

WISCONSIN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, INC.

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WISCONSIN RESIDENTS CONTINUE TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE GROWING COSTS OF HEALTH CARE AND PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Controlling health care and prescription drug costs continues to be a major concern of Wisconsin residents in terms of the problem that most needs attention from state government. They favor major reforms to the existing health care system but there is very little support for the idea of a state-run insurance system. Wisconsin residents believe that if a government-run health insurance system were set up in Wisconsin, out-of-state people would definitely immigrate to Wisconsin to enroll in the system.

These are among the key findings about statewide policy issues from the most recent survey of 600 Wisconsin residents conducted by the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, Inc. and Diversified Research between November 9 and 10, 2008.

In our most recent poll 24% of Wisconsin residents identified “Controlling Health Care and Prescription Drug Costs” as the most important issue that needs attention from Wisconsin state government. The health care issue closely trailed improving the state’s economy by just four percentage points. It was actually the number one issue among some areas and groups in the state. 34% of the residents of Milwaukee rated it as the number one issue needing attention from state government, as did 33% of the residents of Southeast Wisconsin.

There were also some differences in other demographic groups. 33% of Democrats rated it as the most important issue in the state, compared to only 12% of Republicans. 26% of residents who consider themselves Liberals thought it was the important issue, compared to 16% of Conservatives. Among residents who said they were employed, only 21% named controlling health care costs as the most important issue facing state government. However, 33% of our residents who are retired put it as the number one issue in the state. 28% of women also rated it as the number one issue facing state government, while 19% of men in Wisconsin said it was the most important issue facing state government. Considering the state of the economy and the concern over jobs, it is not unimportant to remember that health care continues to be an important issue in the state.

Wisconsin Legislation

We asked a question that dealt with a proposal to replace Wisconsin’s current private health insurance system with a universal health insurance system controlled by the state government. Only 34% of the residents of the state approved that idea while 53% disapproved it.

On this particular question there were some demographic differences across the state. 43% of out-state Wisconsin residents approved this idea, while 45% disapproved of it. In the Milwaukee suburbs,

only 26% approved it, while 55% disapproved it. In Madison, 36% of the residents approved it, while 46% disapproved it. The largest gaps were the political and ideological demographics. 58% of Democrats approved of this idea, while only 13% of Republicans and 28% of residents who said they were Independent approved. Ideologically, 59% of Liberals supported this idea, while only 8% of Conservatives did. There was also an age spread in support – 50% of residents between the ages of 18 and 24 supported this idea of a state-controlled health care system, but only 28% of our senior citizens 65 and older supported the idea, while 58% disapproved of it.

Another interesting gap was that 39% of the men in our survey approved the idea of replacing Wisconsin's current private health care system with a universal system controlled by the state government, while 30% of the women agreed.

Finally we asked if Wisconsin established a government-run health care system if residents thought people would move to Wisconsin in order to enroll in this program. 58% said yes, 30% said no. 60% of our residents in Green Bay thought that there would be migration, as did 64% in Southeastern Wisconsin. The strongest opposition to this question of potential migration came from Milwaukee suburbs where 41% said that there would not be migration and 40% in Waukesha County.

Again there were some political and ideological differences. 67% of Republicans thought there would be migration, while 51% of Democrats agreed that there would be migration. Among Conservatives, 67% thought that migration would happen, while only 47% of Liberals felt the same way.

There was an interesting spread where 62% of men thought there would be migration, while only 54% of our female respondents believed that to be true. These overall numbers were very similar to our poll last year when 53% thought that migration would increase and only 32% thought not.

Summary

This is little doubt from our survey work this year and in previous years that reforming health care remains a major agenda item for Wisconsin residents. It is also clear from our survey polling this year and last year that there is little support for any type of government-run health insurance plan in the state. Residents certainly are interested in some type of reform, but they have little confidence or desire to have the state mandate a government-run plan.

