

The Voters Are Shouting, But Are the Legislators Listening?

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Just a few months ago, I reported on a survey conducted by the Gilmore Research Group.¹

The telephone survey, commissioned by CodeBlueNow!, sampled the opinions of registered voters in Iowa.² The demographic mix of those participating in the survey was similar to that of the state. The topic of the survey was "Iowa Health Care Issues" and the stated purpose was "to obtain their opinions regarding health care in the United States." Those surveyed were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement (among others):

"Basic health benefits should include coverage for any licensed health care professional, such as naturopaths, acupuncturists and chiropractors, as long as they are certified and licensed by the state and by their profession."

Approximately two-thirds (68 percent) of registered Iowa voters who were surveyed agreed with this statement. Only 11 percent disagreed, and 19 percent were neutral.

More recently, the Gilmore Research Group conducted a similar study in the state of Washington,³ asking a representative group of voters if they agreed or disagreed with the above statement. Washington voters were even more determined to have chiropractic covered, with 75 percent in agreement. Only 10 percent disagreed, and 14 percent were neutral.

It's important to make these results known to decision-makers and the chiropractic profession. Surveys such as these are obviously very powerful. They are something each of our chiropractic state associations should consider for its state. (I'm sure CodeBlueNow! and the Gilmore Research Group would be more than happy to discuss a joint effort in your state.) All we need is a few more surveys of a few more states to demonstrate a trend among voters. Once the trend is established, politicians will be obliged to consider chiropractic coverage as a basic health benefit in any future health care reform debates.

Political decisions are based (generally) on what voters demand. Voter surveys are an effective way to get the demands of the voters into the minds of their elected representatives. CodeBlueNow! has re-examined the results of its two surveys by political persuasion of the respondents (Democrats, Republicans or Independents).⁴ What they found is that there is little disagreement between the political positions. When it comes to including coverage for "any licensed health care professional," the results break down as follows:

Iowa: Republicans - 70% agree; Democrats - 81% agree; Independents - 77% agree

Washington: Republicans - 66% agree; Democrats - 81% agree; Independents - 72% agree

The message these findings send is clear. Chiropractic care is not considered "alternative" or "complementary" by American consumers. Thus far, the surveys have demonstrated that voters (regardless of political affiliation) want chiropractic to be covered as a "basic health benefit." This point needs to be driven home so we aren't overlooked in the health reform debate.

We may not have a lot of political clout. And we may not have a big legislative war chest. But we do have the voters. All we need to do is help them have a voice.

References

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