

# Falling public support for health-care reform can be turned around

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Survey results published this week in the journal *Health Affairs* show that while only 27 percent of adults currently support the U.S. Senate Finance Committee's proposed healthcare legislation, an amended bill could gain the majority's favor.

The poll was created and commissioned by S. Ward Casscells, M.D., vice president of external affairs and public policy and the John Edward Tyson Distinguished Professor in Cardiology at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. "I feel that the slumping support for healthcare reform can be turned around and that Americans do indeed care about this healthcare debate," said Casscells, who was also a former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health under Presidents Bush and Obama. "Based on our survey results, any combination of several two-amendment changes to the current legislation would yield plurality or majority support, suggesting broad support may yet be achieved."

The survey reported that while a majority of adults - almost 60 percent - oppose the proposed bill, and another 14 percent remain undecided, Americans say they would be likely to support a healthcare bill that includes a combination of certain amendments.

"According to the data, if the draft legislation were to include amendments calling for malpractice reform, the elimination of an individual mandate and the addition of a public option, our survey shows that support strengthens - increasing from a mere 27 percent to 57 percent," Casscells said.

Zogby International conducted the online survey of 2,232 adults Sept. 28-30 and presented respondents with a detailed outline of a proposed healthcare bill and amendments based on draft legislation being debated in the U.S. [Senate Finance Committee](#).

The survey found that legislation including both malpractice reform and a public option yielded majority support, with 55 percent of respondents supporting it and only 41 percent opposing it. The elimination of the individual mandate combined with inclusion of a public option would garner support by 51 percent of respondents, and legislation that includes malpractice reform and the elimination of the individual mandate would fall just shy of a majority with 49 percent support.

John Zogby, president and CEO of Zogby International, said, "Again the public leads the way. They are neither left nor right on [health care](#), simply practical. Politicians take note."

Casscells added, "It's clear from the survey that people would like to have a say. They want choices, and providing those options increases support for healthcare reform. We hope that this academic survey will be useful as Congress continues its deliberations on this hotly debated issue."

"This latest polling by Zogby and Casscells is an important contribution to our understanding of this critical debate," said Larry R. Kaiser, M.D., president of the UT Health Science Center at Houston. "It is obvious that Americans care about health care reform and are passionate about getting it done right. The insights from this poll could be used as guidance in choosing the best path."

Roberta B. Ness, M.D., MPH, dean of The University of Texas School of Public Health, said, "Tort reform has helped Texas health costs but to prevent disease and treat our uninsured we need the health reforms

Congress is poised to enact, including incentives for individual wellness and public health. Dr. Casscells' data collection efforts are leading the way in understanding public opinion in support of these important measures."

Pete Nicholas, chairman of the board of Boston Scientific Corporation, also weighed in on the survey results. "These findings reinforce the fact that the American public favors sensible health care reform. As a leading medical device company, we support reform efforts as long as the specifics put patients first, promote innovation and control costs," Nicholas said. "We support the delivery and payment-system reforms aimed at achieving efficiencies and improvements in patient care, such as comparative effectiveness research, value-based purchasing and policies that preserve patient and physician choice. The poll's results in favor of malpractice reform are particularly important, as the cascading implications of defensive medicine pose a serious threat to the health care system: billions of dollars in unnecessary costs, which get passed on to patients in the form of higher insurance premiums and out-of-pocket expenses."

Source: University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston ([news : web](#))

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