



# How to Talk to Washingtonians About Health Reform

A presentation by Herndon Alliance

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# Why Are We All Here?

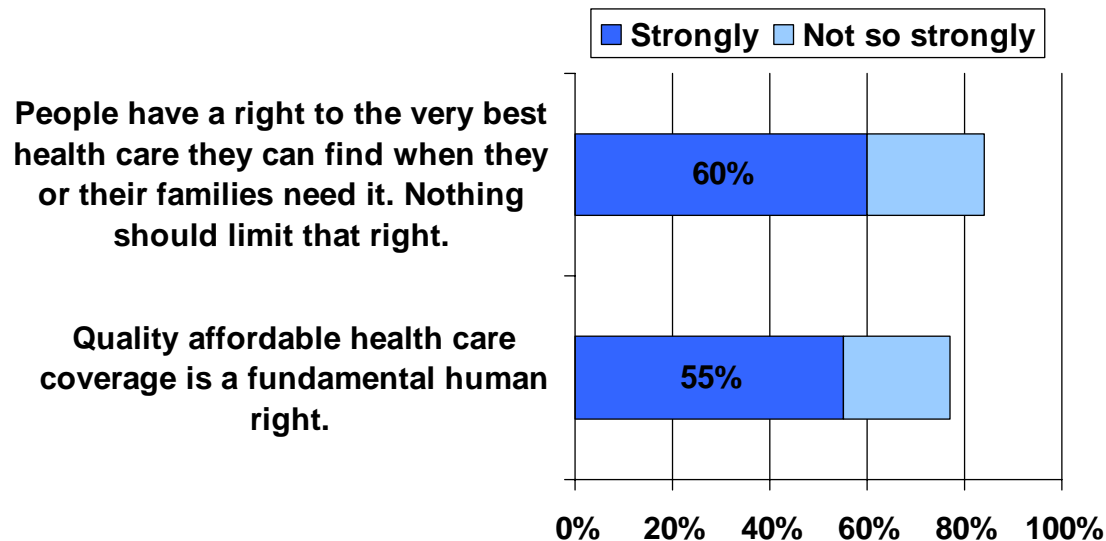
We believe in the American dream.

We value everyday ethics.

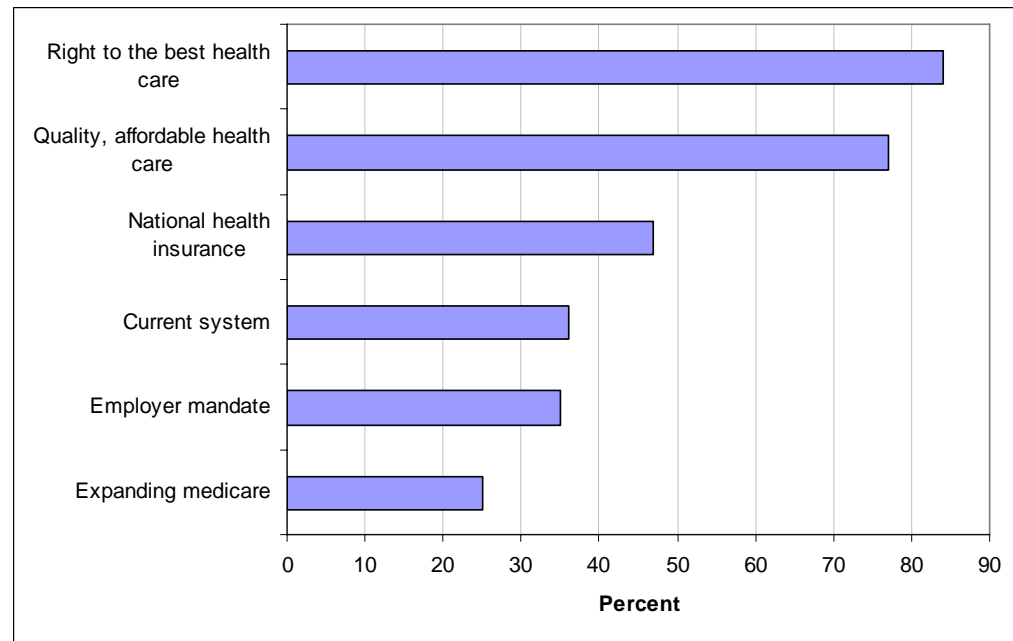
We want guaranteed, quality, and affordable health care for all.

# America Supports Affordable Health Care in Overwhelming Numbers

- More than 80% of Americans say we need a better health care system and more than 60% even agree that health care is a fundamental human right
- The issue of health care reform is the top domestic issue for voters. This is the right time to be expanding support for real reform.



