

News Currents

In Brief

No SNF Cuts To Fund Health Reform: Poll

Voters Object To Tapping Medicare

At least 66 percent of polled registered voters would be less likely to support their local member of Congress for reelection if he or she voted to cut seniors' Medicare-funded nursing facility care as a way to finance health care reform, says a new Mellman Group poll conducted at the request of the American Health Care Association (AHCA).

"Voters clearly object to using Medi-

care payments as a source of funds for health care reform—it is both the least acceptable and most unacceptable way to finance reform," according to Mellman's analysis.

"Voters are much more willing to entertain other financing mechanisms, including taxing those who make over \$250,000 per year. Voters say they will take out their anger on members who vote for such nursing home cuts at the ballot box."

The poll surveyed 1,000 registered voters and has a 3 percent margin of error. It found that cutting Medicare payment to nursing facilities is the least popular of the health care reform funding options under consideration because "most Americans believe that cutting such payments will reduce the quality of care seniors receive in nursing homes."

"While health care reform is important to many Americans, Medicare funds for nursing homes are considered off limits as a way to finance reform," according to the poll's analysis.

AHCA President and Chief Executive Officer Bruce Yarwood says the results make it "abundantly clear" that the public "harbors strong antipathy to slashing Medicare beneficiaries' nursing home benefits to finance any broader reform package."

Yarwood says that while AHCA supports efforts by the Obama administration and Congress to expand access to health care, it should not be done by cutting care to seniors.

—Suzanne Struglinski

Campaign Touts Long Term Care Insurance

In a new effort to increase awareness about the need for long term care, as well as insurance to cover it, the LTC Guild, a new social network, has launched the "3 in 4 Need More" campaign.

As Congress debates the country's future health care plans, the group bases its idea off of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services statistic that at least 70 percent of people over age 65 will require some long term care services at some point in their lives—or about three in four people.

The "3 in 4 Need More" campaign wants to emphasize the need for long term care insurance, mobilize support for new tax incentives to make the insurance more affordable, and press for Medicaid reform to reserve public aid for the truly needy.

"Health reform will have a big hole in it if it doesn't embrace the extended care needs of today's longer-living Americans," says Jonas Roeser, a founding member of the LTC Guild.

The guild is a social network described as a "place where long term care and allied [professionals] meet one another and the public, form local chapters, schedule meetings, and share information." The national site and social network are run by Dick Samson, director of the EraNova Institute of Mountain Lakes, N.J.

LTC Financial Partners joined the campaign as a way to remind lawmakers that people will need more than "ordinary health care that focuses on acute, shorter-term care needs, not extended care," says Denise Gott, chairman of the board. "Every family needs protection from longer-lasting illnesses or injuries that are all too likely to strike."

—Suzanne Struglinski

Question: Which one of the following is the least acceptable way to pay for health care reform?

Cutting Medicare payments to nursing homes to care for seniors	49%
Raising taxes on people who make over \$250,000 per year	8%
Requiring people to pay taxes on generous health care benefits they receive from their employers	14%
Taxing health insurance companies	9%
None	14%
Don't know	6%

If Congress cut \$32 billion in Medicare payments to nursing homes to care for seniors, do you think the quality of care seniors receive in nursing homes would get better, stay about the same, or get worse?

Much better	4%
Somewhat better	3%
Stay about the same	11%
Somewhat worse	19%
Much worse	59%
Don't know	4%