

**TO:** Robert Phillips  
The California Endowment

**FROM:** David Metz and Richard Maullin  
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates

**RE:** Key Findings from Statewide Survey on Healthcare Reform

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Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a survey of likely California voters to assess their attitudes toward the recently-passed federal healthcare reform law.<sup>1</sup> The survey results reveal a public that clearly supports the law: while national surveys continue to show pluralities of voters who are ambivalent about the legislation, **California voters initially favor it by a 49 percent to 42 percent margin.** That support reflects clear majorities of both Democrats *and* independents who are in favor of the law.

In addition, the survey shows that once California voters are acquainted with the provisions that are actually in the law, they become even more supportive. As **Figure 1** makes clear, **informing voters about the details of the legislation causes a significant shift in support – with a 56 percent majority supporting the law and just 40 percent opposed – widening a seven-point margin to a full sixteen points.** This solid majority remains even after voters hear a balanced set of pro and con arguments, with 55 percent in support and 42 percent opposed.

**FIGURE 1:**  
**Progression of Support for the Federal Healthcare Reform Law**

Position	Initial Support	After Provisions	After Pro and Con Messages	Change
<b>Support</b>	49%	<b>56%</b>	55%	+6%
<b>Oppose</b>	42%	<b>40%</b>	42%	0%
<b>Undecided</b>	9%	<b>4%</b>	3%	-6%

As **Figure 1** reveals, simply explaining the key provisions of the law yields the greatest increase in support. Survey respondents were offered an extensive list of different provisions of the law, and were asked to rate their support for each on a seven-point scale, as shown below in **Figure 2**. The table shows the proportions that rated each provision a six or seven, indicating relatively strong support.

**FIGURE 2:**  
**Support for Individual Reform Provisions**  
*(% Rating Each Item a 6/7 on 7-Point Support Scale)*

Provision	%
Prohibits insurance companies from dropping people's health insurance when they get sick	<b>71%</b>
Prohibits insurance companies from denying coverage because of pre-existing conditions	<b>67%</b>
Allows young people to stay on their parents' health plans until age 26	<b>61%</b>
Allows individuals and small businesses to choose from the same health insurance plans offered to members of Congress	<b>61%</b>
Cuts waste, fraud, and abuse in Medicare and ensures that funds go toward improving care	<b>61%</b>
Reduces overuse of emergency rooms by ensuring that everyone has coverage and can go to their own doctors	<b>61%</b>

A number of other provisions of the law were well-received by California voters. For example, a 52-percent majority offered a strongly positive response to the fact that the law “*eliminates co-pays for preventative care, like annual checkups, mammograms, and cancer screenings.*”

Voter support for the law builds upon a broad consensus among California voters that the healthcare system is badly in need of reform. Only one-third of California voters (33%) believe that the healthcare system meets the needs of most Californians, while a majority (51%) believes that it does not. And voters themselves have a significant stake in reform: one-quarter of all voters (24 percent) say that cost concerns have made it hard for them to get the care they need in the past few years.

Taken together, the survey results show a clear and pressing need for public education on healthcare reform in California. The statewide survey reflects a trend evident in much national research – that once voters are acquainted with the details of what the law actually does, they tend to become much more supportive. As the focus shifts from winning Congressional approval of the law to making it work for Californians, efforts to educate the state's voters about the impact of the law will have an even more critical role to play.

<sup>i</sup> **Survey Methodology:** From April 8 -12, 2010, FM3 completed telephone interviews with 803 likely voters across California. The margin of error for the full sample is +/- 3.5%; margins of error for subgroups within the sample will be higher. The survey also included an oversample of 200 voters that decline to state a party affiliation, yielding a total of 328 interviews with DTS voters and a margin of sampling error of +/- 5.4%. Some proportions may not add up to 100% because of rounding.