



MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Jim Burton
Public Opinion Strategies

RE: National Survey Results: Attitudes on Children's Health Care Programs and the Federal Budget

DATE: September 20, 2012

Summary of Findings:

A recent national survey of voters, conducted by Public Opinion Strategies, demonstrates that children's issues are important to voters when they are making up their minds about which candidate to support.¹ Eight-in-ten say a candidate's position on children's issues will affect their vote in November. In addition, voters are opposed to making spending cuts to the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). This sentiment is shared by voters regardless of their party identification or ideology. Even nearly half (48%) of the voters with a favorable opinion of the Tea Party are opposed to cuts to CHIP.

Close to three out of four likely voters oppose making spending cuts to CHIP, when told this would cost three hundred thousand children their health insurance coverage. More than half (55%) strongly oppose these cuts. In a related measure, three-quarters of voters say uninsured children in their own community is a problem. This issue cuts across socioeconomic groups. Lower income households are more likely to say it is a big problem than middle and upper income households; but, voters of all income levels view uninsured children in their community as a problem.

This survey fielded just after the national conventions, and less than half of the voters recall the candidates for President addressing children's issues. Of those who recall something, almost two-thirds feel the campaigns are not paying enough attention to the issue. This finding highlights the need for both campaigns to focus more attention on federal budget issues affecting children.

¹ **Methodology:** From September 10-13, 2012 POS completed 800 telephone interviews with registered voters nationwide, who are likely to cast ballots in the 2012 election. Interviews were conducted on landlines and cell phones. The margin of error for the full sample is +/-3.46 percent; margins of error for subgroups within the sample will be larger. Some percentages may sum to more than 100 percent due to rounding.

A plurality view President Obama as being better than Governor Romney (42% - 32%) at handling the problems children are facing in America. Though among all parents the two are statistically tied (37% Obama – 35% Romney). This ten-point overall difference is driven by younger voters and minorities, who strongly side with President Obama. Voters between the ages of 35-64 and whites are much more evenly split over who is the better candidate to deal with children's issues.

Asked multiple ways in the survey, the sentiment is clear: voters oppose cuts to programs impacting children. If trade-offs need to be made to focus more on children's issues, voters find it strongly acceptable to raise taxes on the wealthy, close corporate tax loopholes, cut subsidies for big companies, and raise taxes on corporate stock sales.

Voters ranging from those with a favorable opinion of the Tea Party to Democrats solidly agree that to protect CHIP from spending cuts, it is acceptable to close corporate tax loopholes and acceptable to cut subsidies for big companies.

When asked about areas of the federal budget that should be cut to reduce the deficit there is only one option that tested with intensity—cutting corporate tax loopholes. Of all the other items tested in the survey, voters were strongly opposed to making cuts to: defense, Social Security, Medicare, student loans, education, the Child Tax Credit, the Earned Income Tax Credit, Medicaid, Head Start, job training programs, medical/scientific research, child care programs, and child abuse prevention programs.

Even voters with fiscally conservative views, such as Tea Party supporters and those who are very concerned about the budget deficit, disapprove of cuts to programs that impact children, including: education, Medicaid, child abuse prevention, and tax credits for families.

Overall, the survey demonstrates significant support for keeping children's programs in place across party and ideological lines. Voters say they want to hear more from the presidential campaigns on children's issues, because a large majority (82%) says the candidate's position will affect their vote. Widespread support exists for keeping children's programs in place; however, when federal budget cuts must be made, voters only show support for closing corporate tax loopholes.