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Are Ohio residents ready for health care reform?

By Plain Dealer guest columnist
October 04, 2009, 5:00AM

By Bill Hayes

Since August, tensions surrounding health care reform have exploded as legislators and President Barack Obama continue to rally public support. It seems some are unwilling to accept broad reform, but new research shows that Americans may be more ready for reform than is commonly thought. What is needed is a chance to work through the tough choices involved in health care reform. Once they do, Americans will be open to significant change and will be willing to make the compromises necessary to create a health system that works for everyone.

Ohio residents cite three sticking points around reforming health care: uncertainty about the government's role in health care, concerns about the potential loss of or limits to good insurance coverage and the cost of a good health care system.

Unless the public is able to come to terms with these sticking points, significant reform is unlikely to pass, let alone be sustainable. Recently, two area organizations, the Health Policy Institute of Ohio and the Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio, took part in groundbreaking research to understand how Americans think about these complicated and emotional issues and how decision processes move from initial opinion to considered judgment.

This multistate project, sponsored by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and conducted in conjunction with Daniel Yankelovich's nationally known research firm Viewpoint Learning, showed that people can work through these sticking points.

In Columbus, Cincinnati and Akron, researchers sat down with randomly selected representative groups of Ohioans and asked them to consider various scenarios for the future of the U.S. health care system. Over the course of a daylong meeting, people from widely different walks of life were able to work through the major obstacles and define health care reforms that made sense to them.

We saw Ohioans arrive at significant common ground. In particular, they all agreed that we are already paying dearly for a broken and unsustainable system, that health care should focus on prevention and wellness, that we must make more effective use of limited resources and that the government will need to play a stronger role.

Ohioans' conclusions about health care reform were consistent with those reached in Kansas and Mississippi, the two other states in this project. Ohioans had a few concerns that stood out compared to other states -- they tended to define "basic" care more broadly, and they were especially concerned that the health system not have inequities based on ability to pay. But these were differences in emphasis, not substance.

Conventional wisdom may assume deep divisions between red and blue states, urban and rural areas, liberals and conservatives, insured and uninsured, but it turns out that, given opportunities for honest dialogue, Americans agree far more than they disagree when it comes to health care reform.

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As you can see in the research at viewpointlearning.com, most Ohioans are ready and willing to accept difficult tradeoffs. And, once they work through the issues, most Ohioans are willing to support substantial changes. But they need Ohio's leaders to help them move along the learning curve -- building on the extensive common ground that already exists. If Ohio's leaders can do that, our state -- and all of America -- will benefit.

I urge you to participate in the many discussions taking place regarding health care reform. If you would like to host a discussion on this issue, you can access trained facilitators at the Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio and Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage.

Hayes is president of the Health Policy Institute of Ohio.

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 Posted by **donkeytruth**
 October 04, 2009, 12:41PM


Problem is we have no choice or freedom with the donkey health care 'reform' doctrine, so there is nothing to get along with.

We do not want it period. It does not address any of the issues causing the problems. It simple creates another welfare system. Adding insult to injury the donkeys have excluded themselves and thier employees from having to be enslaved to this health care doctrine!

to the pd you should list propagda writers from the dnc, osmam land etc as such!

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 Posted by **Nozzy**
 October 06, 2009, 9:09AM

People without health insurance are desperate for action. People opposed to reform likely already have insurance. The real reform - developing health information technology, establishing medical homes, developing a better payment system and encouraging consumers to take a more active approach in their own care - has nothing to do with a welfare sytem.

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