



The Massachusetts Election Was Not a Vote Against Health Reform

Since Scott Brown was elected to the Senate in January (52% Brown; 47% Coakley), many have linked voters' motives to national health reform. Our analysis of polling data shows that while health care was an important election issue, voters did *not* elect Brown to stop national health reform.

Health care was not the only issue for voters.

- Health care was second to the economy. **Seventy-nine percent** of Massachusetts voters polled said their first priority was to “strengthen the economy and create more good jobs.”¹
- “Electing a candidate committed to controlling health care costs and covering the uninsured” was a major priority for more than half (54%) of all voters.²
- Brown won among voters who said jobs and the economy were a high priority (Brown 55%; Coakley 44%) and won a larger majority among voters who highlighted taxes and spending (Brown 70%; Coakley 29%).³

The majority of voters who care about health care cast their ballot for Coakley.

- Coakley won 97% of the vote among people who “strongly favored” national health reform proposals before Congress.⁴
- Coakley won among voters who rated national health reform most important to them (Coakley 53%; Brown 46%).⁵

Brown's position on health care did not influence voters.

- **Eighty-two percent (82%)** of voters were aware of Scott Brown's opposition to national health care legislation.⁶ Yet it did not have a strong impact on the election. Of voters who knew Brown's position on health care reform, an equal number said it made them *less* likely to support him (39%) as said it made them *more* likely to support him (41%).⁷

Most voters, including Brown supporters, want him to work with Democrats on national health reform, not stop it entirely.

- Nearly half (48%) of Brown voters said that they would like him to collaborate with Democrats and add Republican ideas to national health care reform legislation.⁸

Overall, Americans are uncertain about what's in health care reform. Once they learn more about the details, they are more likely to support the current national proposals.

- A January poll found 42% of Americans support the national health care reform proposals; 41% oppose.⁹
- However, learning details about the bills shifted opinions on reform. For instance, 59% of people who initially opposed the proposals said that learning that most people's existing insurance coverage would not change made them more supportive of reform.
- And 17 of 27 provisions – including insurance rules, Exchanges, and reducing the Medicare prescription drug “doughnut hole”- made respondents more supportive of reform proposals.¹⁰

Massachusetts passed comprehensive health reform in 2006; Scott Brown voted for it.

- A majority of all Massachusetts voters (67%) and a *majority of Brown voters* (53%) approve of Massachusetts health care reform, which is similar to current national proposals.¹¹

¹ Hart Research Associates. 2010. Election Night Survey of Massachusetts Senate Voters.

http://www.aflcio.org/issues/politics/upload/mass_elections.pdf. Margin of error +/-3.8%.

² Ibid.

³ Lake Research Partners, American Viewpoint, Inc, Women's Voices, Women Vote. 2010. Understanding the 2010 Massachusetts' Special Election. <http://thinkprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/WVWV-Mass-exits.pdf>. Margin of error +/-4%.

⁴ Rasmussen Reports. 2010. Massachusetts State Survey of 1,000 Special Election Voters.

http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/elections2/election_2010/election_2010_senate_elections/massachusetts/toplines/toplines_massachusetts_special_senate_election_january_19_2010. Margin of error +/-3%.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Hart Research Associates.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The Washington Post, Kaiser Family Foundation, Harvard School of Public Health. 2010. Massachusetts Special Election Poll. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/polls/WaPoKaiserHarvard_MassPoll_Jan22.pdf. Margin of error +/-4%.

⁹ Kaiser Family Foundation. 2010. What Public Opinion on Health Care Issues: January Health Tracking Poll.

<http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/upload/8042-F.pdf>. Margin of error +/-4%.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Hart Research Associates.