



Collaboration
HEALTH CARE, INC.
Create • Innovate • Collaborate

Staying Informed

Ideas, Information, and Perspectives In
the New Health Care World

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“While many will be spending time together with family and friends over the holidays, tens of thousands will still be away in dangerous places continuing to do what our country asked them to do.”

Happy Holidays to Our Troops and Their Families

On December 15, 2011 the United States formally ended the Iraq war. What began with the United States invasion of Iraq on March 20, 2003 ended almost quietly and reverently nearly nine years later. We were there much longer than anyone expected. The final financial cost of the war will be debated for some time. However, the cost in lives will be felt by family and loved ones for many years to come. Nearly 4,500 sacrificed their lives to do what the country asked them to do. Army Specialist David Hickman, 23 of Greensboro, North Carolina was the 4474th to die in Iraq and may be recorded as the last. He was buried two weeks and a day before he was due home. Over 32,000 were wounded. We will now leave the fate of Iraq in the hands of its people. Let’s hope the decisions they make for the future make the sacrifices worthwhile.

As the final troops from Iraq now return home to their families, we can’t forget the “other war.” Over 1,800 brave men and women have already sacrificed their lives for the cause in Afghanistan. With all of the other challenges (and silliness) dominating the stories in the media, we don’t hear much about it. But the casualty list continues to grow.

While many will be spending time together with friends and family over the holidays, tens of thousands will still be away in dangerous places continuing to do what our country has asked them to do. At home, their families and friends think about them every day and pray for their safe return home. They will continue to sacrifice with no questions asked.

As we close out 2011 and prepare for 2012 it seems an appropriate time to take inventory and count the blessings we do have. Take a minute to also remember those who have sacrificed and continue to sacrifice to protect and defend the freedoms many take for granted today. And say a little prayer for their families and their safe return as well.

Happy Holidays.

Grading the Republican Candidates Positions on Health Care

Health care remains (and will continue to remain) a hot topic of discussion. All Republican candidates promise to repeal Obamacare (aka The Affordable Care Act) as one of their first actions as chief executive. However, beyond the desire to repeal the current law- there continues to be a lack of clarity as to what they would do next. We've already seen what can happen when you focus on "talking points." There is a difference between just stating a goal and having a real plan in place to make it happen.

We reviewed the main campaign web sites for all of the Republican presidential candidates to see what specifically they would do about the health care crisis we are about to face in this country. We gave them a grade in three specific areas: Details and Specifics, Clarity of Position, and Overall Grade. The grades were based simply on our perceptions of the web site's ability to help the "average citizen" clearly understand the candidates position, why the action is necessary, and the action-plan they may intend to follow. We didn't grade on the policy recommendations themselves- only how well they are communicated.

"However, beyond the desire to repeal the current law- there continues to be a lack of clarity as to what they would do next."

Rick Santorum

Santorum included his health care position inside a broader category "Made in America." Santorum's message makes it clear that reforming health care is clearly needed to fuel the economic growth in this country. But you have to sort through a lot of other items to find what he believes needs to be done with health care specifically. We found:

Repeal and Replace Obamacare
 Reform Social Security and Medicare for Sustainable Retirement
 Institute Block Grant Funding for Medicaid
 Institute Legal Reform

The web site message lacks specifics. The "talking points" are consistent with several of the other candidates but you are left wondering "how?" We gave him a C.

Grades: Detail and Specifics: C- ; Clarity of Position: C+; Overall Grade: C

Jon Huntsman

You would think a governor who led his state through a pretty substantial health care reform effort would want to play it up. Apparently Jon Huntsman's advisors don't think it is important- or too politically charged. Health care is not included as an "issue" on his campaign web site. Huntsman defines the primary issues as: Jobs and the Economy, National Security, Foreign Policy, Energy Security, and Financial Regulatory Reform. Health care is not mentioned in any of them. We gave Huntsman an "Incomplete."

