



**American Hospital  
Association**

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## ***NEWS RELEASE***

### **Health Care Tops Issues Voters in Early Primary States Want 2008 Presidential Candidates to Address**

Washington (November 6, 2007) – Democratic and Republican voters from early primary states identified health care as the top issue they want to hear about from presidential candidates during the 2008 election campaign, a poll released today found. Health care eclipses other important national priorities such as Iraq, illegal immigration, the economy and terrorism/security issues, according to voters from Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada.

Health care costs and coverage were the two top specific health care issues that voters from across the political spectrum want candidates to tackle, found the survey, which was conducted by national polling firms Public Opinion Strategies and Greenberg, Quinlan, Rosner on behalf of the American Hospital Association (AHA).

“Voters of all stripes want presidential candidates to address this key issue that touches the lives of every American in profound ways,” said AHA Executive Vice President Rick Pollack.

Specifically, nearly nine out of 10 voters polled favored a set of changes to the health system that would include the following:

- ✓ Providing health care coverage for everyone, with everyone; that is government, individuals, and employers contributing to the cost;
- ✓ Making changes to make health care more efficient and more affordable;
- ✓ Using more information technology to increase patient safety, lower costs, and reduce paperwork so that doctors and nurses can spend more time with patients;
- ✓ Ensuring people have access to preventive care and wellness programs, so that people lead healthier lives; and
- ✓ Improving the quality of care so that every patient receives the right care at the right time.

“The top priority for voters this election campaign is the future of health care in America,” Pollack noted. “Candidates will have plenty of opportunities over the next year to tell voters their views. We hope that at every town hall meeting, campaign rally and political debate, the candidates talk about their plans for the future of health care in America.”

To help spur discussion, the AHA will call on health leaders to ask the candidates questions about their plans to help advance health care in America. A brochure entitled “Ask the Candidates” will be sent to hospital members and posted on the AHA’s Web site at [www.aha.org](http://www.aha.org).

The poll interviewed 600 likely 2008 general election voters across these four states (margin of error +/- 4.0%). In addition, 400 likely GOP primary voters/caucus goers and 400 likely Democratic primary voters/caucus goers (100 per party, per state) were interviewed (margin of error +/-4.9%). An executive summary of the poll findings is attached.

**About the AHA**

The AHA is a not-for-profit association of health care provider organizations that are committed to health improvement in their communities. The AHA is the national advocate for its members, which include nearly 5,000 hospitals, health care systems, networks and other providers of care. Founded in 1898, AHA provides education for health care leaders and is a source of information on health care issues and trends.

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**GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER RESEARCH**

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** AMERICAN HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

**FROM:** BILL McINTURFF / LORI WEIGEL

**RE.:** KEY FINDINGS FROM A SURVEY OF VOTERS IN FOUR PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY/CAUCUS STATES: IOWA, NEW HAMPSHIRE, NEVADA AND SOUTH CAROLINA

**DATE:** NOVEMBER 2, 2007

*Key Findings*

- Health care should be the top issue for the presidential candidates, according to a survey of voters in four key primary/caucus states. ***When asked to volunteer the topic they would most like to hear the presidential candidates discuss, health care related issues eclipse all other issues - even Iraq.*** This hold true among both Democratic and Republican primary voters/caucus goers.

In fact, across party lines, more voters volunteer a health care related issue as the topic they would like the candidates to speak about today than any other single issue.

<i>% Want to Hear Candidates Discuss this Issue...</i>			
	All Voters	GOP primary/ caucus voters	DEM primary/ caucus voters
Health Care	40%	26%	55%
Iraq	32%	19%	44%
Illegal Immigration	13%	24%	4%
Economy	13%	18%	9%
Terrorism/Security	10%	16%	5%

- We afforded voters the hypothetical opportunity to pose a question to the presidential candidates. In the realm of health care, these questions generally fell into two broad categories:

**The rising cost of health care:**

*“I would want to ask that they plan on making health care not just for the well-off or the people the most money to afford that.” – New Hampshire swing voter woman*

*“I would just like to know what their platform is on health care, especially for the elderly. I have an elderly parent, and currently it costs a lot for them to make the co-pays and things like that for their health care.” -- Nevada Republican woman*

*Why is everything going up too high? ...I have experience. I had heart surgery. I have a very expensive prescription that I'm on and insurance is costing too much so that its hard to keep.” – South Carolina Democrat man*

**Coverage for the uninsured:**

*“How would you better provide for those who are not insured and what would you do to make sure that the next generation will have benefits? Because we don't have health insurance, and it is really expensive. I would like my children to have health benefits when they become of age.” – Iowa Republican woman*

