



## ***Obama’s Approval Ratings on Most Issues are High***

President Obama’s approval ratings on most issues are high, as he has a 62% approval rating on the way he is handling Foreign Affairs, 61% for his Energy Policy, and 60% for the way he is handling the Economy and Terrorism. Obama’s approval rating on health care is relatively lower at 55% and his lowest approval rating is “social issues like abortion and same-sex marriage,” at 45%.

*President Obama’s Approval Rating on Issues*



To obtain complete Poll results, please see [www.diageohotlinepoll.com](http://www.diageohotlinepoll.com).

To schedule an interview with Ed Reilly, contact Selin Kent at (212) 850-5735 or [Selin.Kent@fd.com](mailto:Selin.Kent@fd.com).

**Methodology:** The Diageo/Hotline Poll was conducted by telephone from June 4 – 7, 2009, among a random, representative sample of 800 registered voters, age 18 and older (margin of error +/- 3.5%).

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