Results from the 2015 Cal Wellness–Field Health Policy Survey – Part 1

More California voters are embracing the Affordable Care Act. Greater than two in three believe the state has been successful in implementing the law. Increasing support for extending Medi-Cal services to undocumented residents.

By Mark DiCamillo, Director, The Field Poll

The state's registered voters are increasingly embracing the nation's Affordable Care Act (ACA) and its implementation in California. Greater than six in ten (62%) now support the law, up from 56% last year. Just 33% are opposed. While views about the ACA remain highly partisan, for the first time, majorities of voters in all major regions of the state, all races and ethnicities, and all age groups back the law.

More than two in three voters (68%) believe that the state's implementation of the ACA in California has been successful, while just 20% believe it has not. Opinions about this cross party lines, and includes not only large majorities of Democrats and no party preference voters, but a plurality of Republicans as well.

The survey also finds that voter support for extending Medi-Cal services to the state's undocumented residents is gaining in popularity. At present, 58% of the state's registered voters favor this idea, while 39% are opposed. Last year a narrower 51% to 45% supported this proposal.

About half of voters under age 65 (48%) say they have personally visited the state's Covered California website, the place where consumers and small businesses can shop for health insurance online. This is up twelve points from last year when 36% reported this.

Nearly two in three voters (63%) report that the state's Medi-Cal program is important to themselves and their families, of whom 45% say it is very important. The proportion of voters describing Medi-Cal as very important has increased sixteen points over the past four years, from 29% in 2011 to 45% this year.

Californians overwhelmingly agree with the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that low and moderate income Americans who buy health insurance through the federal government insurance exchange can receive financial assistance, in the same way as those purchasing it through the individual state exchanges. Greater than seven in ten state voters (74%) agree with the High Court's ruling, while just 22% disagree.

In light of the ruling, a nearly two-to-one majority now thinks the major provisions of the law are probably here to stay. In addition, two in three of the state's likely voters say that a candidate's position on the ACA will be very important to their vote for President and Congress in next year's elections.
These are the main findings from Part 1 of the 2015 Cal Wellness-Field Health Policy Survey. This year's survey, conducted by The Field Poll under a grant from The California Wellness Foundation was completed by telephone among a random sample of 1,555 California registered voters in eight languages and dialects June 25-July 16, 2015.

"These findings tell us that Californians value health equity," said Judy Belk, president and CEO of California Wellness. "There is increasing support for ACA, and a clear desire to be inclusive of all people, including the undocumented, when it comes to health care access."

Part 2 of the poll, for publication tomorrow, will examine voter satisfaction with the state's health care system overall, satisfaction with their own health plan, whether voters would prefer obtaining their health coverage from an employer or from the government, and voter views about the costs they are paying for health care.

OVERVIEW OF TODAY’S FINDINGS

Nearly two-to-one voter support for the ACA in California

The Field Poll has been measuring voter opinions about the ACA in California annually since its passage in 2010. Overall voter sentiment remained fairly stable in the first four years following its passage, with between 52% and 54% of voters in support. However, since then support for the law has grown. The current survey finds supporters now outnumbering opponents nearly two to one, 62% to 33%.

Views about the ACA in California have consistently been partisan-based. In the current survey Democrats back the law overwhelmingly, 85% to 11%, while Republicans are opposed 68% to 25%.

However, this year, for the first time, majorities of voters in all major regions of the state, all races and ethnicities, and all age groups back the law.

Broad agreement with recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling on the ACA

Earlier this summer the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a key part of the ACA, when it ruled that the federal government can provide financial help to low and moderate income Americans who buy health insurance through the federal government's insurance exchange, as well as those operated by individual states. California voters express broad agreement with this decision, with 74% endorsing the ruling and just 22% disagreeing. Agreement with the High Court’s decision crosses party lines and includes 86% of Democrats, 77% of no party preference voters, and 51% of Republicans.

In light of the ruling, a nearly two-to-one majority of California voters believe that the law's major provisions are probably here to stay.
Candidate positions on the ACA very important to likely voters

This year's poll asked likely voters how important a candidate's position on the ACA will be to them when deciding whom to support for President and Congress in next year’s elections. Two in three likely voters in California maintain that this would be very important to them in both elections. In addition, a slightly larger proportion of ACA supporters than opponents consider the issue very important.

