



AHEAD OF WHAT'S NEXT.

Congressional Staff Briefing  
Alliance for Health Reform  
October 23, 2009

## **Health Reform: What the Public Really Wants, Thinks, Believes and Understands**

By Humphrey Taylor, Chairman - The Harris Poll

# Health Care Reform: What Does the Public Really Want? (1)

1. Most people are unhappy with the current health care system and favor reform. They want to have a system that gives them affordable access to quality care for the rest of their lives. Americans are more dissatisfied with the U.S. health care system than are people in (almost) all other developed countries.
2. Most people think that some kind of government intervention is needed to fix the system, to expand coverage, and to contain costs. However, support for government intervention does not, in most case, translate into support for a “government-run” system. (Though what people understand by that phrase is far from clear.)
3. While most people believe that fundamental changes are needed in our health care system, only a minority wants to completely rebuild it. Most people favor building on the present system and the bits of it that seem to work well.

# Health Care Reform: What Does the Public Really Want? (2)

4. There is substantial support for health care reform not only among the public but from large majorities of almost all major interest groups. Only small minorities of doctors, employers or insurers think that the system works pretty well now. However, they all have different interests and tend to see very different problems and support or oppose different proposals.
5. Most people are at least reasonably satisfied with their own health insurance (if they have it) and with the quality of care that they receive. However, that does not mean that they like the system. Most people believe that the costs are much too high and that everyone should be covered.
6. Few people seem to worry much about the unfunded liability for Medicare that economists tell us is a huge problem.

# Health Care Reform: What Does the Public Really Want? (3)

7. Proposals that people *believe* will take away the health insurance they have now, or force them to change doctors, that “ration” care, or prevent them from getting the treatments they think they need are deeply unpopular.
8. There is no consensus on the appropriate roles of the government, employers and individuals. Half of the population thinks that health insurance and health care should be “an entitlement paid for by taxes,” while a third believes that it should be like other products and services, where you get what you can pay for.
9. Republicans and Democrats are highly polarized on many aspects of reform. Most Democrats focus on expanding coverage and limiting out-of-pocket costs. They tend to favor an expanded role for government. Most Republicans focus on cost containment and oppose a bigger role for government. Democrats are much more likely than Republicans to think that health care is a “right.”

# Health Care Reform: What Does the Public Really Want? (4)

10. Public support for and opposition to the following differ greatly:

- “Health Care Reform”
- “Obama’s Proposals”
- “Democratic Proposals”
- “Republican Proposals”

11. There are many things that many people do not want. They do not want to pay much higher taxes and out-of-pocket costs. They don’t want to damage the economy or increase unemployment. They dislike the idea of rationing and oppose anything that they think might reduce the quality of their care or limit their choices.

# Health Care Reform: What Does the Public Really Want? (6)

12. Most people do not think or talk about the issues that are the focus of much debate:

- health information technology
- comparative effectiveness reviews
- health information exchange
- reimbursement reform
- pay-for-performance
- quality measures
- outcomes research
- unfunded liabilities

When asked about these issues, the public's replies vary dramatically, depending on the language used.

13. Most people do not seem to see a conflict between giving patients every test and treatment they and their doctors want, however expensive, and containing costs.

# Uwe Reinhardt's "All American Wish List for Health Reform" (1)

1. Only patients and their own doctors should decide what clinical response is appropriate for a given medical condition, even if that response involves unproven clinical procedures or technology.
2. Neither government bureaucrats nor private insurance bureaucrats should ever refuse to pay for whatever patients and their doctors have decided to do in response to a given medical condition. An insurer's refusal to pay for a medical procedure is tantamount to rationing health care.
3. Rationing health care is un-American.

