

## **Likely Voters Feel the Affordable Care Act Is Here to Stay. They Agree on Ways to Improve the Law.**

### ***New Findings from a Poll of Likely Voters in Five Battleground States***

October 8, 2015. In a new survey sponsored by Community Catalyst and SEIU, likely voters express frustration with the prolonged political debate over the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and support keeping the law and working to improve it. The survey shows that most likely voters believe the healthcare law is here to stay. Thinking about the 2016 election, they prefer a candidate who will keep and improve the law to one that will repeal it and start all over again. In many of these results there is a partisan divide, but where they agree most is that Congress should work together to make the law better.

Beyond the political debate over the law, the survey finds surprising consensus. Most likely voters consider outcomes of the law to be important and they agree on a number of ideas for improving the law.

The survey was conducted September 15-19, 2015 by PerryUndem with 1,005 likely voters in Florida, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.<sup>1</sup> The five main takeaways from the survey are:

1. **Likely voters believe the ACA is here to stay.** Two-thirds of likely voters agree with this (64%). They want Congress to work to improve the law (71% agree) and they would rather have elected officials focus on improving the law than keep trying to repeal it (58% vs. 40%).
2. **They prefer a candidate who will keep the law and improve it.** They would choose a keep/improve candidate over one who wants to repeal the law and start all over (55% vs. 40%).
3. **They value the outcomes of the law.** Across party affiliation, likely voters say a number of outcomes of the law are important: no more exclusions due

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<sup>1</sup> The survey was conducted by telephone – 50% landline, 50% cell phone – with 1,005 likely voters in five battleground states: FL (n=202), NV (n=201), OH (n=200), PA (n=201), and VA (n=201). The survey fielded from September 15 to 19, 2015 and has a margin of error of  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points.

to pre-existing conditions (93% important); more people getting preventive care (93% important); people can get insurance if they lose a job or their life circumstances change (90% important); and more women are able to get maternity care and preventive services, including birth control, without a copay (87% important).

4. **They support a number of ideas to improve the law.** The improvements with greatest support reflect likely voters' interest in efforts to make premiums and cost-sharing more affordable, not just in the ACA marketplaces but broadly. Top ideas: requiring hospitals and doctors to be more transparent about their costs (91% support); preventing insurance companies from charging high copayments for medications for people with serious illnesses (87% support); and giving Medicare more power to negotiate drug prices (87%).
5. **They support expanding Medicaid.** Likely voters in NV (83%), OH (81%) and PA (80%) agree with their state's decision to expand Medicaid. On the other hand, in states that have not yet expanded Medicaid, likely voters (FL 72%; VA 74%) want their state to accept federal dollars and expand Medicaid.

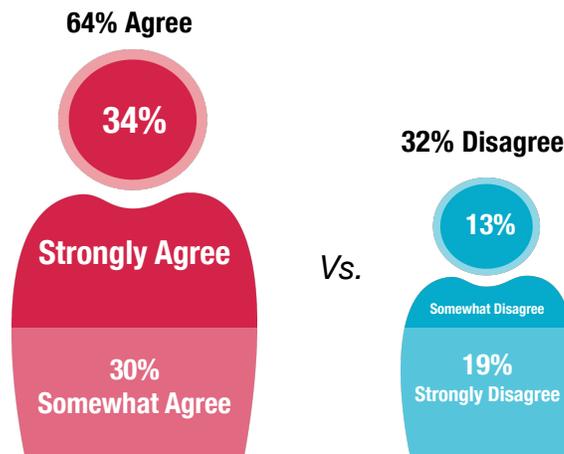
More details can be found on the following pages.

# FINDINGS

## 1 The ACA is here to stay.

Likely voters in battleground states are pragmatic when it comes to the healthcare law. They are twice as likely to agree that “the Affordable Care Act is probably here to stay” than disagree with that statement (64% agree vs. 32% disagree). [Figure 1] Democrats (83%) are most likely to say the ACA is probably here to stay. A majority of Independents (63%) also agree with this statement, while Republicans are split (45% agree, 50% disagree).