Increasingly positive view of how the state is implementing the ACA

A large and growing majority believes the state has been successful in its implementation of the health care law in California. The current survey finds 68% of voters saying this, up from 60% who reported this last year. By contrast, just 20% believe the state's efforts have not been successful, while another 12% have no opinion.

The view that the state has been successful in implementing the ACA crosses party lines, and includes large majorities of Democrats and no party preference voters, as well as a plurality of Republicans.

In addition, increasing majorities believe the state has been successful in achieving six of seven specific goals of the law. This includes encouraging more previously uninsured residents to get coverage, expanding Medi-Cal to extend health insurance to more low-income residents, providing consumers with more insurance choices, obtaining the federal funds needed to implement the law, establishing a one-stop place where consumers can go to shop for health insurance online, and providing insurance buyers with better consumer protections.

However, voters remain divided with regard to another ACA goal, limiting the rate increases that insurance companies charge their customers. While 42% of voters feel California has been successful in meeting this objective, 44% do not.

About half of voters under age 65 have personally visited the Covered California website

Covered California, the place where California consumers and small businesses can shop for health insurance online, is well known to large proportions of voters, and about half (48%) of the state's registered voters under age 65 say they have personally visited its web site. This represents a 12-percentage point increase from the 36% who reported this one year ago. Most likely to have visited the web site are voters who are currently uninsured or have gone without health insurance at some point in the past two years.

Of those who visited the web site 55% say they were satisfied with their experience there, while 40% were dissatisfied. However, reported satisfaction with Covered California is highly partisan and related to a voter’s overall opinion of the law. While 72% of the law’s supporters who have visited its web site say they were satisfied with their experience there, just 21% of those opposing the law who visited the site feel this way.

Nearly nine in ten (87%) of voters who completed the survey in a non-English language say that if they needed more information about Covered California they would prefer receiving it in their own language. Spanish speakers are somewhat more likely than Asian language speakers to say they would want this information provided to them in their own language.
Growing proportion says Medi-Cal is very important to themselves and their families

The current survey finds that nearly two in three voters (63%) report that the state's Medi-Cal program is important to themselves and their families, with 45% saying it is very important. The proportion of voters describing Medi-Cal as being very important has increased sixteen points over the past four years, from 29% in 2011 to 45% this year.

Nearly all current Medi-Cal recipients (91%) term the program very important, as do 79% of those with an annual household income of less than $20,000. In addition, large majorities of Latinos (66%), Asian Americans (61%) and African Americans (55%) also describe the program as being very important to them.

When asked whether Medi-Cal has been generally successful in meeting its program goals, four times as many voters say that it has (68%) as feel it has not (17%).

Increasing voter support for extending Medi-Cal to undocumented residents

The current survey repeated a question first posed to California voters last year about whether the state's Medi-Cal program should be expanded to provide preventive health services to undocumented residents, who are not currently eligible for coverage under the ACA. The results show that 58% of the state's registered voters now favor extending Medi-Cal for undocumented residents, while 39% are opposed. This represents a significant increase in voter support from last year when supporters outnumbered opponents by a narrower 51% to 45% margin.

However, there are big differences in voter opinions about this proposal by party. Democrats favor the idea four to one (78% to 19%), while Republicans are opposed nearly three to one (72% to 25%). No party preference voters largely reflect overall voter sentiment, supporting the proposal 60% to 38%.

When examining voter opinions by race and ethnicity, registered Latinos report the highest level of support for extending Medi-Cal to undocumented immigrants, with 77% in favor. However, the proposal also now receives majority support from the state’s white non-Hispanic, African American and Asian American voters.

Similar results are observed when asking voters about a proposal that would make it illegal for California businesses to discriminate against residents based on their immigration status, citizenship or language. Statewide, 57% of voters support this idea, while 37% are opposed.

Note: See topline findings attached for the wording and percentage distributions to each question referenced in this release.
About the Survey

The 2015 Cal Wellness-Field Health Policy Survey is the ninth in an annual series of health policy surveys conducted among California registered voters by The Field Poll on behalf of The California Wellness Foundation. This year's survey was completed by telephone among 1,555 California registered voters in eight languages and dialects – English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Vietnamese, Tagalog and Hindi. Interviews were completed on either a voter's landline phone or a cell phone depending on the source of the telephone number on the voter file and the preference of the voter. In this survey 1,193 interviews were completed on a cell phone, while 362 were completed on a regular landline or other phone.

