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PDF version; crosstabs; website:

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Siena New York Poll:

More Voters Support President's Health Care Plan than Oppose It; 43% Still Want More Info Before Deciding

Providing Quality Health Care to All Americans is a Moral Issue
70% Believe Current Health Care Costs Could Bankrupt the Economy
NY'ers Divided on Plan's Affordability and Government's Role

Loudonville, NY. More New York voters (36%) support President Barack Obama's approach to reforming health care in the U.S. than oppose it (21%), according to a new Siena (College) Research Institute poll of registered voters. But the single largest group of voters, forty-three percent, still need more information in order to decide. Overwhelmingly, voters agree that providing quality health care to every American is a moral issue (74%) that we simply must accomplish, that fixing health care should be one of our country's top priorities (83%) and that health care costs left unchecked may bankrupt our economy (70%). But, voters are split with nearly equal numbers believing and denying that in these economic times the country can afford the President's proposed reforms, and nearly split down the middle with forty-four percent in support of a public option while thirty-seven percent are opposed to some form of government managed health care.

"A majority of New Yorkers from every political party, age group, race, and geography, agree we need to fix our health care system," according to Dr. Don Levy, SRI's Director. "Over eight in ten voters are closely following this national debate. Not only do voters see a system in need of repair, the majority of all groups agree that providing health care is the right thing to do morally and that if we don't get costs under control, health care will bankrupt our economy."

Despite the fact that eighty-four percent of New York voters say that they have followed the recent national debate over health care reform either very closely (41%) or somewhat closely (43%) and fifty-four percent watched or closely followed the coverage of President Obama's speech to Congress and the nation on health care reform, forty-three percent of all voters and no fewer than thirty-six percent of any demographic group neither support nor oppose the President's plan but rather still need more information.

“President Obama continues to enjoy favorable ratings from two-thirds of all New Yorkers, but that is his lowest approval number since before last November’s election. Two-thirds of Republicans give the President an unfavorable score while eighty-three percent of Democrats and sixty-four percent of independents continue to endorse President Obama,” according to Levy.

Fifty-three percent of all New York voters agree that the President’s plan for health care reform is a risky proposal. Despite agreement among most voters that the health care costs are out of control and will in the long run bankrupt the economy unless we act, nearly equal (44% agree, 45% disagree) percentages argue whether or not the country can afford the President’s proposed reforms. Seventy-one percent of Republicans do not think we can afford the reforms while sixty percent of Democrats support the spending.

Voters are split over whether the government should be more involved in delivering health care and a large minority is concerned that the President’s plan will lead us away from democracy towards socialism. New Yorkers, led by a large majority of Democrats (56% to 26%) and a plurality of independents (45% to 41%) believe some form of public option should be included in any health care reform legislation but Republicans (58% to 23%) disagree. And although a majority of all voters (52%) do not think the reforms advocated by the President will lead us away from democracy towards socialism, thirty-eight percent of all voters and sixty-four percent of Republicans do.

“Democrats and Republicans agree that there is a problem with the health care system that ought to be addressed but they do not agree on how to fix the problem, whether we can afford to fix it now, or if following the President’s lead on this issue will enhance or threaten our democracy,” Levy noted.

Overwhelmingly, New Yorkers agree that it should be illegal for health care insurance companies to deny coverage based on a pre-existing condition. Seventy-seven percent of voters agree either strongly (60%) or somewhat (17%) on that proposed aspect of health care reform.

President Obama’s approach to reforming health care in the U.S. does not receive a majority of support among any demographic. Democrats support the President by nearly five to one (47% to 10%), independents by two to one (39% to 20%) while Republicans oppose the proposal by over three to one (43% to 13%). Overall, thirty-six percent say they support the President’s proposal, twenty-one percent expressed opposition and forty-three percent need more information.

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This SRI survey was conducted September 13-17, 2009 by telephone calls to 792 New York State registered voters. It has a margin of error of ± 3.5 percentage points. Data was statistically adjusted by age, gender, party and geography to ensure representativeness. Sampling was conducted via random digit dialing weighted to reflect known population patterns. For more information, please call Dr. Don Levy at 518-783-2901 or dlevy@siena.edu. Survey cross-tabulations and frequencies can be found at: www.Siena.edu/SRI/SNY.



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Siena New York Poll Trends – September 2009

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Barack Obama?

| DATE | FAVORABLE | UNFAVORABLE | DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION |
|---------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| September 2009 | 65 | 31 | 4 |
| August 2009 | 70 | 23 | 6 |
| May 2009 | 72 | 23 | 5 |
| April 2009 | 75 | 19 | 6 |
| March 2009 | 70 | 23 | 7 |
| February 2009 | 74 | 18 | 8 |
| January 26, 2009 | 81 | 10 | 9 |
| December 2008 | 76 | 16 | 7 |
| November 2008 | 70 | 23 | 8 |
| October 27, 2008 | 67 | 28 | 5 |
| October 2, 2008 | 64 | 29 | 7 |
| September 2008 | 56 | 32 | 12 |
| August 2008 | 54 | 34 | 12 |
| July 2008 | 57 | 32 | 12 |
| June 2008 | 58 | 30 | 13 |
| May 2008 | 55 | 34 | 11 |
| April 2008 | 54 | 34 | 12 |
| March 24, 2008 | 56 | 32 | 13 |
| March 3, 2008 | 56 | 31 | 13 |
| February 2008 | 60 | 30 | 10 |
| January 2008 | 57 | 28 | 15 |
| December 2007 | 55 | 30 | 15 |
| September 2007 | 56 | 24 | 20 |
| June 2007 | 53 | 24 | 23 |
| May 2007 | 58 | 22 | 20 |
| April 2007 | 55 | 23 | 22 |
| March 2007 | 52 | 20 | 28 |
| February 2007 | 52 | 21 | 28 |
| January 2007 | 50 | 17 | 34 |
| HIGHEST EVER | 81 (1/09) | 34 (4/08, 5/08, 8/08) | 40 (11/06) |
| LOWEST EVER | 48 (11/06) | 10 (1/09) | 5 (5/09, 10/27/08) |

Siena New York Poll Trends – August 2009

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Is the United States on the right track, or is it headed in the wrong direction?

| DATE | RIGHT TRACK | WRONG DIRECTION | DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION |
|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| September 2009 | 49 | 42 | 9 |
| August 2009 | 52 | 37 | 10 |
| July 2009 | 49 | 41 | 10 |
| May 2009 | 62 | 31 | 7 |
| April 2009 | 61 | 29 | 11 |
| March 2009 | 50 | 36 | 14 |
| February 2009 | 48 | 39 | 13 |
| January 26, 2009 | 61 | 24 | 15 |
| December 2008 | 41 | 48 | 11 |
| November 2008 | 44 | 44 | 13 |
| October 27, 2008 | 19 | 69 | 12 |
| September 2008 | 28 | 56 | 17 |
| September 2007 | 23 | 64 | 13 |
| HIGHEST EVER | 62 (5/09) | 69 (10/08) | 17 (9/08) |

Poll Trend Notes: Trends reflect questions asked at least twice since the first Siena New York poll in February 2005. Results listed here include all times questions have been asked since January 2007.

“Highest Ever” is provided at the bottom of each question. “Lowest Ever” is presented at the bottom of each question that was asked prior to 2007.

All surveys are of registered voters except for the polls of September 2008, October 2008, September 2006, and October 2006, which are polls of likely registered voters.