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TO: Interested Parties

FR: DSCC

RE: Republicans At Odds with Voters on Defining Issue of 2018

A year-and-a-half of Republicans' sustained attacks on health care have made it the defining issue of 2018. Here are the key trends observed from a variety of surveys taken over the last 18 months that underscore how the core challenge to GOP Senate candidates 15 weeks out from Election Day remains their deeply unpopular positions on the issue voters continue to say will determine their vote.

Republicans at Odds with Voters' Health Care Priorities

The introduction of the Republican health care agenda in 2017 crystalized for voters how those proposals would hurt them and their families: ending coverage for pre-existing conditions; eliminating essential health benefits like maternity care; an age tax; and sending premiums soaring.

Polls from POLITICO ([July 2017](#)), Fox News ([June 2017](#)), Suffolk ([June 2017](#)), and Quinnipiac ([June 2017](#)) found voters rejected Republicans' health care policies by enormous margins.

Polling from the American Medical Association ([June 2017](#)) showed swing state residents echoed concerns expressed in national polls. In 2018 cycle Senate states including **Nevada, Ohio, Tennessee and West Virginia, voters rejected the GOP's proposal – with no more than 26 percent of voters in any of those states supporting the Republican position**

Voters are more likely to say they're focused about health care than any other issue. Asked to select their top two issues from a list in a new HuffPost/YouGov poll, 30 percent of registered voters picked health care.

HuffPost/YouGov, [April 2018](#)

Recent surveys demonstrate voters' opposition has continued: polls conducted in 2018 from [CNN](#), [CBS](#), and [PPP](#) all show a sustained, intensifying backlash to the GOP's health care proposals.

Eliminating Pre-Existing Conditions Coverage Unpopular, GOP Blamed for Higher Costs

Republicans have also kept one of their most unpopular proposals, eliminating coverage for pre-existing conditions, in the spotlight. Twenty Republican Attorneys General – including two Senate candidates – filed a lawsuit against the Affordable Care Act that would make coverage protections for pre-existing conditions unconstitutional.

However, ending discrimination against people with pre-existing conditions has always been among the most popular aspects of the health care law.

- Kaiser found in [2009](#) that “eight in ten back the proposal, including 67 percent of Republicans, 80 percent of political independents and 88 percent of Democrats.”
- Today Kaiser finds that [76 percent all of voters say it is “very important”](#) to them that the provision remains law, with an additional 15 percent saying it is “somewhat important.”

- And [two-thirds](#) say a candidate's support for continued protections for people with pre-existing health conditions is either the "single most important factor" or "very important, but not the most important factor" in their vote choice.

Voters are also well aware that Republicans' efforts at sabotage are already hitting their pocketbooks.

- A June NBC/WSJ [found](#) that half of Americans – including independents by a 30-point margin - 49 to 29 – say they will blame President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans if health care costs increase," which they are [set to do](#) shortly before the 2018 midterms.
- A [June 2018 CBS News poll](#), more than twice as many voters say recent "changes to health care laws made by the Republican Congress" have hurt their health care coverage and costs (25 percent) compared to those who believe it has helped (10 percent).

Voters Trust Democrats on Health Care

With health care consistently ranking as voters' most important issue the question of who voters trust to address these concerns will be critical in November.

In a [March 2018](#) Morning Consult poll, Democrats had a 10-point edge on who all voters trust to handle healthcare (45-35). Among voters for whom healthcare is the most important issue, that edge is even more pronounced (55-26). In a similar CNN poll in [March 2018](#), "56 percent thought Democrats would do a better job of dealing with health care, compared to 36 percent who thought Republicans would."

Voters also side with Democrats' approach to health care, which is being articulated in ads like those from [Jacky Rosen](#) stating: "I'll work with both parties to fix Obamacare and bring down costs." [PPP found in April of 2018](#) that "66 percent say they want to keep what works about the law and fix what doesn't, while just 29 percent say they want to repeal it and start over with a new healthcare law." Kaiser's survey agreed, [finding in October 2017](#) that "a large majority of the public (71 percent) want President Trump and his administration to do what they can to make the current law work. These findings are echoed in key Senate states, like Indiana where [PPP found 61 percent](#) want to "keep what works about the Affordable Care Act and fix what doesn't."

Bottom line: The data confirms the challenge facing the GOP: in an election cycle defined by health care, voters don't like the Republicans' agenda, trust Democrats' approach more, and are preparing to hold every GOP Senate candidate accountable.