To enable the survey to more closely examine the opinions of the state's growing Asian American voter population, the statewide sample was augmented among random samples of the state’s Chinese American, Filipino American, Vietnamese American, Korean American, and Asian Indian American voters. Of the 1,555 interviews completed statewide, 1,227 were conducted in English, and 328 in non-English languages.

All interviewing on the survey was completed June 25 – July 16, 2015. Up to six attempts were made to reach and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period. After the completion of interviewing, the overall sample was weighted to align it to the proper statewide distribution of voters by race/ethnicity and by other demographic, geographic and political characteristics of the California registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to any probability-based survey depend upon its sample size. According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from the overall sample are subject to a maximum sampling error of +/- 2.6 percentage points. The maximum sampling error is based on percentages in the middle of the sampling distribution (percentages around 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution have a smaller margin of error. Sampling error will be larger for analyses based on subgroups of the overall sample.

About The California Wellness Foundation

The California Wellness Foundation is a private, independent foundation created in 1992, with a mission to improve the health of the people of California by making grants for health promotion, wellness education and disease prevention. Since its founding in 1992, the Foundation has awarded 7,690 grants totaling more than $912 million. For more information, visit the Foundation's website, www.calwellness.org, or contact Cecilia Laiché, communications officer, at (818) 702-1900.
2015 Cal Wellness-Field Health Policy Poll
Release #2510
(Topline Findings)

TOTAL REGISTERED VOTERS
(n = 1,555)

As you know, about five years ago the Congress passed and President Obama signed into law the Affordable Care Act, to reform the nation’s health care system and it is now being enacted.

1. Generally speaking, do you support or oppose the health care law? (IF SUPPORT OR OPPOSE, ASK:) Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?
   SUPPORT STRONGLY ........................................ 41%
   SUPPORT SOMEWHAT ..................................... 21
   OPPOSE SOMEWHAT ......................................  6
   OPPOSE STRONGLY ........................................ 27
   DON’T KNOW/REFUSED ....................................  5

2. So far, would you say the health care law has directly helped you and your family, directly hurt you and your family or has it not had much direct impact?
   HELPED ................................................................ 25%
   HURT .................................................................... 19
   NO DIRECT IMPACT ............................................ 54
   BOTH HELPED AND HURT (VOL) ...........................  1
   DON’T KNOW/REFUSED .....................................  1

IF HELPED OR BOTH HELPED AND HURT:
(n = 427)

3. What would you say is the main way the health care law has helped you and your family? Has it (READ CATEGORIES IN RANDOM ORDER, BUT ALWAYS READING FOURTH CATEGORY LAST) (ANSWER CAN BE A MULTIPLE)
   ( ) allowed someone in your family to get or keep health coverage ........................................ 54%
   ( ) lowered your health care or health insurance costs ................................................................. 31
   ( ) made it easier for you to get the health care you need ............................................................ 36
   or it has helped in some other way ............................................................................................. 16
   DON’T KNOW/REFUSED ...........................................................................................................  2

IF HURT OR BOTH HELPED AND HURT:
(n = 255)

4. What would you say is the main way the health care law has hurt you and your family? Has it (READ CATEGORIES IN RANDOM ORDER, BUT ALWAYS READING FOURTH CATEGORY LAST) (ANSWER CAN BE A MULTIPLE)
   ( ) caused someone in your family to lose insurance ............................................................. 15%
   ( ) increased your health care or health insurance costs .......................................................... 70
   ( ) made it more difficult for you to get the health care you need ............................................ 30
   or it has hurt in some other way ............................................................................................ 26
   DON’T KNOW/REFUSED ...........................................................................................................  1

IF NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGE INTERVIEW:
(n = 328)

5. If you needed to obtain more information about Covered California, in which language would you prefer to receive this information – English or (LANGUAGE OF INTERVIEW)?
   ENGLISH ................................................... 12%
   LANGUAGE OF INTERVIEW ................................ 87
   DON’T KNOW ................................................  1