# Yet We Keep Making that Number Smaller



# The Voters

- 94% of voters in 2006 were insured.\*
- Of those, 15% are part of the health care base and 79% are swing voters.
- Older women and seniors are the most attentive voters on the health issue.
- Small business owners are an important constituency on this issue; a small business voice is an important signal to persuadable voters.
- Key swing constituencies are:
  - Proper Patriots (34% of population; 40% of electorate, focused on personal responsibility, everyday ethics, national pride.
  - Marginalized Middle-Agers (17% of population, 15% of electorate, looking for help and status).
  - Mobile Materialists (13% of population; 12% of electorate; most extreme in rejecting initiatives.

# Moving Forward

- Build a broader base of support.
  - By developing an offensive narrative that connects with the values people share and beliefs they hold about health care while addressing the issues that concern them.



# Lessons Learned from Two Rounds of Research

Research by:  
American Environics  
Lake Research Partners  
Herndon Alliance

# Health Care is a Core Value

Linked to:

- The pursuit of the American Dream
- Our country's destiny
- Our family's well-being and future

Voters talk about health care in moral terms yet reform as a moral issue is insufficient to move voters.

# Health Care is Personal

- Voting America is largely insured. With any health reform package, voters are fearful and worry. They ask:
  - How does it affect me and my family?
  - Who will pay?
  - What will I lose?
  - Will I get 'less for more'?

# Health Care Reform Must Offer

- Choice
- Control

Voters perceive a public plan as inferior. They worry that they will be dumped into a public plan. Voters need to be reassured that they will have a choice of plans, will always have health coverage, and all plans (public + private) will provide a standard comprehensive package of benefits.

# Health Care Reform Must Offer

- Security
- Peace of Mind

Voters, especially women, want affordable health care they can count on and that mirrors both life's transitions (job changes, part-time and full-time work, major illness, divorce relocation, early retirement) and economic transitions (outsourcing, mergers, buyouts).

# We Need to Channel Public's Anger not Fear

- Fear makes voters more self-protective and less willing to support change
- Anger moves people to action
- To reassure voters
  - keep doctors, strong bond with doctors
  - have more control over health care
  - affordable coverage guaranteed
  - choice of coverage

# Coverage Denied Due to Pre-existing Conditions Angers Voters

- Voters want to rein in the greed of insurance companies, force them to treat people fairly, and hold them accountable.
- Provides a watchdog role for government.
- Gives insured a concrete benefit and may save them money.

# Personal Responsibility is Important to Voters

- Voters believe everyone should have access to quality, affordable health care, but don't want to pay for those they perceive as being 'undeserving.'
- Undocumented immigrants are thought to be 'undeserving.'

# Voters Want an American Solution

- See a role for something beyond market forces to ensure affordable health care access.
- Skeptical of a ‘government run’ program, even as they acknowledge the failures of the private insurance model.
- See a role for government as ‘watchdog.’
- See a role for a non-profit agency to administer a public plan.
- Believe Medicare has problems, even though they support it, and are wary of using it as a model for future reform.

# Voters Want to Help Small Business

- Concerned about impact of health care reform on small business.
- Support discounts and sliding scales to help small businesses afford coverage.
- Want to hear directly from small business owners.

# Issues that Block Voters' Support of Health Reform

- Cynicism about government + bureaucracy.
- Higher costs and higher taxes.
- Scarcity + loss of quality.
- Undocumented immigrants and other 'undeserving' people.
- Impact on small business.
- Ability of powerful interests to block action.



## What the Research Tells Us: Moving Beyond the Barriers

# Speak Directly to the Beliefs and Values of Americans

- Unblock altruism—animate anger not fear.
- Emphasize security, peace of mind, choice, and control.
- Take the offense.
- Develop an overarching narrative.

# Personal Responsibility

- Voters must clearly hear a central place for ‘personal responsibility’ in a plan – corporations, parents, individuals taking responsibility.
- Sliding scale works – everyone pays something.
- Once their need for others to demonstrate personal responsibility is met, people become more altruistic.
- People who work hard, play by the rules and pay taxes should have access to quality health care.

# Choice, Control, Quality

- People want to make their own choices of doctors, tests, specialists, drugs, second opinions. Voters believe that choices are being reduced by employers, HMOs, and insurance companies. Keeping your doctor and the option of keeping your current plan is important, especially to women.
- People want more control over what they perceive to be an increasingly arbitrary system driven by greed.
- People are concerned that the 'public' plan will be lower quality. We need to preserve choice of provide to counter the idea that government (or employer) will restrict choice.

# Preventive Care as Stepping Stone

- Common sense investment.
- Prevention encourages personal responsibility.
- A potential escalator; when included people often embrace offering treatment.
- Provides acceptable role for government.
- ‘Wellness’ does not test well.

# An American Solution

- Voters are feeling that the needs of Americans are being neglected.
- They want a uniquely American solution to reforming our health care system.
- They believe American ingenuity will produce the best approaches and model.
- Voters want concrete solutions with doable steps to make health care affordable and available.