## Uwe Reinhardt's "All American Wish List for Health Reform" (2)

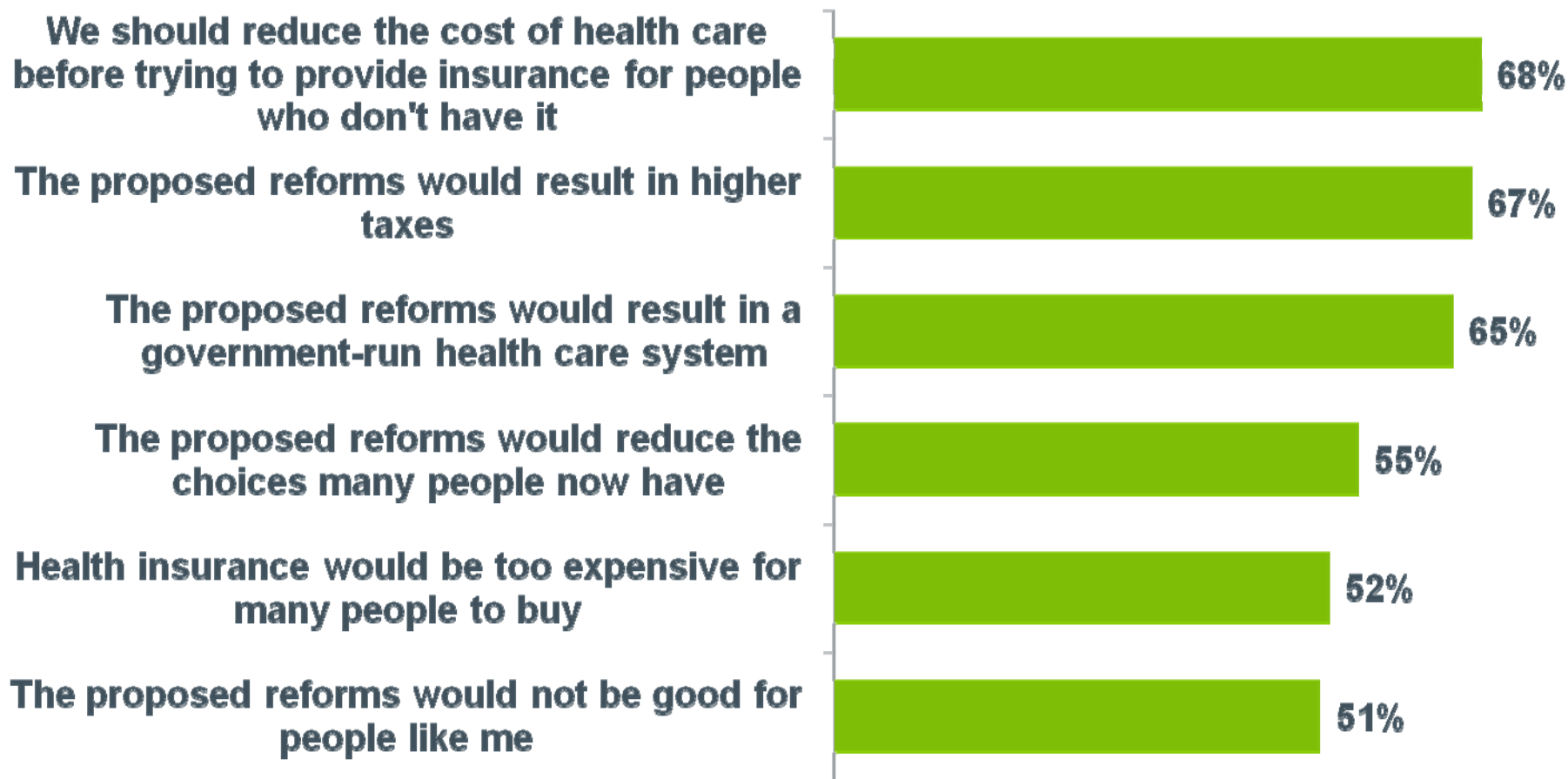
4. Cost-effectiveness analysis should never be the basis of any coverage decision by public or private party payers in health care, for to do so would put a price on human life – which, in America, unlike everywhere else, is priceless.
5. Government should not require individuals to purchase health insurance. Such a mandate would violate the constitutional rights of freedom-loving Americans.
6. Americans have a moral right to life-saving and potentially highly expensive medical care, should they fall critically ill, even if they are uninsured and could not possibly pay for that care with their own financial resources. (Why else would God have created hospitals and their emergency rooms?)



## Uwe Reinhardt's "All American Wish List for Health Reform" (3)

7. Government should stay out of health care. Specifically government should not control health care prices, nor should it increase its spending on health care, which is out of control.
8. Even small reductions to the future growth of Medicare spending – called “cuts” in Washington parlance – unfairly burden the elderly, along with the doctors and hospitals that serve them and the manufacturers of health products, lest the pace of technical innovation be impaired.

# Majorities Agree with Many Criticisms of the President's Proposals (1)



Source: Harris Poll, October 2009.

