Health Care as a Post-Election Issue in 2004

Robert J. Blendon, Sc.D.
Harvard School of Public Health
Kennedy School of Government

In collaboration with the
Kaiser Family Foundation
Election Survey Project
# Seats Held in Senate and House by Party, Post 2004 Election

## Senate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## House

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Points About Post-Election Views on Health Care

• Health care 5th most important issue, but not high priority for President Bush’s voters

• High level of dissatisfaction about health care/not 1992

• Top health care issues in election: costs, Medicare & uninsured

• Public highly critical of pharmaceutical and managed care companies

• Bi-partisan support remains high for drug re-importation

• Seniors remain critical of Medicare Rx bill/could be important mid-term election issue
### Most Important Issue in Voting Decision, 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Voters</th>
<th>Bush Voters</th>
<th>Kerry Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral values (22%)</td>
<td>Moral values (35%)</td>
<td>Economy/jobs (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy/jobs (20%)</td>
<td>Terrorism (33%)</td>
<td>Iraq (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism (19%)</td>
<td>Iraq (7%)</td>
<td>Health care (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq (15%)</td>
<td>Economy/jobs (7%)</td>
<td>Moral values (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health care (8%)</strong></td>
<td>Taxes (6%)</td>
<td>Education (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes (5%)</td>
<td><strong>Health care (4%)</strong></td>
<td>Education (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (4%)</td>
<td>Education (2%)</td>
<td>Taxes (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources: National Election Day Exit Poll, November 2, 2004.*
Top Issue in 2004 Presidential Vote Among Registered Voters (January)

1. Economy/Jobs - 36%
2. Healthcare/Medicare - 19%
3. Terrorism - 14%
4. Iraq/War - 11%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Economy/jobs</th>
<th>Federal deficit</th>
<th>Health care</th>
<th>Moral values</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Taxes</th>
<th>Social Security</th>
<th>Taxes</th>
<th>Health Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992a</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996b</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000b</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004c</td>
<td>(1) Moral values</td>
<td>(2) Economy/jobs</td>
<td>(3) Terrorism</td>
<td>(4) War in Iraq</td>
<td>5 Health Care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most Important Health Care Issue in Deciding Presidential Vote in 2004

Percent saying issue is one of two most important

1) Health costs 29%
   Health care/insurance costs 14%
   Prescription costs 10%

2) Medicare/seniors’ health care 18%

3) The uninsured/access to health care 17%

Impression of New Medicare Law Among People on Medicare

- Favorable: 26%
- Unfavorable: 47%
- Don't know: 26%

Whom Would Voters Trust to Handle the Issues, October 2004

Among likely voters

- Terrorism: Bush 56%, Kerry 37%
- Iraq: Bush 51%, Kerry 41%
- Economy/Jobs: Bush 44%, Kerry 47%
- Health care*: Bush 40%, Kerry 49%

*Newsweek & Time polls (average), October 22, 2004; *Newsweek & Time and LA Times polls (average).
Enthusiasm and Anger Towards Candidates
Health Care Policies (Registered Voters)

Kerry
- Enthusiasm: 14%
- Anger: 9%

Bush
- Enthusiasm: 9%
- Anger: 6%

Sources: Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health Election poll, October 2004.
How Health Care Voters Voted

Kerry: 78%
Bush: 22%

Americans’ Views of the Availability and Affordability of Health Care in U.S.

% saying dissatisfied

1993\textsuperscript{a} 77%

2000\textsuperscript{a} 67%

2004\textsuperscript{b} 62%

Sources: \textsuperscript{a}Blendon, Benson, Challenge, 2004; \textsuperscript{b}Kaiser Family Foundation/ Harvard School of Public Health poll, 2004.
Americans’ Views of the Quality of Health Care in U.S.

% saying dissatisfied

1993\textsuperscript{a} 46%

2000\textsuperscript{a} 44%

2004\textsuperscript{b} 55%

Sources: \textsuperscript{a}Gallup polls, 1993, 2000; \textsuperscript{b}Kaiser Family Foundation/Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality/Harvard School of Public Health poll, 2004.
Worries about Own Health Care

% saying very worried about…

- Not being about the afford health care services you think you need: 47%
- Not being able to afford prescription drugs you need: 35%
- Losing your health insurance (among insured): 29%

*Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health, August 2004.*
What Is Responsible for Rising Health Care Costs?

% saying very important factor

- High profits/Drug companies: 69%
- Greed and waste in system: 62%
- Aging of the population: 55%
- Malpractice suits: 54%
- Use of expensive medical technologies: 46%
- Consumers have little incentive to seek lower cost care: 39%

*Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health poll, October 2004.*
Americans’ Views of Health Care Institutions and Industries, 1996-2004

% saying does a good job serving customers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hospitals</th>
<th>Pharmaceutical Companies</th>
<th>Managed Care Companies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public Support for Changing the Law to Allow Imported Rx from Canada

% favoring

80%

Sources: Harvard School of Public Health/Kaiser Family Foundation, October 2004.
Key Views of President Bush’s Voters

- Health care top voting priority: 4%
- Very concerned about availability/cost of health care: 28%
- Government should do more to solve problems: 32%
- Abortion should always be legal: 5%

Implications of the 2004 Election

- The uninsured
- Medicare
- Medicare Rx/re-importation
- Medicaid/SCHIP
- Cost containment
- Patient Care Bill of Rights
- Quality of care
- Malpractice
- Abortion/Stem cell research
- Public health funding/Bioterrorism
- International AIDS funding