Finally one issue that may become a major point in the health care reform debate is potential migration to Wisconsin from other states. This would be particularly true if the state were to establish a health insurance program that allows no exclusions for pre-existing conditions. Most Wisconsinites believe that people from out of state would move to Wisconsin to obtain this important benefit.

ABOUT THE STUDY

This study of 600 Wisconsin residents was conducted by telephone between November 9 and November 10, 2008. A total of 600 Wisconsin residents were interviewed. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 4% for percentages of the whole sample. For a percentage near 50%, for example, this means that repeated samples would produce results between 47% and 53%, 95 times out of 100.

This study was commissioned by the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, Inc. The Institute was founded in 1987, and its mandate is to examine issues of public policy facing Wisconsin, using a non-partisan approach.

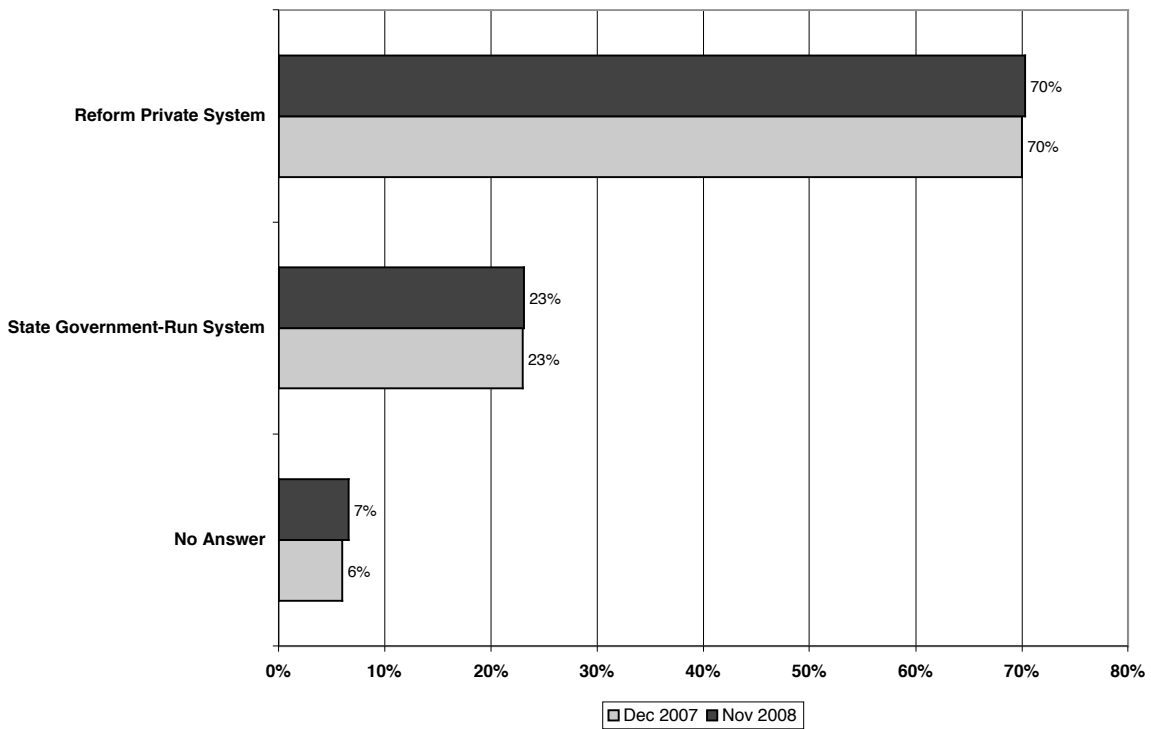
Dr. Michael LaVelle, President of Diversified Research, a nationally known survey research company supervised the project. Dr. LaVelle has a Ph.D. and has taught statistics and social research methods at the university level. He has been President of Diversified Research since 1982 and has over thirty years experience in survey research.