Grades: Detail and Specifics: INC ; Clarity of Position; INC; Overall Grade: INC

Mitt Romney

Romney is taking a lot of heat for the health care reform platform enacted in Massachusetts while he was governor (RomneyCare). Romney has run into challenges trying to defend his program- while trying to discredit the Affordable Care Act at the same time. Health care is a specific policy item identified on his web site and the goals include:

Repeal Obamacare
 Providing states with the responsibility, flexibility, and resources to act (primarily Medicaid)
 Tax Reform- Deductions for individual health insurance
 Focus federal regulation of health care on making markets work (purchasing pools, purchasing across state lines)
 Medical Malpractice Reform
 Rely on Market Forces Instead of Government Programs (encouraging HSAs)

Romney provides a few more details but still lacks specifics on "how and why." He gets a B

Grades: Details and Specifics: B-; Clarity of Message: B; Overall Grade: B

Ron Paul

Ron Paul's message is pretty clear- he would prefer no government at all. And, he's got a respectable following and a good organization in Iowa so it should be interesting. Health care is specifically identified as an issue on his web site and he lists the following objectives:

Repeal Obamacare
 Allow insurance purchases across state lines



*The Start of the Republican Primary
 Looking for Details*

(continued from page 2)

Tax Deductions for Medical Expenses
 Tax Credits, Deductions, and Payroll Tax Exemption for Terminal Illness
 Malpractice Reform
 Disallow Usage of Medicare/Medicaid Funds for Other Purposes
 Expand HSAs
 Eliminate FDA/FTC interference with knowledge of and access to alternative treatments
 Eliminate the national PHI data base

Paul provides a reasonable list of goals but, once again, no specifics about why these specific goals are important or how they will be achieved. We'll give him a B.

Grades: Details and Specifics: B-; Clarity of Message: B+ Overall Grade: B

Rick Perry

Rick Perry identified health care as an issue- but you have to get to his "Cut, Balance, and Grow" plan to figure out what they are. Perry's plan focuses on Medicare and Medicaid and includes:

Repeal Obamacare
 Increase the Medicare Age Eligibility
 Income Testing for Health Care Payments
 Premium Support (For Insurance Premium Payments)
 Establish Block Grants for Medicaid Funding

Perry's Cut, Balance and Grow plan provides some reasonable context and support to understand some of the logic behind his health care platform but there is little information on how he plans to get it done. Rick Perry gets a B+

Grades: Details and Specifics: B; Clarity of Message: A-; Overall Grade: B+

Michelle Bachmann

Michelle Bachmann has probably been one of the most vocal opponents of the Affordable Care Act since it passed in March, 2010. Her web site lists health care as a specific issue but most of the content is spent describing why the ACA is wrong and needs to be repealed. She does state she supported the Ryan Plan for Medicare reform and contends, "I will empower your families and doctors, not unelected bureaucrats to make the right decisions about the shape and form of your health insurance, your quality of care and your course of treatment." But she gives no details about how or why. She gets a C.

Grades: Details and Specifics: D+; Clarity of Message: B; Overall Grade: C

Newt Gingrich

Gingrich is the academic and historian of the group. His Center for Health Transformation has produced some interesting and innovative work over the years and he has also been critical of the perceived bureaucracy included with the Affordable Care Act since its enactment. His web site identifies health care as a specific issue and provides not only the objective- but a brief statement or comment along with each one. They include:

Make Health Insurance More Affordable and Portable
 Provide More Choices in Medicare
 Reform Medicaid
 Cover the Sickest
 Extend HSAs
 Reward Quality Care
 Reward Health and Wellness
 Stop Health Care Fraud
 Stop Junk Lawsuits
 Speed Medical Breakthroughs to Patients
 Inform Patients of Price and Quality
 Invest in Research

While the goals are listed and some context is provided on Gingrich's web site, there is nothing included that provides guidance as to "how." Newt gets an A-.