## Majorities Agree with Many Criticisms of the President's Proposals (2)

**The proposed reforms would make it harder for many people to get the care they need**

**51%**

**The proposed reform would change the system too much when only minor changes are needed**

**48%**

**The proposed reform would hurt Medicare**

**45%**

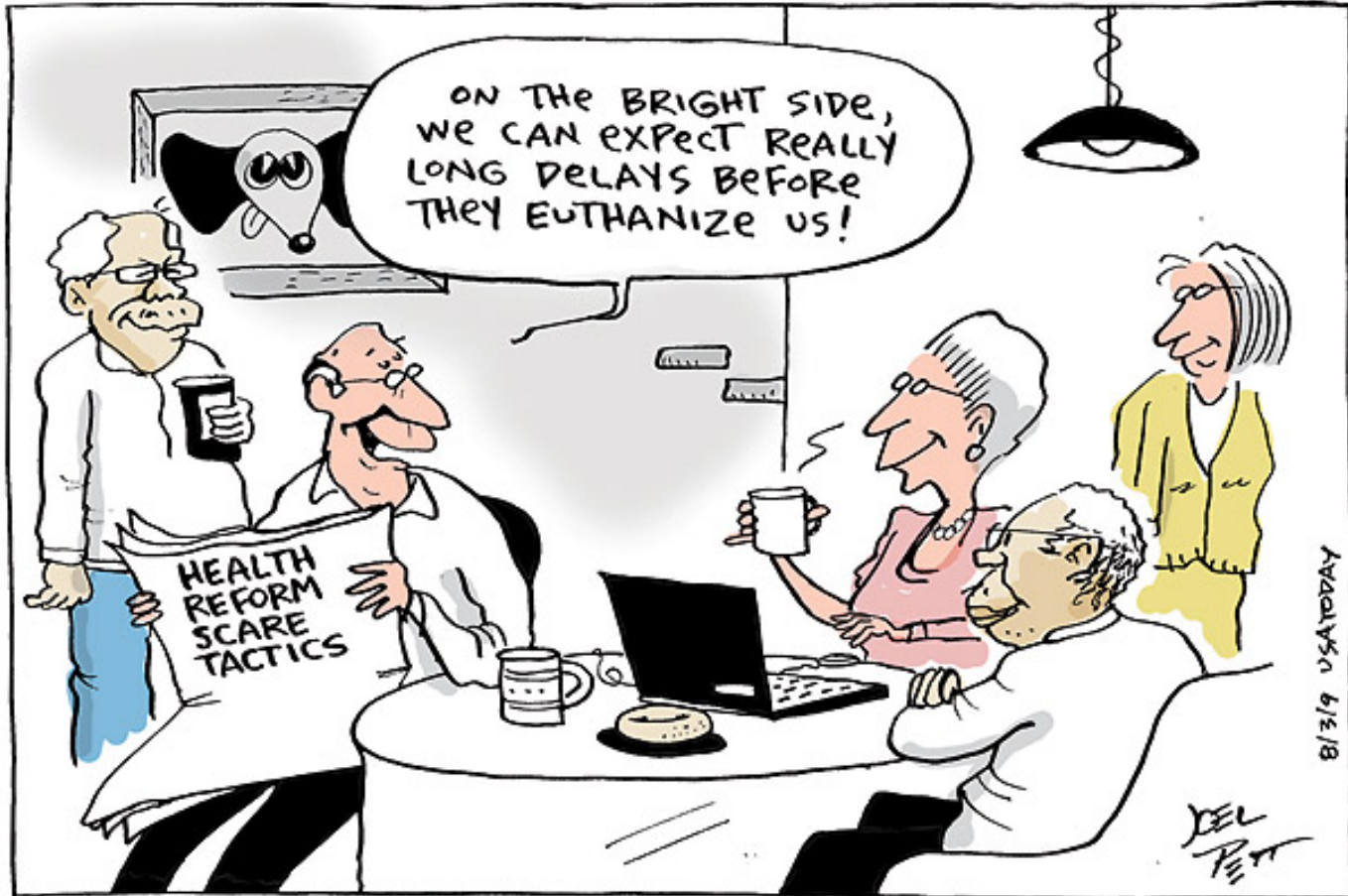
**The system we have now is better than what the president is proposing**

**43%**

**The proposed reforms would create panels that would decide who should live and who should die**

**37%**

Source: Harris Poll, October 2009.