ISSUE NEEDING MOST ATTENTION FROM WISCONSIN STATE GOVERNMENT

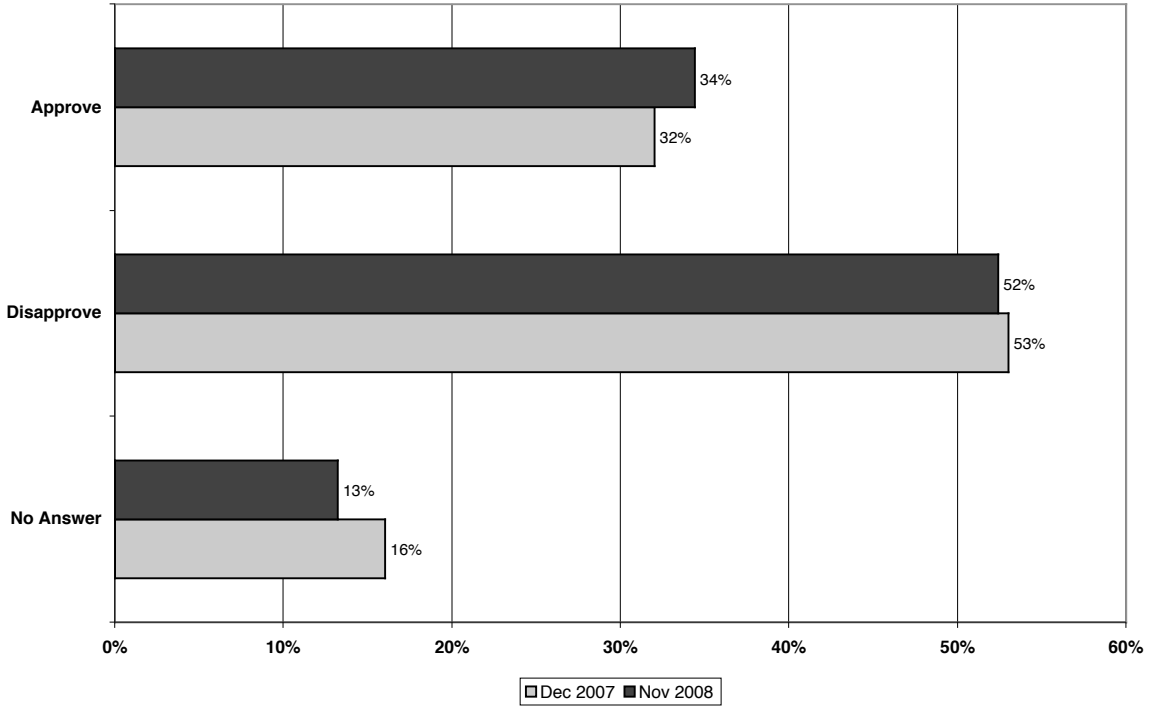
	June 2000	March 2002	Sept. 2002	Oct. 2003	Sept. 2004	Oct. 2005	June 2006	Dec 2007	Nov 2008
Improving the State's Economy	N.A.	18%	20%	23%	17%	10%	10%	8%	28%
Controlling Healthcare and Prescription Drug Costs	N.A.	28%	29%	33%	35%	21%	27%	30%	24%
Reforming the Tax System	24%	20%	21%	17%	12%	14%	17%	21%	14%
Improving Public Education	24%	16%	18%	18%	15%	21%	18%	14%	14%
Improving the Ethics of Wisconsin Politicians and Bureaucrats	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	13%	10%	10%
Lowering the Wisconsin Gasoline Tax	28%	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	24%	15%	16%	8%

N.A. Not asked.