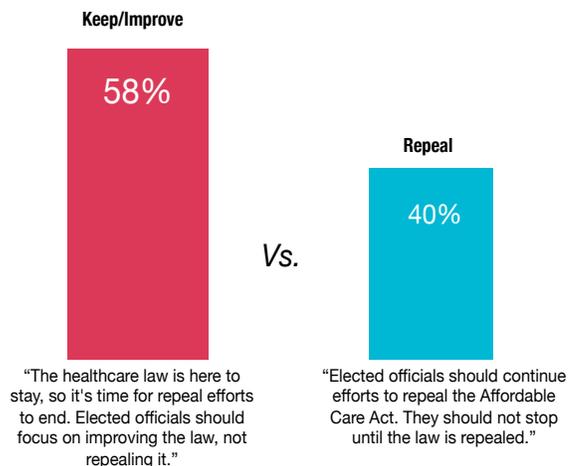
Figure 1: Do you agree or disagree with these statements about the law... “The Affordable Care Act is probably here to stay.” N=1,005



In addition, likely voters in battleground states want Congress to work to improve the law (71% agree, 48% strongly agree), while only 1 in 4 (26%) disagree. Majorities of Democrats (88%), Independents (67%), and Republicans (54%) all agree that Congress should work together to improve the law.

Most likely voters also say they would rather have elected officials focus on improving the law rather than keep trying to repeal it (58% vs. 40%). [Figure 2] Democrats (84% vs. 13%) and Independents (54% vs. 44%) favor keep/improve over repeal. Republican likely

Figure 2: Here are two statements about the Affordable Care Act. Please choose the one you agree with most. N=1,005



voters favor repeal over keep/improve (67% repeal vs. 31% keep/improve).

Likely voters' drive to improve the law likely stems from their ambivalence about whether the law is working or not (46% say the law is working but 49% disagree).

Finally, the context to these findings is one of frustration. Likely voters are tired of the political debate over the law. The survey asked likely voters for one word to describe how they feel about the debate over the ACA.

[Figure 3]

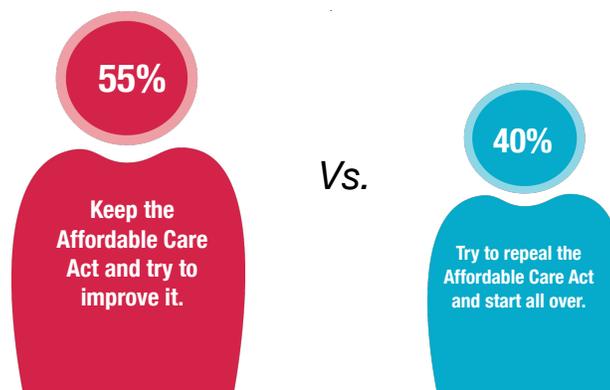


## 2 Likely voters prefer a candidate who will keep the law and work to improve it.

When asked whether they would choose a candidate for office who would keep and improve the Affordable Care Act or one that would repeal and start all over again, likely voters favor a keep/improve candidate over a repeal/start over candidate by a 15-point margin (55% to 40%). [Figure 4]

Democrats strongly prefer a candidate who will keep the ACA and try to improve it (87% vs. 9%), while Independents also prefer a keep/improve candidate to one who will repeal/start over (52% vs. 42%). Republicans, however, prefer a candidate who will repeal the law to a keep/improve candidate (72% repeal/start over candidate vs. 23% keep/improve candidate).

Figure 4: All other things being equal, would you want a candidate who would work to: N=1,005



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### Likely voters value the outcomes of the ACA.