*“What can they do to get health care under control? Right now it is out of control... a lot of people don't have insurance. My son doesn't and he works every day. He doesn't have insurance because he has a seasonal job. He works 80 hours a week, and because it is seasonal, he doesn't get any insurance...and he can't pay for insurance. He's a diabetic, and he can't afford insurance. If he got it, it would be twice as much. I think the government should subsidize it.” -- New Hampshire Democrat woman*

*“How are you going to help the general public who are trying to purchase high cost insurance be able to afford any kind of health care and prescriptions? There are so many uninsured people in America today and that really worries me. There are so many people today trying to purchase insurance policies that have such high insurance deductibles. If something tragic happens, they still cannot afford their health care costs... It really ties the hands of a lot of our young people so they can't afford to have families.” --Iowa Democrat woman*

- At a time of bitter partisan politics, there are often more commonalities between the bases of the two parties in these early decision states than distinctions. So, for example, both parties' voters...
  - ✓ Name health care as the top topic they want presidential candidates to discuss;
  - ✓ Express strong interest in hearing presidential candidates' responses to key health care questions;
  - ✓ Cite cost concerns/affordability as the most important health care problem facing the country; and,
  - ✓ Rank a number of specific reforms regarding quality care, preventive care and safety virtually identically.

- In addition, voters across the political spectrum respond extremely positively to the set of goals and objectives for reforming the health care system. **Fully 87% of voters in these critical primary states support the goals and objectives (61% strongly support)**, including 73% of Republican primary/caucus voters and 97% of Democratic primary/caucus voters. The goals were summarized as...

- ✓ Providing health care coverage for everyone, with everyone; that is government, individuals, and employers contributing to the cost;
- ✓ Making changes to make health care more efficient and more affordable;
- ✓ Using more information technology to increase patient safety, lower costs, and reduce paperwork so that doctors and nurses can spend more time with patients;
- ✓ Ensuring people have access to preventive care and wellness programs, so that people lead healthier lives; and
- ✓ Improving the quality of care so that every patient receives the right care at the right time.

A solid majority of 61% say the presidential candidates should pay “a great deal” of attention to these ideas, and another 32% say they should pay “some” attention to them.

- Voters were asked to choose which of these goals the next President and Congress should focus on first. While there is often a great deal of agreement among voters on goals for reforming health care, the two ends of the political spectrum are at odds on where emphasis should lie:

<i>% Believe Congress and next President should focus on...</i>			
	All Voters	GOP primary / caucus voters	DEM primary/ caucus voters
More efficient and affordable	35%	<b>44%</b>	27%
Coverage for everyone	30%	15%	<b>45%</b>
Preventive care and wellness	14%	15%	14%
Information technology	10%	12%	7%
Improve quality of care	7%	5%	5%

Interestingly, uninsured voters in these states are more likely to say the next Administration and Congress should deal with costs first over coverage for all (64% and 57%, respectively, name cost and covering all uninsured as one of the top two goals to tackle first).

- This distinction in emphasis between GOP and Democrat primary/caucus voters is also evident in that they demonstrate different interest levels in the responses of presidential candidates to questions regarding their core concerns:

Democratic primary voters/caucus voters top question to ask a candidate:

What steps would you take to provide health care coverage to everyone?

Republican primary voters/caucus voters top question to ask a candidate:

How would you work to make health care more efficient and affordable?

Still, this really is a distinction in how partisan voters discuss these issues and what is foremost on their mind. There is fairly strong support across the political spectrum for the broad goals of reducing health care costs and finding a way to ensure everyone has coverage.

- Finally, it is worth noting that voters have one final task for the next President and Congress in the realm of health care. When asked what should happen to federal funding for hospitals, a solid majority of 55% believe Congress and the next President should increase funding – more than say it should be kept the same (28%) or decreased (7%) combined.

### *Methodology*

- Public Opinion Strategies and Greenberg, Quinlan, Rosner Research conducted this research on behalf of the American Hospital Association. The survey was conducted October 21-24, 2007 in four states that will play a critical role in the 2008 presidential nominating process: Iowa; New Hampshire; South Carolina and Nevada. Across these four states, we interviewed three key audiences:
  - ✓ N=600 likely 2008 general election voters or 150 per state (overall margin of error of +4.0%);
  - ✓ N=400 likely Republican primary voters or caucus goers or 100 per state (overall margin of error of +4.9%); and
  - ✓ N=400 likely Democratic primary voters or caucus goers or 100 per state (overall margin of error of +4.9%).

The latter two audiences were selected based on the appropriate criteria of who can participate in each party's nomination process for that individual state.