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Harry Reid Imagines That ObamaCare Is Getting More Popular

Peter Suderman | July 28, 2010

They like it, they really, really like it?

Healthcare reform will end up helping Democrats at the polls this fall, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) suggested Monday.

Reid, who is facing a tough reelection challenge himself, said public opinion is shifting in favor of the new healthcare law Democrats passed through Congress earlier this year, and predicted more and more voters would reject Republicans' calls for repealing the legislation.

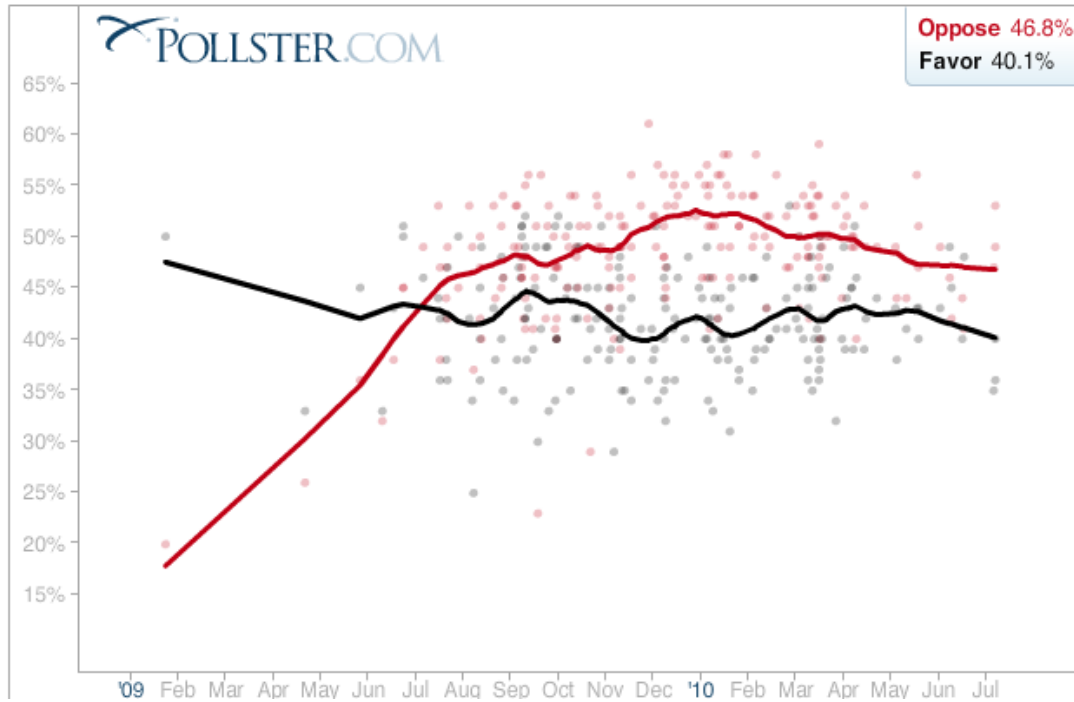
The more people know about healthcare, the better they like it, said Reid, who listed several aspects of the new law he sees as popular.



Democrats have recently taken to arguing that the public is warming to the new health care law, but I don't buy it. As Cato's Michael Cannon argues, that narrative only works "if you begin looking for a trend at the high-water mark of opposition, if you look at a few select polls, if you look at not-so-straightforward poll questions, if you interpret simultaneous declines in both support and opposition as growing support, and if you devise a rationale for ignoring the views of those who most oppose ObamaCare." Once you do that, though, it's totally plausible!

Alternatively, as Cannon notes, you could take a look at Pollster.com's multipoll trend estimate, where it's pretty clear that the number of people who favor the law has been trending downward.

Health Care Plan: Favor / Oppose



And even if you use Pollster.com's date-range filter to look only at the trend lines since passage, you see declines in both opposition and support. ObamaCare, in other words, has gotten less popular.

Prior to the law's passage, Democrats convinced themselves that it would suddenly become popular after passage. But while it's true that specific provisions have always played well with the public, the law as a whole—with all its costs included—hasn't. Nor, as I've argued previously, was there ever much reason to think that it would. A lot of liberals pointed to the continued popularity of reform in Massachusetts, for example, but ignored the fact that this sort of reform was popular in Massachusetts prior to passage. It didn't become popular; it stayed popular. With ObamaCare, we have the opposite situation. The bill was unpopular before passage. There's little reason to believe that it will quickly become popular now that it's law.