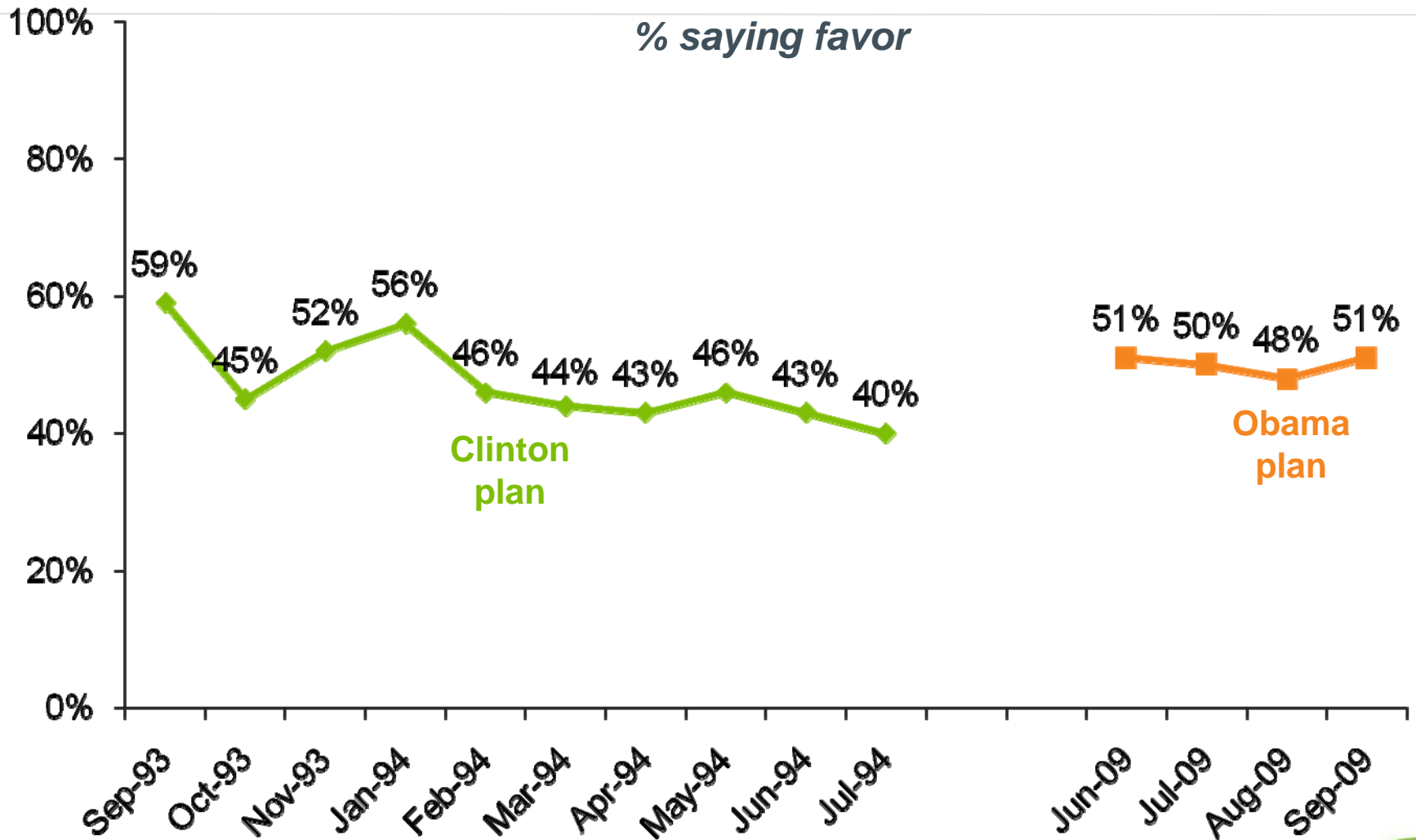


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# APPENDIX

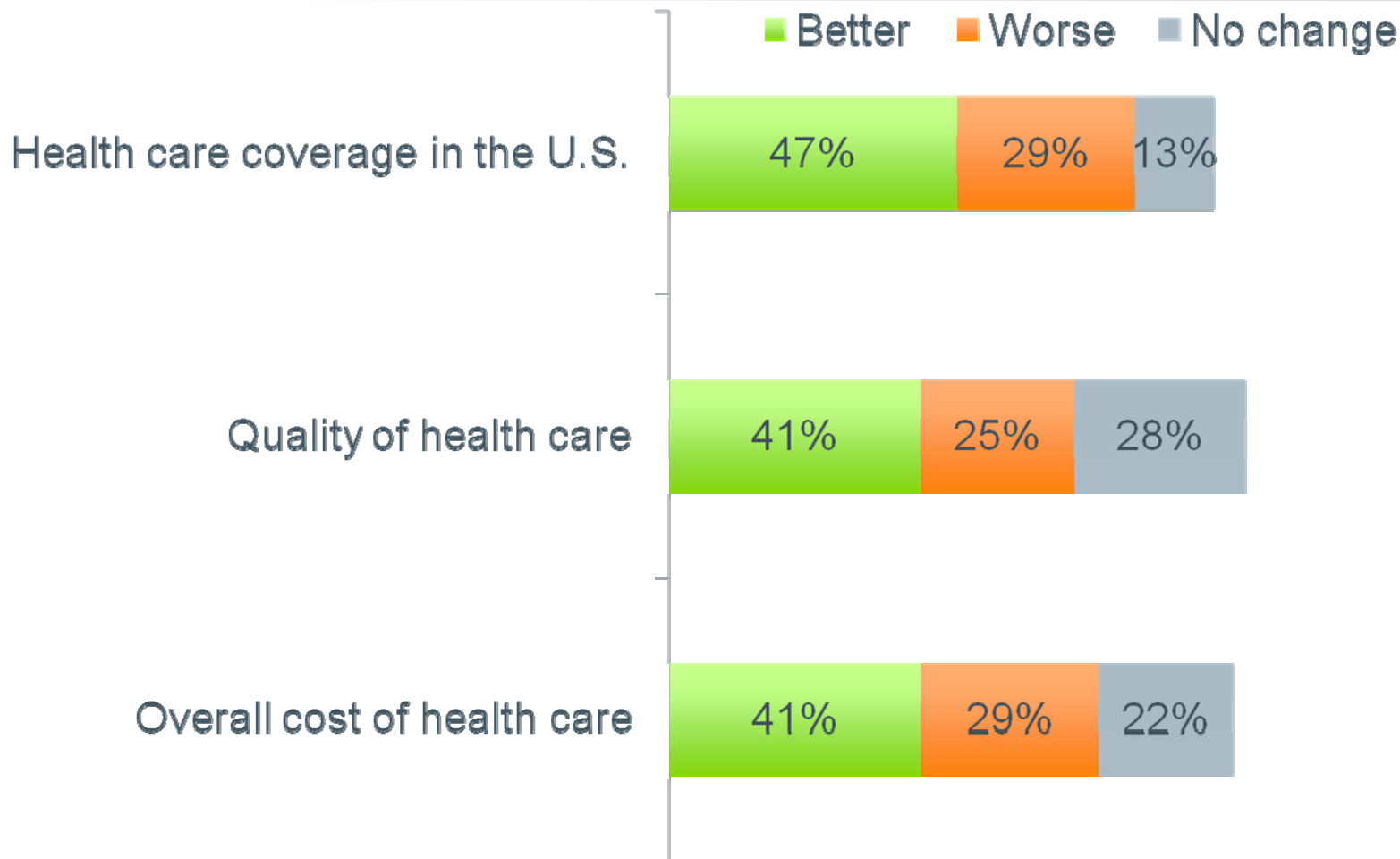
## SOME POLL FINDINGS AND OTHER INFORMATION

