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Daniel Larison **EUNOMIA**
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Is There A Majority for Health Care Repeal? Not Really

Posted on March 25th, 2010 by Daniel Larison

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[Doug Bandow](#) cites the [new Rasmussen poll](#) showing a majority in favor of repeal, and refers to the public anger this result is supposed to represent. The closer we look at the majority that favors repeal, the stranger it looks.

First of all, only 46% of all respondents “strongly favor” repeal. Adding in those who “somewhat” favor repeal, that brings the number up to 55%. Adding together both “strongly favor” and “somewhat favor,” 81% of Republicans and 59% of independents favor repeal, and a remarkably high 27% of Democrats claim to favor the same thing. This last number seems improbable, and the more we look at other crosstabs the more we see where this would-be Democratic pro-repeal sentiment is coming from. Rasmussen would have us believe that 20% of liberal and 32% of black likely voters want to repeal the health care legislation, and further we are supposed to think that 18% of liberals will vote for a pro-repeal candidate.

Most bizarrely of all, Rasmussen claims that 58% of 18-29 year olds, who have regularly expressed significantly [more support](#) for the health care legislation over the last year than other age groups, favor repeal of the same legislation. We are supposed to believe that 18-29 year old likely voters are more likely to support repeal than any other age group aside from voters 65 and older, and we are also supposed to accept that 49% of them would vote for a pro-repeal candidate.

This goes against everything else we think we know about this age group's party identification and their political and policy views. Admittedly, Gallup's latest health care polling is a survey of adults and not likely voters, but even that cannot account for the dramatic difference between the [58% of 18-34 year olds who say the health care bill is a "good thing"](#) and Rasmussen's 58% of 18-29 year olds who favor repeal! [Pew's survey](#) of Millennials released in February gives us even more reason to doubt support for repeal among young voters. According to Pew, Millennials are more likely to identify as Democratic than any other age group, slightly more likely to identify as liberal than conservative, and are more likely to say that government is effective and are more "pro-regulation" than any other group. As of February, 51% still agreed with the statement that "the government should help more needy people even if it means going deeper in debt." This makes them an especially odd source of support for repealing health care legislation. Therefore, I have to conclude that Rasmussen's topline result is wildly misleading.

Rasmussen's results are not coming out of nowhere. I'm sure that Rasmussen did find dissatisfied liberals and young voters who wanted the public option or something of the sort and dislike the current bill because it is far too watered down, and the only way they could express their dissatisfaction to the pollster was by saying that they favor repeal. In practice, these liberal and young respondents are not going to vote for pro-repeal candidates, because they do not actually favor undoing most of the measures contained in the legislation. More to the point, to support repeal they would have to vote for Republican candidates that endorse a range of policies that they reject as liberals.

When it actually comes time to vote, do we really expect these respondents to vote Republican? That is what they would have to do to see repeal realized, and they would have to do this not just once but at twice to give Republicans control of both Congress and the White House. After all, there is no liberal Democratic member of Congress who will run a campaign pledging repeal of health care legislation, so the only candidates proposing repeal will be Republicans. If you asked these same respondents if they wish to have unified Republican government in order to repeal this legislation, my guess is that the result would look rather different. That would probably apply for many moderates and independents as well, but we cannot be as sure about that. None of this is to say that repeal is substantively the wrong thing to propose, but the heart of the Republican political stand against the legislation has been the assumption that the electorate will reward them for their resistance. Conservatives and Republicans should be very cautious if they assume that repeal is some automatic electoral winner that will resonate with a substantial majority of likely voters.

Bandow is not wrong when he refers to the public's anger. There is a great deal of anger out there, but much of it is being misunderstood. Voters have turned against entrenched party establishments in various state and federal races over the last year, they have objected furiously to the collusion between government and financial interests, and their protest votes have been misinterpreted as an uprising against excessive spending. Meanwhile, the opposition to the health care bill from the left has been tacked on to conservative opposition without acknowledging that the opposition of the former directly undermines the argument that the health care bill is the product of the far left that a "center-right nation" is rejecting. It seems that the same confusion is occurring when discussing support for repeal, as liberals who wanted the legislation to do far more are added to genuine opponents of any and all federal health care legislation to create the illusion of a pro-repeal majority.

P.S. It is worth noting that in the same Rasmussen poll just 43% say that the health care bill will have a "bad impact" on them personally. 26% think it will have a good impact, and 25% say no impact.

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One Response to "Is There A Majority for Health Care Repeal? Not Really"

1. [Rowan](#), on [March 25th, 2010 at 8:49 pm](#) Said:

Yeah, that's a really, really odd poll result. I'm an 18-29-year-old who didn't support the bill, probably for more far-left reasons than far-right (though both might be involved, I really don't know on the political spectrum). But would I support repeal? Probably not, and certainly not voting a candidate who supported repeal inherently, as that's most likely to be a Fox News Republican with whom I disagree about pretty much anything.

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