Likely voters in battleground states were asked to rate the importance of a number of outcomes of the ACA. Of the seven tested, all were deemed to be “important” by the vast majority of likely voters. Only small percentages of likely voters say these are not important outcomes. [Table 1]

It is noteworthy that voters of different parties equally value these outcomes of the law. This is a place of agreement among likely voters. For example, 98% of Democrat, 89% of Independent, and 91% of Republican likely voters think it is an important outcome of the law that people with pre-existing conditions no longer need to worry about being denied coverage. Another example: 98% of Democrat, 89% of Independent, and 90% of Republican likely voters think it is important that some states are reporting that more people are getting preventive care. Finally, 97% of Democrat, 81% of Independent, and 80% of Republican likely voters think it is important that more women now have maternity coverage and are able to get other services, including birth control, with no copayments.

Table 1: Please tell me if you think each is an important or not important outcome of the law. N=1,005

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Somewhat Important</b>
People with pre-existing conditions no longer have to worry about being denied insurance because of their health.	<b>93%</b>	74%	19%
Some states are reporting that more people are now getting preventive services like physical exams and breast cancer screenings.	<b>93%</b>	73%	20%
Now if you lose a job, become pregnant, get married, or have another life-changing event, you can get health insurance right away without waiting.	<b>90%</b>	69%	21%
More women now have maternity coverage and are able to get cancer screenings, annual check-ups, and birth control with no copayments.	<b>87%</b>	64%	23%
More than sixteen million uninsured people have now been able to get health insurance.	<b>83%</b>	60%	23%
Studies are starting to show that fewer uninsured people are using hospital ERs for their care.	<b>81%</b>	52%	29%
Parents now have the option of keeping their children on their health insurance until age 26.	<b>76%</b>	52%	24%

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## They agree on ways to improve the law.

Likely voters also agree on ideas to improve the healthcare law. Most popular are increasing cost transparency in healthcare, preventing insurance companies from charging high copays for medications for those with a serious illness, and giving Medicare more power to negotiate drug prices. [Table 2]

Once again, likely voters agree on these changes regardless of party affiliation. For example, 96% of Democrat, 84% of Independent, and 91% of Republican likely voters support requiring healthcare providers to be more transparent about their costs. Also, 93% of Democrat, 83% of Independent, and 85% of Republican likely voters want the law to prevent insurance companies from charging high copays for medications needed to treat serious illnesses. There is even agreement on giving insurance commissioners more power to push back on insurers who have high rate hikes (86% Democrats; 71% Independents; and 78% Republicans).

*Table 2: I am going to read some ideas to improve the Affordable Care Act. Regardless of how you feel about the law, please indicate whether you support or oppose the idea. N=1,005*

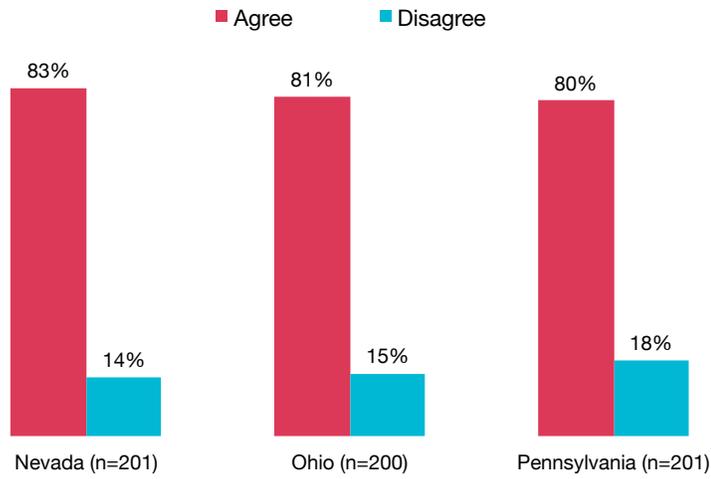
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Strongly Support</b>	<b>Somewhat Support</b>
Require hospitals, doctor practices, and other health care providers to be more upfront about their charges so that people know what they are spending before they use a health service.	<b>91%</b>	75%	16%
Prevent insurance companies from charging high co-payments for medications that are necessary for people with cancer and other serious illnesses.	<b>87%</b>	70%	17%
Change the way insurance companies pay doctors and hospitals so that there are more incentives to keep people healthy rather than paying them based on the number of procedures and tests they give.	<b>87%</b>	64%	23%
Give Medicare more power to negotiate prices for prescription drugs to lower prices.	<b>86%</b>	63%	25%
Expand tax credits to more small businesses to help them afford health insurance for their employees.	<b>86%</b>	61%	27%
Take steps to reduce health plan deductibles to lower out of pocket costs people pay for using health care services. Out of pocket costs might include things like co-pays, deductibles, and other costs.	<b>85%</b>	57%	28%
Give state insurance commissioners more authority to push back on insurance companies that want to hike up insurance premiums.	<b>80%</b>	57%	23%