# Americans' Support for Health Care Reform Plans



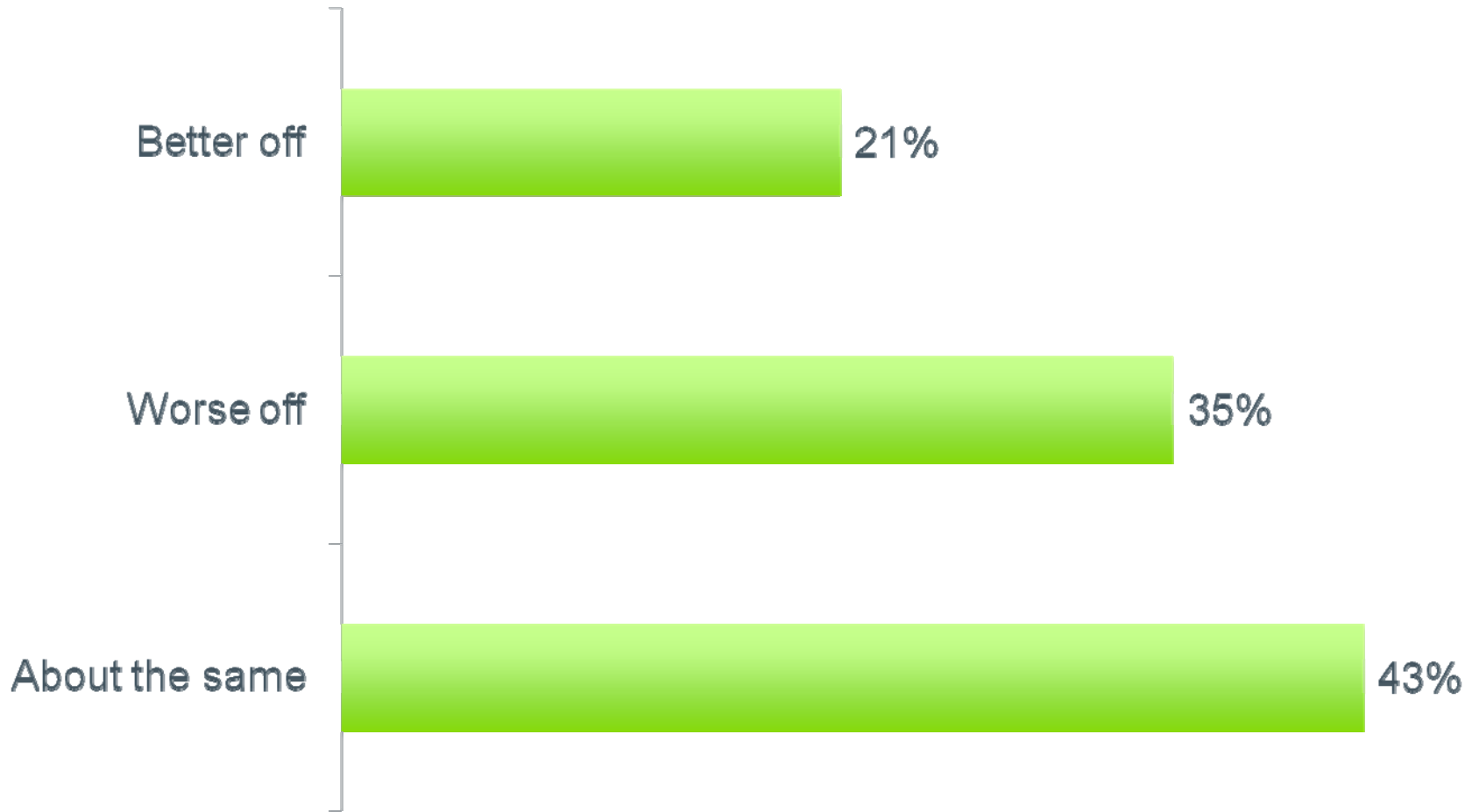
Source: Bob Blendon from CNN/Time polls, 1993-1994, CNN/ORC polls 2009.

# Americans' Expectations of Results of Health Care Reform on Country



Source: Bob Blendon from USA Today/Gallup, September 11-13, 2009.

