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American Public Supports Investment in Prevention As Part of Health Care Reform Solid Majorities Favor Prevention Proposals

To: Interested Parties
From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research
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The following analysis is based on a national research project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Trust for America's Health, and conducted jointly by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research and Public Opinion Strategies. The national survey of 1,008 registered voters was conducted November 2nd – 5th, 2009. The margin of error is +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

When it comes to health care reform, one thing is clear: the American electorate wants prevention to play a central role in shaping a new direction for our health care system. They view prevention as a top priority, support increasing our investment in it, and favor the specific prevention initiatives being proposed in health care reform legislation.

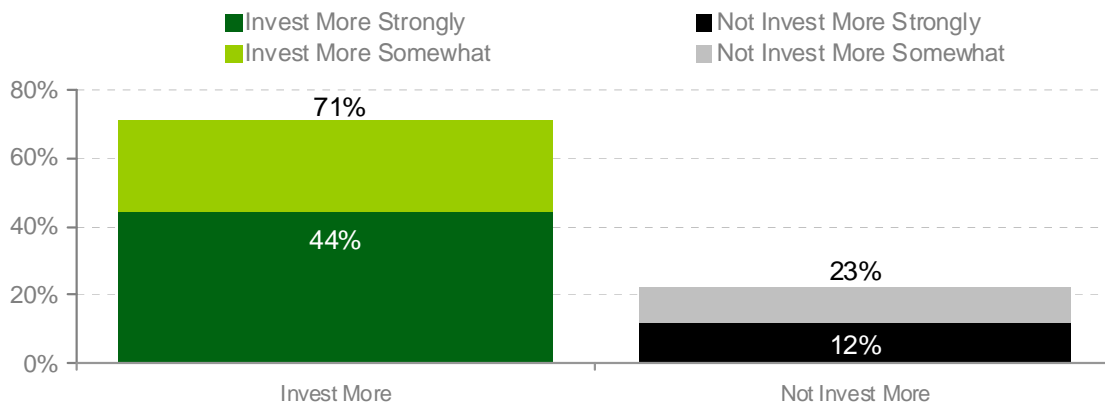
Voters View Prevention As An Effective Way Forward; Want to Make it a Top Priority

By a 52 – 16 percent margin, voters say we should be putting more emphasis on prevention than treatment (27 percent say we currently have the right balance). As the graph on following page shows, they overwhelmingly support backing this belief through investment—more than seven out of 10 (71 percent) of American voters favor increasing the level of funding for prevention¹.

Support for an increased investment in prevention is both robust and broad. Forty-four percent of the total population wants to invest more in prevention *strongly*, against just 12 percent who feel strongly that we should not invest more in prevention, a nearly four-to-one margin. Increasing our investment is favored by at least an 18-point margin among every demographic subgroup in this survey, and wins majority support across the political spectrum (85 percent of

¹ Respondents were given a description of “prevention.” Please see question language on following page.

Democrats, 59 percent of Republicans, and 68 percent of Independents) and from coast to coast (72 percent in the Northeast, 73 percent in the South, 71 percent in the West, and 69 percent in the Midwest).



“Just so everyone has the same information, when we talk about prevention we mean providing people with information and resources and creating policies that help people make healthier decisions. Thinking about the level of funding for prevention in the United States, do you think we should invest more in prevention, or do you think we should not invest more in prevention?”

As demonstrated by the following table, American voters rank investing in prevention ahead of nearly every other proposed health care reform initiative tested in this survey. Nearly two-thirds of the country gives it a score of between 8 and 10 on a ten-point scale, where zero means not at all an important priority and ten means very important. There is a significant gap between the top three priorities—prevention included—and all other proposals.