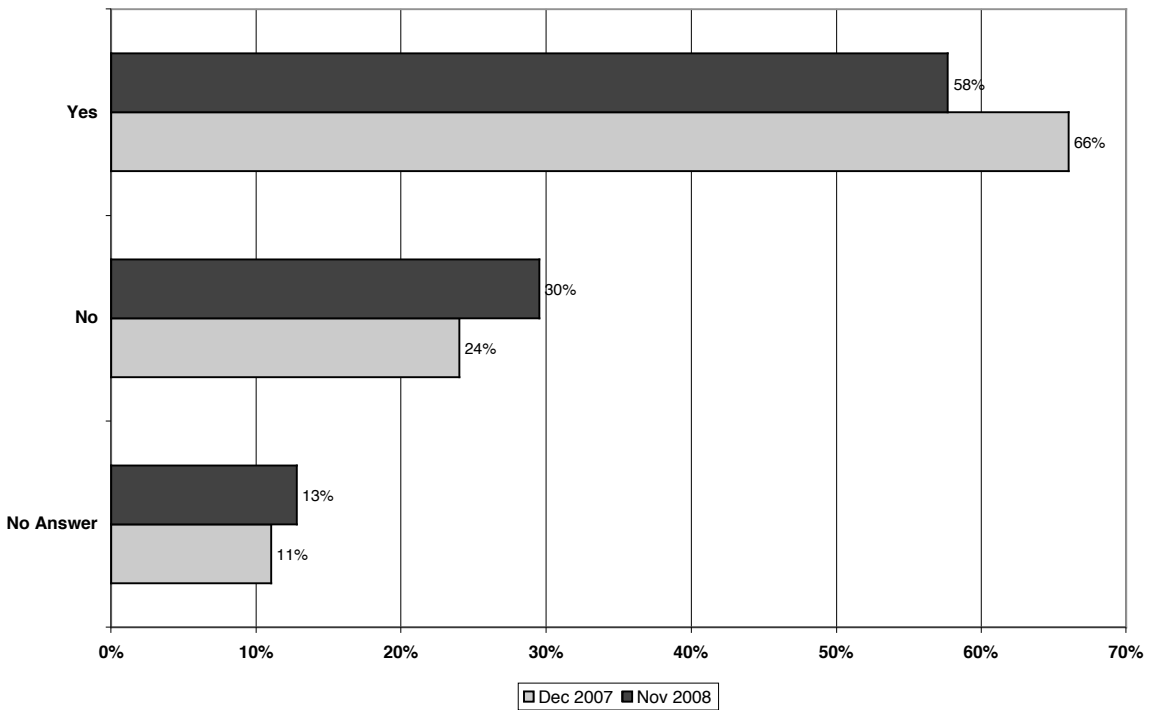
Wisconsin Residents' Opinions on Best Way to Reform Health Care System in State



Wisconsin Residents' Opinions on Replacing Wisconsin's Private Health Insurance System with a Universal System Controlled by State Government



Wisconsin Residents' Opinions on Whether Out of State People Would Move to Wisconsin in Order to Enroll in a Wisconsin State Government-Run Health Insurance System



Some people say that the best way to reform health care is to replace the current private health insurance system with a new universal health insurance system that is run by the Wisconsin state government

. . . While . . .

Other people say that the best way to reform the current private health care system is to cut costs and provide more choices by increasing competition among private insurance companies and by requiring health care providers to publicly release their actual costs.

. . . Which one is closest to how you feel?

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
State government run system	23%	24%	20%	21%	17%	22%	25%	22%	32%
Reform private system	70%	66%	75%	76%	72%	73%	68%	78%	61%
Don't Know/Refused	7%	10%	5%	3%	11%	5%	7%	0%	7%

Next year there is likely to be a proposal to replace Wisconsin's current private health insurance system with a universal health insurance system controlled by the state government. Would you approve or disapprove of this proposal?

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
Approve	34%	36%	26%	36%	30%	37%	36%	34%	43%
Disapprove	52%	48%	55%	54%	59%	57%	46%	57%	45%
Don't Know/Refused	13%	17%	20%	10%	12%	6%	19%	9%	13%

If Wisconsin established a government run health insurance system do you think out of state people would move to Wisconsin in order to enroll in this government run health insurance system?

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
Yes	58%	48%	45%	49%	66%	63%	56%	64%	61%
No	30%	33%	41%	40%	23%	22%	36%	25%	25%
Don't Know/Refused	13%	18%	14%	11%	11%	15%	8%	11%	14%