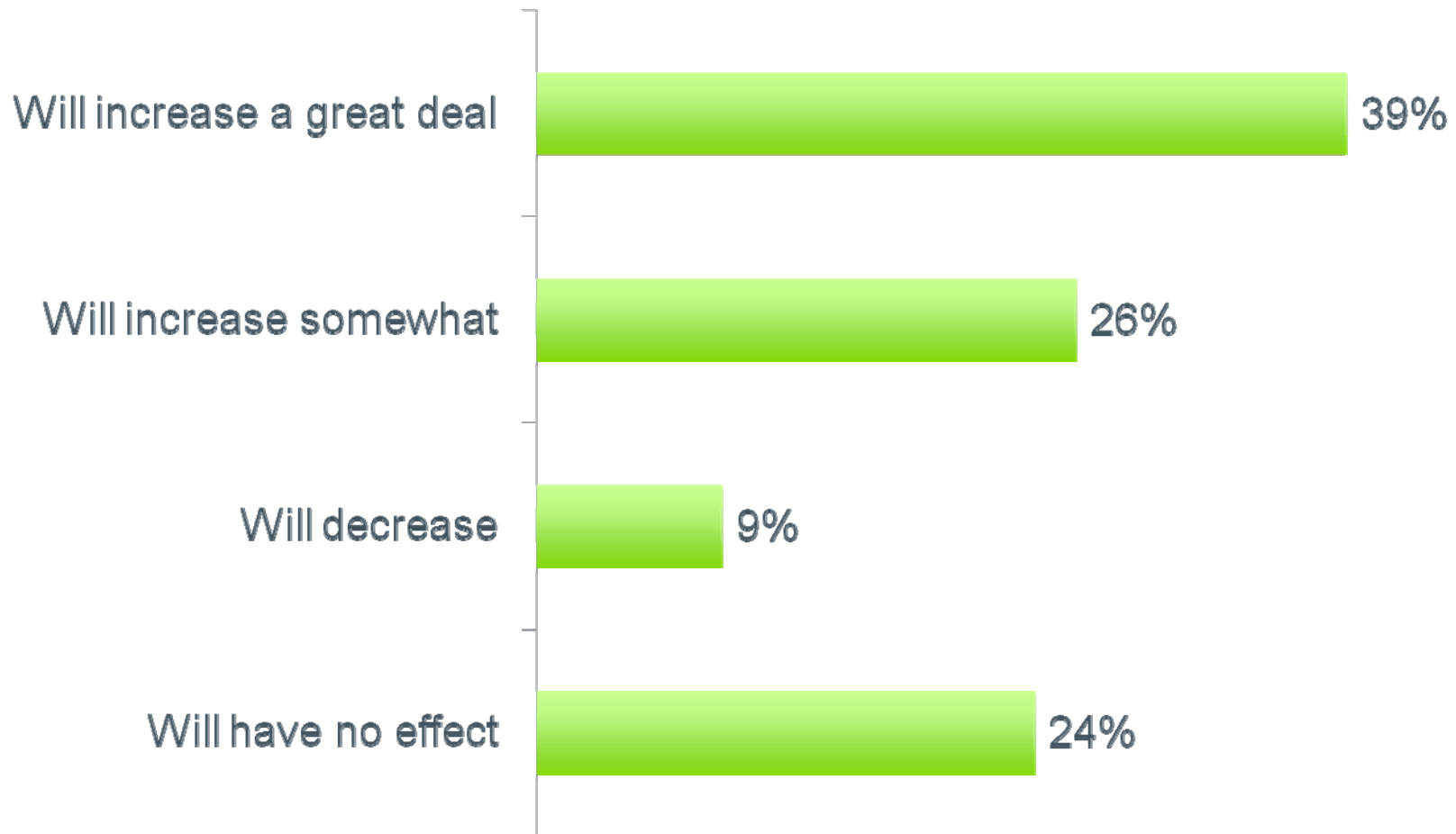
# Americans' Expectations of Results of Health Care Reform on Their Families Overall Are more Negative than Positive



Source: Bob Blendon from CNN/ORC poll, September 11-13, 2009.