# Give Voice to Small Business

- Voters want to hear directly from small business owners and hear how health reforms will directly impact them

# Address Concerns about Scarcity

- Voters are concerned that if everyone has access to health care, there simply won't be enough to go around. Doctors, support staff, hospitals, and clinics will be overwhelmed and quality will suffer.
- It is important to communicate that a reform will actually relieve the burden on emergency rooms, will simplify and standardize insurance coverage, and make it easier for people to get the preventative care they need so they don't get sicker and need more extensive/expensive treatment.

# The Role of Government

- People embrace government as a watchdog and regulator.
- But they worry about the bureaucracy and costs associated with government run programs.
- They prefer the program be run by an independent non-profit.
- It helps to remind people of the bureaucracy, greed and profits, and high costs of our current private insurance system.
- Redirect concerns about government back to anger at the status quo.

<b>Positive Perceptions</b>	<b>Negative Perceptions</b>
Quality affordable health care	Universal coverage
American health care	A system like Social Security; Canadian Style Health Care
Sliding scale	Free
Prevention	Wellness
Smart investments; investing in the future	Inexpensive
Choice and Control	Competition
Rules; public	Regulations; government

<b>Positive Perceptions</b>	<b>Negative Perceptions</b>
Guaranteed	Required
Giving people control; peace of mind	Government health care for all
Standard package; affordable health plans	Basic health care
A choice of public and private plans	Medicare for All
Government enforcement/watchdog Personal and shared responsibility	Government health care; public health care

# More of this data is on our website

- Detailed information and additional research is available at :
  - [www.herndonalliance.org](http://www.herndonalliance.org)
- Also check out our communications tools, materials, and strategies.



# Guaranteed Affordable Choice (GAC)

# Need New Concepts, Not Magic Words

- Calling health care a ‘moral issue’ is not enough
- Invent new policy initiatives that speak to values behind the words.
- Replace framework of ‘who is deserving’ of health care and ‘who is undeserving.’
- Speak to the desire for new rules.
- Examples:
  - Healthiest Next Generation
  - Cancer Screenings
  - Guaranteed Affordable Choice

# It's about Choices

- GAC is a health reform concept conceived and tested by the Herndon Alliance.
- Provides a more detailed frame than principles, yet not so in-depth as to constitute a full-scale plan.
- Meets the needs and desires of Americans without inciting their fear of change.
- Bridges the uninsured and the underinsured to the insured.
- Points to a path for making quality health care affordable and accessible to all.

# The Essential Concept of GAC

- To provide choices to all Americans including:
  - the choice to keep their current insurance if they like it
  - the choice to sign up with another private health insurance plan;
  - the choice to sign up for a public independent plan run by a non-profit agency;
  - the choice to keep their doctors or select others.

# How Did GAC Test?

- A strong majority of voters (60+%) consistently and overwhelmingly favor GAC over:
  - Health Savings Accounts
  - Tax credits
  - Single Payer Plan
  - And even after hearing attacks against GAC

# Why Does GAC Test Well?

- Choice of plans
- Standard Comprehensive Package
- Payroll Tax
- Pre-existing Conditions
- Undocumented Immigrants
- Costs

# How Do We Expand Support for GAC?

- Mobilizing the values of Americans, particularly targeted constituencies:
  - American pride
  - American dream
  - Everyday ethics
  - Prevention

# Upcoming from Herndon

- Research – immigration issue, narrative, affective offense
- Voice of small business
- Advanced communications strategizing – build plans around the values and messaging
- Practical communications advice – customization, counsel or editing of materials
- Bootcamp for communication leaders around the country – work together to create messaging and communication strategies using a values based approach

# Advancing Healthy Washington's Agenda in 2008

Strategic Thinking

+

Strategic Communications

# Strategic Thinking

Goal: To effectively move health reform up on personal agendas

- Understand where audience is:
  - Approach at current level and move up
  - hopeless vs. what can do vs. ready to act
- Attach to what motivates
  - A + B + C
- Be Offensive
  - Aggressively push what people want
  - Aggressively differentiate from naysayers

# Strategic Thinking

- **Barriers: Be aware of and overcome obstacles through policy and messaging**
  - Government role, taxes, personal responsibility, other
- **Prioritize, stay on point**

# Strategic Communications

- Goal: Control the health reform agenda
  - take the offense
  - Agenda = A + B + C
  - develop a positive values-based narrative that responds to the beliefs of Washingtonians

# Strategic Communications

Goal: Communicate effectively with the public

- Understand who you are talking to
  - Talk to them where they are
  - Move them to next stage sequentially
- Connect on big issues using a values-based health narrative
  - Reflects the beliefs of the public
  - Tells a story
  - Can be broken down into talking points and repeated with a consistent voice by all in the coalition
- Speak about details only after you have connected
- Speak from the heart - listen to the public

# Thank you

Herndon Alliance  
American Environics + Lake Research Partners

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