



Californians Largely Unfamiliar with Patient Protection Propositions on November Ballot; Many Still Undecided, Opposition Outweighs Support

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Big Imbalance In Advertising: Opponents Waging Multi-Million Dollar Television Campaign Against Propositions 214 and 216; While Proponents Have Yet to Run Any Television Ads

San Francisco, CA -- Amidst reports that a managed care "backlash" is spreading across the country, Californians remain largely uninformed about two statewide patient protection initiatives on this November's ballot. As recently as the end of September, just five weeks before the election, a majority (64%) of Californians said they did not have a good understanding of Propositions 214 or 216 and nearly seven out of ten (67%) claimed they had never seen, read nor heard anything about them, according to a series of new tracking surveys of Californians conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Field Institute between August 14 and September 30.

Despite substantial differences between the two initiatives, even among those Californians who were aware of the initiatives, few could distinguish between them, with 73% saying they don't know what, if any, the differences are between the two initiatives. Most also could not identify which organizations support and oppose the initiatives.

"While the patient protection initiatives on the statewide ballot

are getting national attention as a barometer of public interest in regulation of the managed care industry, few Californians have tuned in," said Drew E. Altman, Ph.D., President of the Kaiser Family Foundation. "Without broader public debate it is hard to view whatever happens in November as a meaningful referendum on these issues."

Given Californians' general lack of familiarity with the propositions, it is not surprising that even with just one month until the election many said they had yet to make up their minds about how they will vote. As of the end of September, around a third remained undecided: 37% undecided on Proposition 214 and 31% undecided on Proposition 216. Only about a quarter say they would vote in favor of either measure if the election had been held today: 24% for Proposition 214 and 25% for Proposition 216. Pluralities, though not majorities, say they would cast their vote against the initiatives: 39% against Proposition 214 and 44% against Proposition 216. Support and opposition for the propositions remains virtually unchanged from the month before when Californians were first polled by the Foundation.

The Campaigns For and Against the Propositions

Four out of ten (37%) Californians say they have seen, read, or heard an ad either for or against the initiatives. This is a marked increase from the August poll when only 22% said they were aware of any advertising.

The heightened awareness of advertising coincides with more television advertising spending by the opponents. According to another Foundation commissioned study to monitor television advertising by the proponents and opponents of the propositions, during the month of August the opponents spent approximately \$767,500 on television advertising. Proponents did not purchase any television ad time during the month of August. The opponents' television ads ran in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, and Sacramento, potentially reaching up to 96% of the state's population. In addition, opponents have committed an additional \$2.3 million for television placements in the same four markets between September 16 and November 5, three times what they spent in the month in August. (Ad placement does not necessarily mean an ad will run, but indicates that air time has been reserved.) As of

October 5, proponents had not made any television placements for the remainder of the time leading up to the election.

Proponents of Proposition 216 report having run a single full-page ad in seven newspapers in September. Proponents of Proposition 214 say they will be running one ad in a local San Francisco-area newspaper this week. In addition, the opponents and both groups of proponents have grassroots activities underway to further communicate their positions.

Which Messages Build Support and Which Ones Generate Concern

Several of the major arguments made by the proponents of Propositions 214 and 216 resonate with Californians, for example, the need to ensure that doctors are able to place patients' well-being above financial interests and to give patients complete information about their medical condition and treatment options. When presented with these arguments, 69% and 67% of Californians, respectively, said they would be more inclined to support the propositions. However, the potential for higher health care costs and more government bureaucracy, concerns raised by the opponents, also appear to worry many voters. Between 50-52% of Californians said they would be less inclined to support the propositions after hearing the opponents' charges.

Underlying Attitudes

Californians ambivalence toward the propositions is underscored at least to some extent by their mixed opinions about managed care in general. While a third of Californians think the trend toward managed care in the state is a "bad thing," an almost equal percentage -- 31% -- say it is a "good thing" with a quarter believing it makes no difference (24%). Twenty-seven percent (27%) think more government regulation of the managed care industry is necessary. One out of five (21%) say the current amount of oversight is about right, and 17% say it is too strict. More than a third (35%) have no opinion on the issue.

The Kaiser Family Foundation, based in Menlo Park, California, is a

non-profit, independent national health care philanthropy and is not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries. The Foundation's work is focused on four main areas: health policy, reproductive health, HIV, and health and development in South Africa.

Single copies of the survey questionnaire/toplines and the summary report of television advertising expenditures, as well as a side-by-side comparison of the texts of Propositions 214 and 216, are available free-of-charge by calling the Kaiser Family Foundation's publication request line at 1 (800) 656-4533 (document #1200).