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## They support expanding Medicaid.

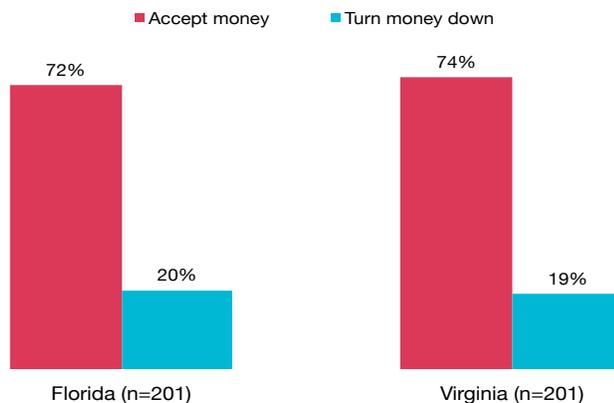
Likely voters were asked about expanding the Medicaid program. In states that have already expanded Medicaid, respondents were asked whether they agree with their states' decision or not. In response, large majorities of likely voters in Nevada (83%), Ohio (81%), and Pennsylvania (80%) agree with their state's decision to expand Medicaid. [Figure 5]

*Figure 5: Nevada/Ohio/Pennsylvania accepted federal dollars that were set aside to cover more uninsured state residents through the Medicaid program. Most of these individuals are working and cannot get or afford health insurance through their jobs. Do you agree or disagree with Nevada's/Ohio's/Pennsylvania's decision to accept these dollars and expand health coverage to more uninsured state residents?*



In states that have not yet expanded Medicaid, likely voters in Florida (72%) and Virginia (74%) say they want their state to accept federal dollars and expand Medicaid. [Figure 6]

*Figure 6: Florida/Virginia has turned down federal dollars that were set aside to cover uninsured state residents through the Medicaid program. Most of these individuals are working and cannot get or afford health insurance through their jobs. Do you think Florida/Virginia should accept this money to cover more uninsured state residents or turn the money down and leave them uninsured?*



## CONCLUSIONS

The survey finds likely voters in battleground states frustrated with the ongoing political debate surrounding the ACA. While there continues to be a partisan divide on this issue, the majority of likely voters want to keep the healthcare law and make it work better. They prefer a candidate who will keep the law and improve it to one who will replace it and start all over again. The idea that “Congress should work to improve the ACA” receives the highest agreement in the survey, with 71% agreeing (including 54% of Republican likely voters). They do not necessarily feel the law is working well, but they are tired of the discord and want to move forward.

Beyond the political debate, there is consensus. This is the new insight from the survey. Strong majorities of voters across the political spectrum agree that various outcomes of the law are important. They agree that no more exclusions due to pre-existing conditions, greater access to and use of preventive services, and people being able to enroll in insurance right away if they lose a job or become pregnant are important outcomes.

They also show a surprising amount of agreement on ideas to improve the law. They strongly support more transparency in pricing and costs, limits on what insurance companies can charge in copays for medications for people with serious illnesses, giving Medicare more authority to negotiate drug prices, and other ideas. These findings show there is a way forward for improving the law.

Finally, while some states continue to debate whether or not to accept federal dollars to expand their Medicaid programs, likely voters in battleground states are much clearer on what they want to see. In states that have already expanded, they support their state’s decision. In states that have not yet expanded, likely voters want them to accept federal dollars and expand.