6. Regardless of whether you support or oppose the health care law, how successful do you think the state of California has been in implementing the law – very successful, somewhat successful, not too successful or not at all successful?
   VERY SUCCESSFUL ........................................ 23%
   SOMewhat SUCCESSFUL .................................. 45
   NOT TOO SUCCESSFUL ..................................... 13
   NOT AT ALL SUCCESSFUL ..................................  7
   DON’T KNOW/REFUSED ................................... 12
7. I am going to read some of the goals that California initially set out to achieve when it began implementing the health care law. For each please tell me how successful you think the state has been in achieving each goal. **READ ITEMS IN RANDOM ORDER, ASKING:** How successful do you think California has been in achieving this goal – very successful, somewhat successful, not too successful, or not at all successful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORDER</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>VERY SUCCESSFUL</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT SUCCESSFUL</th>
<th>NOT TOO SUCCESSFUL</th>
<th>NOT AT ALL SUCCESSFUL</th>
<th>NO OPINION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. encouraging more previously uninsured residents to get health insurance coverage</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. providing health insurance buyers with better consumer protections</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. obtaining the federal funding needed to implement the law</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. providing California consumers with more health insurance choices</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. limiting the rate increases that health insurance companies charge to their customers each year</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. establishing Covered California, a one-stop place where it will be easy for consumers and small businesses to shop for health insurance online</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g. expanding Medi-Cal to extend health insurance coverage to more low income Californians</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IF UNDER AGE 65:**

8. Have you personally visited the Covered California website to get more information about the kinds of health insurance being offered there?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>DON’T KNOW/REFUSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>(n = 565)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Overall, how would you rate your experience with Covered California – very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. I am going to read some proposals that have been made to expand or modify the way the health care law is implemented in California, and please tell me whether you favor or oppose each one. **READ ITEMS IN RANDOM ORDER, ASKING:** Do you favor strongly, favor somewhat, oppose somewhat or oppose strongly this proposal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>DON’T KNOW/REFUSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>(n = 565)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>The U.S. Supreme Court recently ruled that under the Affordable Care Act the federal government is allowed to provide financial help to low and moderate income Americans who want to buy health insurance in states that do not operate their own health insurance marketplaces. Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or disagree strongly with the Supreme Court’s ruling in this case?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. In light of the Supreme Court’s ruling, do you think major provisions of the health care law are probably here to stay or do you think they will eventually be eliminated?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBABLY HERE TO STAY</th>
<th>EVENTUALLY ELIMINATED</th>
<th>DON’T KNOW/REFUSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. How important for you and your family is Medi-Cal, California’s health program that provides health insurance and long-term care to certain low-income adults and children? Is it very important for you and your family, somewhat important, not too important or not at all important?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERY IMPORTANT</th>
<th>SOMewhat IMPORTANT</th>
<th>NOT TOO IMPORTANT</th>
<th>NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT</th>
<th>DON’T KNOW/REFUSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Overall, how successful do you think Medi-Cal has been in meeting its goals – very successful, somewhat successful, not too successful or not at all successful?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERY SUCCESSFUL</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT SUCCESSFUL</th>
<th>NOT TOO SUCCESSFUL</th>
<th>NOT AT ALL SUCCESSFUL</th>
<th>DON’T KNOW/REFUSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. There will be an election next year for President. How certain are you that you will vote in that election – absolutely certain, fairly certain, not too certain, or not at all certain?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN</th>
<th>FAIRLY CERTAIN</th>
<th>NOT TOO CERTAIN</th>
<th>NOT AT ALL CERTAIN</th>
<th>DON’T KNOW/REFUSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IF ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN TO VOTE AND VOTED IN AT LEAST ONE RECENT ELECTION:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(n = 1,001 likely voters)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 16. How important will a candidate’s position on the Affordable Care Act be to you when deciding whom to support for President in next year’s election – very important, somewhat important, not too important or not at all important?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERY IMPORTANT</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT</th>
<th>NOT TOO IMPORTANT</th>
<th>NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT</th>
<th>DON’T KNOW/REFUSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>66%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. How important will a candidate’s position on the Affordable Care Act be to you when deciding whom to support for the U.S. House of Representatives or Senate in next year’s election – very important, somewhat important, not too important or not at all important?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERY IMPORTANT</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT</th>
<th>NOT TOO IMPORTANT</th>
<th>NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT</th>
<th>DON’T KNOW/REFUSED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>