	Mean	%10 score	%8 – 10 score
Prohibit insurance companies from denying coverage because of age, medical history, or pre-existing condition.	7.9	50	70
Invest in more prevention to help people stay healthy and reduce diseases such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease	7.7	40	64
Provide tax credits to small businesses to help small businesses provide affordable health insurance to their employees.	7.7	36	64
Require all businesses to provide health care for their employees or contribute to a fund to help pay for their coverage.	6.3	28	44
Expand coverage by making more people eligible for Medicaid, the government-funded program that provides care to low-income families, the disabled, and some elderly.	6.2	23	42
Require all Americans to have health insurance while providing financial assistance to those who cannot afford it.	6.0	28	43
Give all Americans a choice of keeping their current insurance or joining a national insurance pool with a choice of private and public plans administered by the government.	4.9	19	35
Require all Americans to have health insurance while providing financial assistance to those who cannot afford it. Those people who can afford it would have to buy their own health insurance or pay a penalty or fine if they do not.	4.6	12	26

Now, I am going to read you a list of proposals related to health care. For each, please tell me, on a scale of 0 to 10, how big a priority that proposal is for you in reforming health care in our country. Zero means it is not at all an important priority.

Key Prevention Proposals Generate Strong Support

Voters believe prevention would improve if we pass health care reform—44 percent say “the focus on prevention of common illnesses and disease” would get better if health care reform is passed, against 29 percent who think it would get worse—a solid result on a tough measure.

It follows then that there is strong to overwhelming support for each of the core proposals being made to improve prevention in our country. As the following table illustrates, each proposal is favored by a minimum 58 percent majority (and a minimum 19-point margin), with three of the five proposals earning the support of more than 72 percent of the electorate, including large blocs who strongly favor these proposals.

	Strongly Favor	Total Favor	Total Oppose	Difference
This proposal would ensure that public health workers are well trained, have up-to-date laboratories, and are adequately equipped to communicate with the public about health threats.	51	82	16	+66
This proposal would provide funding for education loan repayment to make sure we have enough public health professionals to combat shortages in health departments and meet health needs.	42	73	24	+49
This proposal would establish a Public Health Investment Fund that would dedicate annual funding to prevention. This would be used to invest in improving nutrition and physical activity in our schools and communities, expand access to immunizations, and test new approaches to staying healthy so people have the information to make their own best decisions about how to be healthy and prevent disease.	45	72	26	+46
The federal government does not currently have a plan or structure to address our nation's health. This proposal would create a National Prevention and Wellness Strategy to coordinate our efforts by assessing the health of our country, establishing priorities, and setting health goals. All community programs would be held accountable to rigorous evaluation to ensure we are investing in things that work.	29	58	37	+21
This proposal establishes a Preventive Services Task Force, an independent entity that reviews scientific evidence and cost-effectiveness of prevention programs. The Task Force would develop recommendations for improving prevention programs and provide local community health services with key information to help people make healthy choices.	28	58	39	+19

Now let me read you some specific proposals that are being considered in the health care reform bill. For each, please tell me whether you favor or oppose this proposal.

Voters Believe Prevention Will Save Us Money and Is Worth the Cost

By a nearly three-to-one margin (70 – 24 percent), people think prevention will save us money rather than cost us money. Even once voters have been given the \$34 billion price tag that comes along with the above proposals, they say investing in prevention is worth the cost. But, it's important to put this number in context. Voters who were informed simply that the investment would cost \$34 billion say it is worth it by a 48 – 44 percent margin, while those who heard that it will cost \$34 billion of the roughly \$900 billion total health care reform spending say it is worth it by almost a two-to-one margin (60 – 35 percent).

Lastly, 65 percent say they would either be more likely to support a member of Congress who votes for the proposal to invest in prevention or that it would make no difference to their vote, while just 32 percent say it would make them less likely to support that member of Congress.

The Bottom Line

Voters favor investing more in prevention, and support for an increased focus on the issue is solid and widespread. Voters view prevention as one of the most important pieces of health care reform, and they strongly back the specific initiatives being proposed to put us on a new, healthier path.