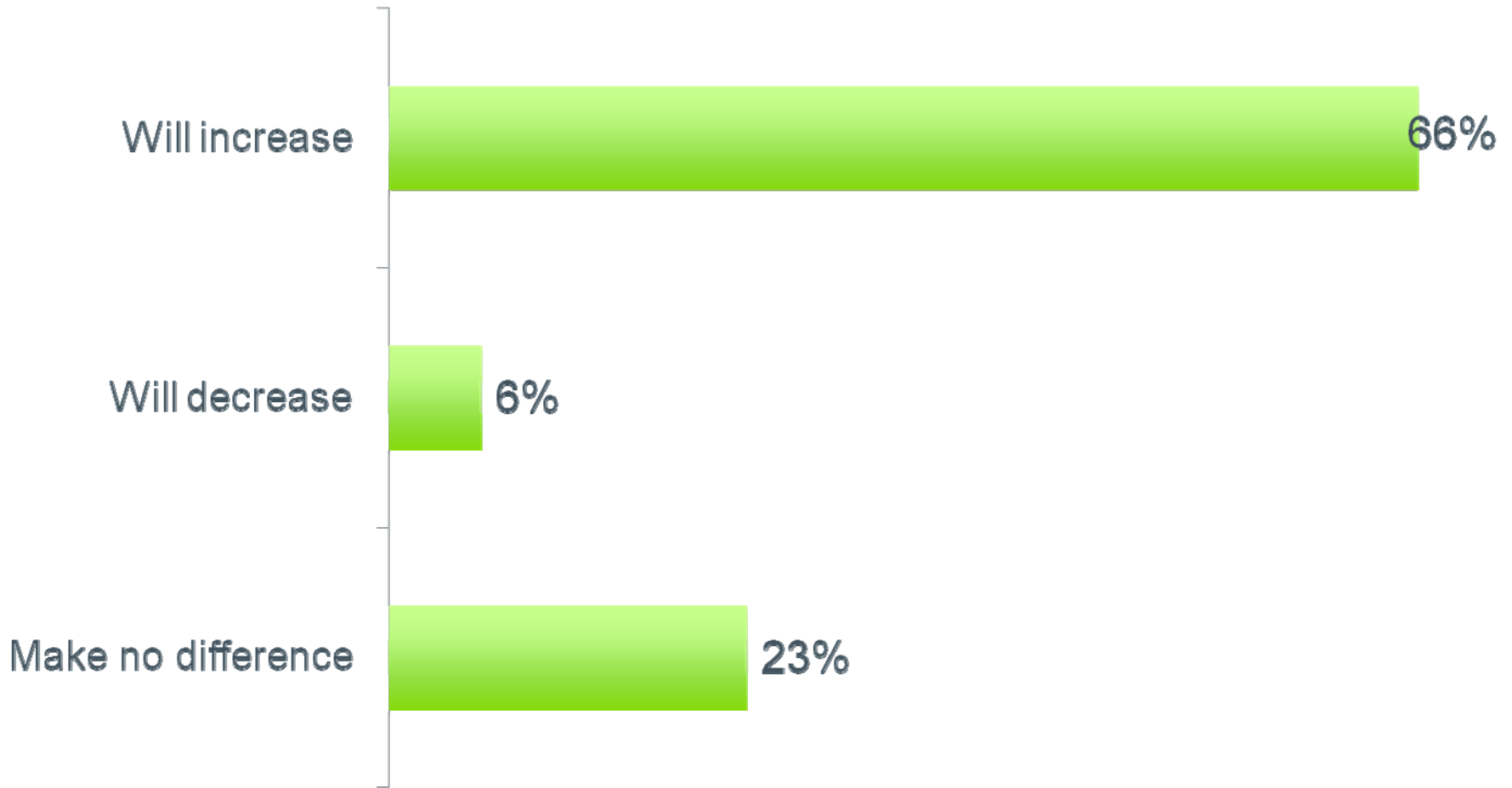


# Americans' Views on the Effect of Health Care Reform on the Federal Budget Deficit Are Generally Negative



Source: Bob Blendon from Washington Post/ABC News poll, September 12, 2009.

# Americans' View About the Effect of Obama's Health Plan on the Taxes They Pay



Source: Bob Blendon from *Quinnipiac University poll, July 27-August 3, 2009.*

# The System Is *Already* Fiendishly Complicated

- Medicare (A, B, C, & D)
- Medicaid
- Veterans
- D.O.D.
- FEHBP
- WIC
- Native Americans
- Community Clinics
- PBMs
- ERISA
- NIH
- CMSS
- DSH payments
- Uncompensated care
- Employer-provided coverage
- Individual insurance
- Fee-for-service, capitation and salaried physicians
- Solo, small and large group practices
- Integrated medical systems
- CDC
- AHRQ
- SRGs

Etc., etc.

# Reform Is Fiendishly Complicated (1)

## 1. COVERAGE ISSUES

- Employer mandates
- Subsidies to small employers
- Pre-existing conditions
- Public option
- Individual mandates
- Subsidies to individuals
- Etc.

## 2. HOW TO PAY FOR EXPANDED COVERAGE

- Taxing insurance premiums
- Taxing insurers
- Taxing hospitals
- Cutting payments to providers
- Comparative effectiveness review
- Reimbursement reform (bundled payments, episodes of care. . .)
- Etc.

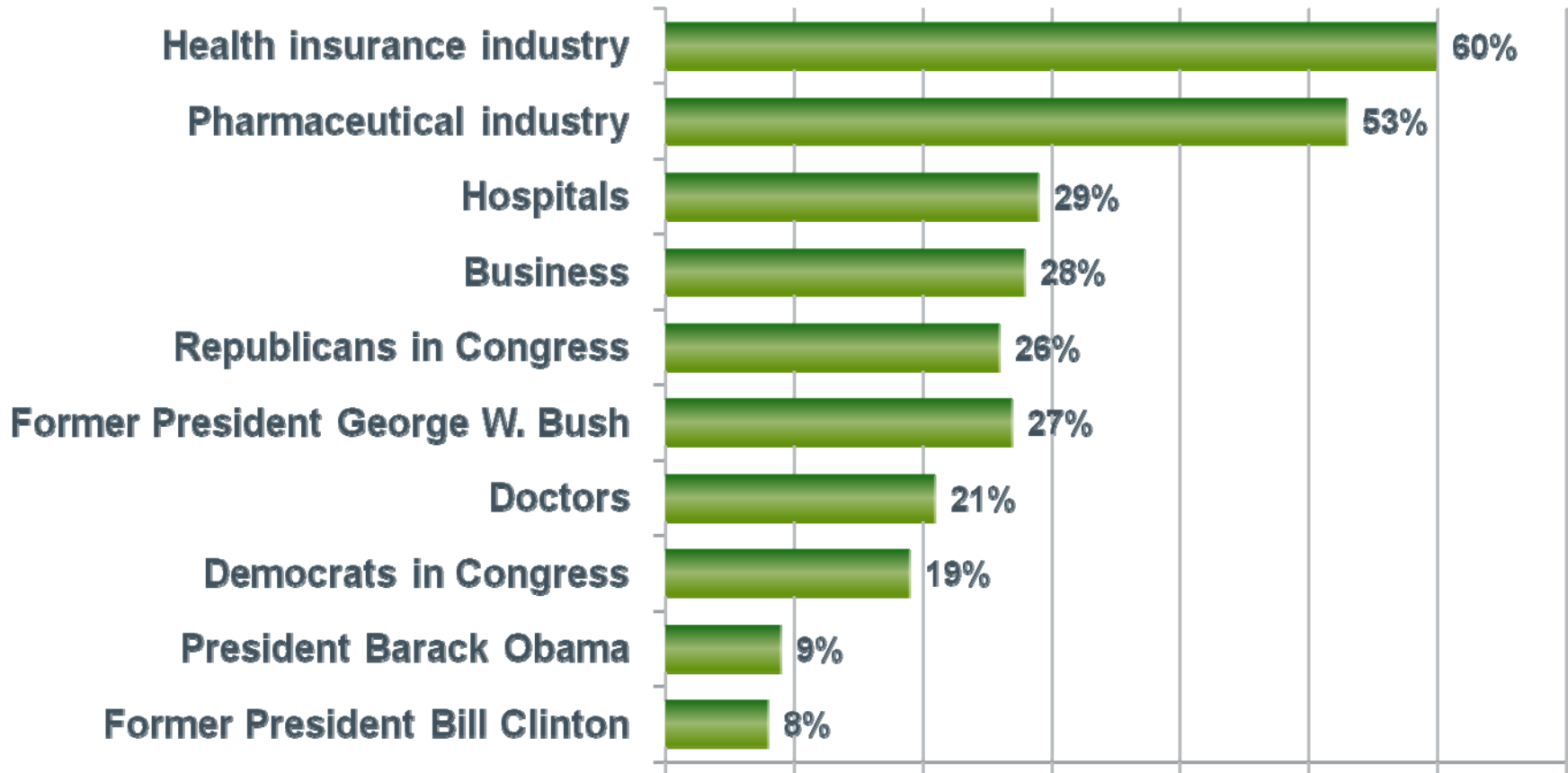
# Reform Is Fiendishly Complicated (2)

