Understanding the Role of the ACA in the 2014 Elections

Robert J. Blendon, Sc.D.
Professor of Health Policy and Political Analysis
Harvard School of Public Health/Kennedy School of Government
October 7, 2014

Part of a collaborative project with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Key Issues of Discussion

• The geographic and demographic context of the 2014 election
• The political history of the ACA since enactment
• The important differences between voters' views on the ACA and public opinion
• Outcome of the election: implications for health reform

14 Competitive States / Open Seats
US Senate Races – 2014
Top 10 Liberal States in US

1. Vermont
2. Massachusetts
3. Delaware
4. New York
5. Hawaii
6. Oregon
7. Maine
8. California
9. New Jersey
10. Washington


Public Approval of Health Care Law
Averaged results from multiple polling organizations – September 2014

State Variation in Public Support for the ACA (Obamacare) – 2014

% supporting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>% Supporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Boston Globe/HSPH Poll, June 2014. (registered voters)
2 Field Poll, July 2014. (registered voters)
3 Quinnipiac University Poll, July 2014. (registered voters)
Registered Voters’ Support for the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) – 2014

- All: 41%
- Democrats: 71%
- Independents: 36%
- Republicans: 11%


Top Issues in Vote for Congress – 2014

Which one of the following issues will be most important in deciding your vote for Congress this November?

- The economy: 38%
- Terrorism: 17%
- Health care: 16%
- Immigration: 10%
- Federal budget deficit: 8%
- International conflicts: 6%


The Likely Voter Dilemma in National Election Races

- Total population in a poll: 100%
- Registered voters: 73%
- Actual Voters
  - 2012 Presidential Election: 54%
  - 2010 Congressional Election: 38%
  - 2008 Congressional Election: 37%

Federal Election Commission, Data from Non Congressional Research Service reports, Election Data Services Inc., and State Election Offices.
Effect of Support for Health Care Law on Vote for Candidate for Congress

HSPH/SSRS Poll, September 2014.

% saying if a candidate for Congress supports the health care law, would make respondent (likely voters):

- Less likely to support candidate: 40%
- More likely to support candidate: 31%
- Wouldn't make much difference / no opinion: 27%

Long Term Impact of Laws on Health Care (MA and Nation)

- Massachusetts Residents - MA Law:
  - Make Better: 44%
  - Make Worse: 21%

- US Residents - National Law:
  - Make Better: 37%
  - Make Worse: 46%

Impact of ACA on Country to Date, by Party

Health Care Law’s Perceived Impact on Their Families

Kaiser Family Foundation Poll, September 2014.

Role of Federal Government in Ensuring Americans Have Healthcare Coverage


The Responsibility of Federal Government to Make Sure All Americans Have Coverage

Paid Advertising on the ACA Post-Enactment – 2010

Total Spent

$445,000,000

Favorable Messages

$27,000,000

Negative Messages

$418,000,000

Kantar Media Research, May 2014.

2013 Estimated Spending on Anti-ACA Political Advertising

37,544 negative ads

Kantar Media/CMAG, August 1 – September 11, 2014.
What Should Congress do with the ACA in the Future? (likely voters) – Part I

**Repeal the Law**
- All: 31%
- Democrats: 4%
- Independents: 54%
- Republicans: 56%

**Scale Back the Law**
- All: 23%
- Democrats: 14%
- Independents: 27%
- Republicans: 27%

HSPH/SSRS Poll, September 2014.

What Should Congress do with the ACA in the Future? (likely voters) – Part II

**Keep the Law as is**
- All: 14%
- Democrats: 30%
- Independents: 8%
- Republicans: 4%

**Expand the Law**
- All: 27%
- Democrats: 44%
- Independents: 26%
- Republicans: 9%

HSPH/SSRS Poll, September 2014.