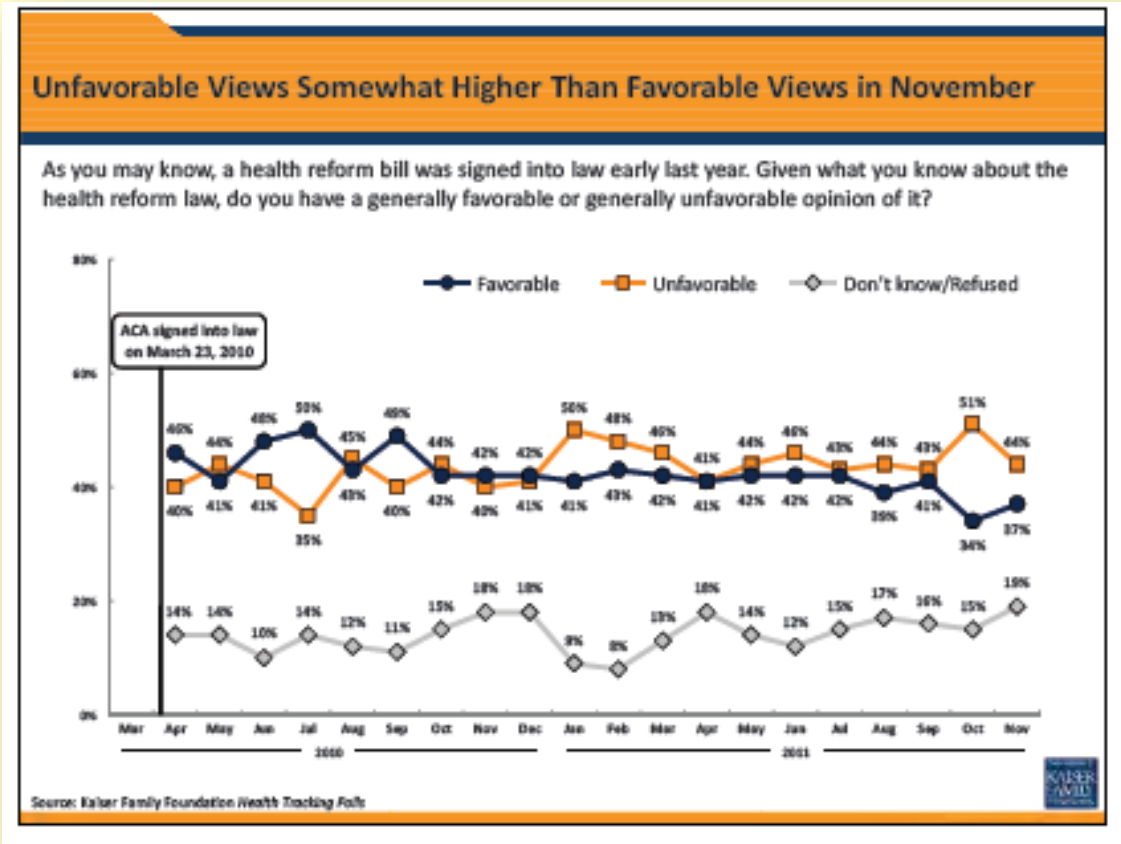
Grades: Details and Specifics: B+; Clarity of Message: A-; Overall Grade: A-

We realize the web sites are only one way a candidate can communicate the details of their policies to the general public. The details supporting the ideas may be in any number of briefs and policy papers developed by the candidates and made available on their sites. With the exception of Rick Perry's Cut Balance and Grow plan, we didn't find them.

This upcoming election is going to be a critical one for our country. The general public will need to understand the "how" as well as the "what" when it comes to health care. We've already learned that the "talking points" are what you say to get elected. It's the "how" that matters- and all candidates are going to need to explain that part better than they have in the past. It's the "how" that really matters.

"We've already learned that the "talking points" are what you say to get elected. It's the plan behind the talking points that really matters."

Public View of Health Care Reform (ACA)
The Journey Continues- November, 2011



Check Our Web Site, Our Partners, and Join Our Collaboration Health Network

Our goal is to help improve engagement and understanding of how health care works so we make the decisions to help it work better- for everyone. We've collected over 300 studies, positions, essays, and articles from a variety of different and diverse sources to provide an easy-to-use and balanced resource on a number of health care topics. We've designed it for consumers and professionals to use to develop informed perspectives of the issues and challenges facing health care today. This year visitors have logged over 34,000 sessions with over 14,000 downloads of our newsletters and information we posted.

Check out our growing list of partners similarly committed to help improve the way health care works. From wellness programs, to claims technology, to on-site health and wellness clinics, to internet applications, to nutritional counseling; our partners provide the services that are going to be required for providers, consumers, employers, and other health care organizations to participate in the new health care landscape that is unfolding.

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Something to Think About

“Gettin’ good players is easy. Gettin’ ‘em to play together is the hard part.”

Casey Stengel

“Relentlessly pursue the quality of life you envision”

WK White Eagle