## 3. OTHER HOT ISSUES

- Quality measures
- Electronic medical records (and HIT)
- Accountable care organizations (ACOs)
- Prevention and wellness
- Pay-for-performance
- Patient-centered care and medical homes
- Transparency in data/costs/quality
- Outcomes research
- Etc.

# Who is to Blame for Problems with Health Care System?

## A Great Deal of Blame



# Attacks on Health Reform Proposals Have Been Successful (1)

## Obama's proposals would:

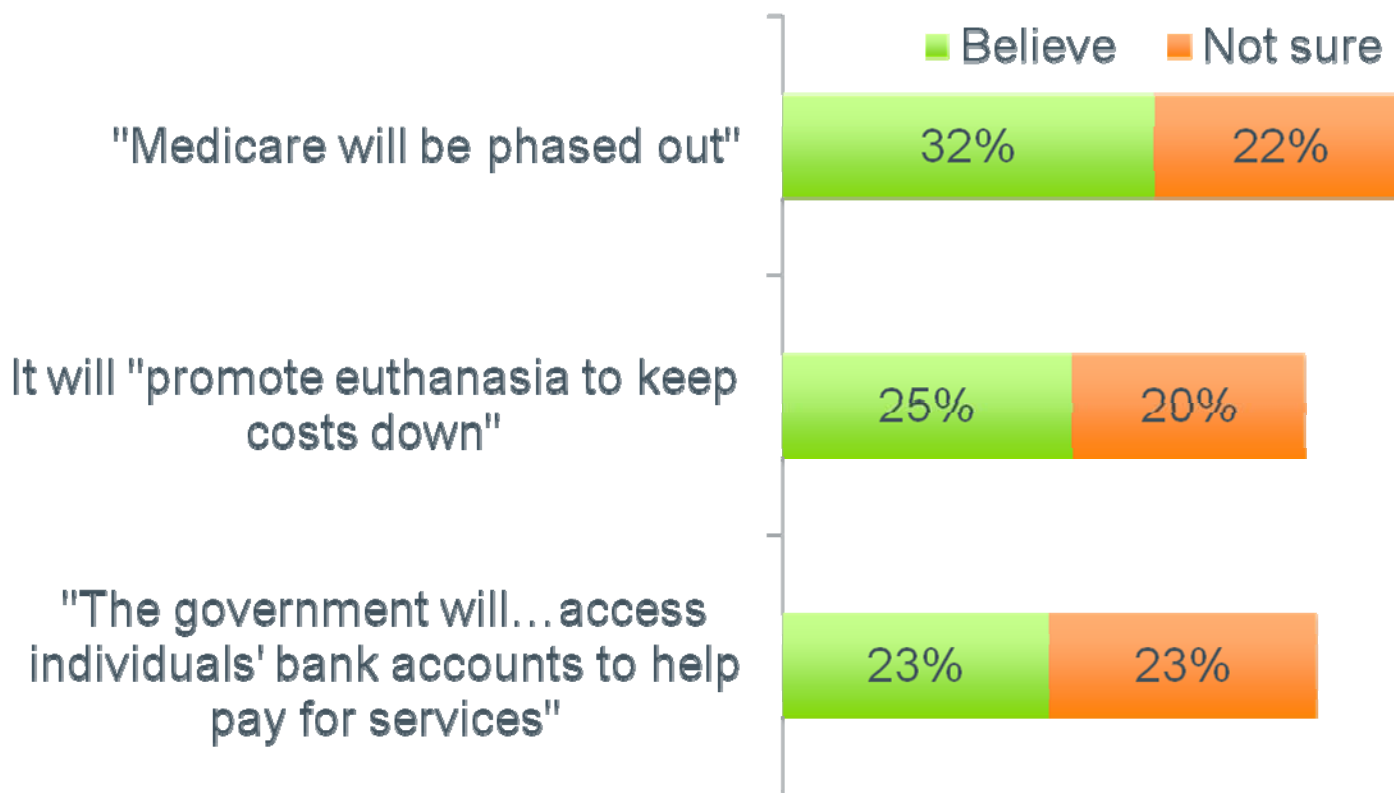
	Would	Not Sure
"Create a government-run health care system	58%	19%

	Would Not	Not Sure
Not allow people to "keep the health insurance they have now"	58%	19%

Source: Harris Poll, September 2009.

# Attacks on Health Reform Proposal Have Been Successful (2)

## IF PROPOSED PLANS BECOME LAW . . .



Source: Harris Poll, September 2009.



# Three Things to Watch That Could Derail Reform Bill

- Obama's job rating slumps
- Sustained public belief in emotionally powerful criticisms (even if they are false)
- Increasing public opposition to bill as it moves towards a vote