



**TO:** Interested Parties

**FROM:** Lisa Grove and Ben Patinkin  
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**RE:** Findings from a Survey of Likely November 2008 California Voters

**DATE:** January 13, 2008

*This analysis is based on 600 interviews among likely 2008 general election voters in California. The survey was conducted January 10-12, 2008. The margin of error is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error for subgroups varies and is higher.*

**Californians Are Strongly Opposed to Legislation That Mandates the Purchase of Private Health Insurance.**

**There is proposed legislation that would make it mandatory for every Californian to show proof that they have health insurance coverage or face financial penalties. If an individual does not receive full coverage through an employer or if a person does not qualify for state assistance, then they would be required to pay for a policy. There would be no limits placed on what health insurance companies could charge for premiums. Do you favor or oppose this legislation or are you undecided?**

Favor, strongly	11%	<b>16%</b>
Favor, not strongly	5%	
Undecided	21%	
Oppose, not strongly	14%	
Oppose, strongly	49%	<b>63%</b>

A large number of Californians express opposition to proposed legislation requiring them to purchase private health insurance. Nearly two-thirds (63%) say they oppose this proposal. Nearly one-half (49%) say they are “strongly” opposed to it.

Less than one in five (16%) say they would support mandating the purchase of health insurance with “no limits placed on what health insurance companies could charge for

premiums.” Another one in five (21%) are undecided.

There is no base of support for this legislation. Indeed, opposition never dips below the majority mark among any subgroup. Opposition is the most pronounced among high propensity voters, voters between the ages of 40 and 49, those without healthcare and Republican men.

The only subgroups to express even modest approval for the legislation are voters in the Central Valley (20%) and Sacramento media market (20%), African American voters (26%) and younger Republicans (23%). However, even among these groups a majority oppose, and opponents outnumber supporters by a margin of at least 33 percentage points. With opposition at such high levels, this effort would be doomed to failure at the ballot box.

More specifically, the idea of “mandating that every Californian prove they have health insurance” seems to be one of the main obstacles to this legislation. When asked specifically how they feel about this main tenet of the proposal, over six in 10 (61%) oppose it. Of these, four in 10 (42%) say they are strongly opposed to it. Less than three in 10 (29%) support this idea.

**When Mandated Purchasing of Health Insurance Is Coupled With Accountability Measures Aimed at Insurance Companies, Voters Still Do Not Support This Legislation.**

<p><b>There is proposed legislation that would make it mandatory for every Californian to show proof that they have health insurance coverage or face financial penalties. If an individual does not receive full coverage through an employer or if a person does not qualify for state assistance, then they would be required to pay for a policy. Health insurance companies would be required to justify their premiums to the state and get approval from state regulators before they can raise rates. Do you favor or oppose this legislation or are you undecided?</b></p>		
Favor, strongly	19%	<b>32%</b>
Favor, not strongly	13%	
Undecided	20%	
Oppose, not strongly	13%	
Oppose, strongly	35%	<b>48%</b>

As with the legislation that simply mandates the purchase of health insurance by every Californian, this proposal, too, fails to pass muster with the electorate. Even when told, “health insurance companies would be required to justify their premiums to the state and get approval from state regulators before they can raise rates,” nearly one-half (48%) oppose the idea. Less than one-third (32%) favor this approach, while one in five (20%) are undecided.

Voters believe the state is putting the cart before the horse with these proposals. When asked which should come first, greater accountability in how private health insurance companies set their rates or a mandatory requirement that every Californian purchase insurance, regardless of cost, nearly three-quarters (72%) believe greater accountability should come first. Only one in

10 (12%) say they believe the mandatory purchase of health insurance is a higher priority for those in charge of solving the state’s health care woes.

**Voters Prefer Proposals That Will Result in Improved Quality and Lower Cost for Health Insurance Coverage, as Well as Greater Accountability for Insurance Companies. They Do Not Favor Imposing Financial Penalties On Those Who Choose Not to Purchase Insurance.**

Tenets of the Proposal	Favor Oppose Favor Margin		
Allows any Californian to buy the same health coverage available to the governor and other elected officials	81%	9%	+72
Limits the amount patients must pay out of pocket when they get sick	75%	18%	+57
Requires insurers to sell policies to anyone regardless of health condition	75%	18%	+57
Requires health insurers to justify premium increases and get approval from state regulators for rate increases	71%	22%	+49
Rolls back health care premiums by 20%	66%	23%	+43
Requires the state to subsidize the cost of health insurance for low income people	64%	27%	+37
Consolidates two state government departments that regulate and oversee the health insurance industry into one agency	57%	20%	+37
Prohibits the state from requiring Californians without health insurance to purchase insurance	48%	41%	+7
If an individual does not purchase health insurance, the state could garnish their wages, forcing them to pay for insurance coverage	15%	78%	- 63

California’s voters make it clear that they want proposals that will improve the quality and lower the cost of health insurance. Over eight in 10 (81%) want to make available the same type of coverage that elected officials receive.

Similarly, three-quarters (75%) would favor the idea of limiting co-pays and deductibles as well as requiring insurers to sell policies to consumers regardless of their health condition.

As noted earlier, respondents are also clamoring for greater accountability of insurance

companies. Over seven in 10 (71%) say they would support a proposal that requires health insurers to justify premium increases and get approval from state regulators for rate increases. This idea, coupled with efforts to lower costs and increase the quality of health insurance available to the average Californian should be the basis for which legislators move forward with any healthcare reform.

What voters do not want is financial penalties to be imposed on them for not purchasing health insurance. When asked whether they support or oppose the idea of allowing the state to garnish the wages of those who do not have insurance, nearly eight in 10 (78%) say they oppose it. Only one in 10 (15%) would support such an approach to healthcare reform. To the extent that this proposal is a part of any legislation dealing with health insurance, voters will not be pleased.