

Rutgers poll: Majority of N.J. residents support 'Obamacare'

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Susan K. Livio/Statehouse Bureau

By

TRENTON — Two-thirds of registered New Jersey voters say the U.S. Supreme Court made the right decision in June **upholding the federal health care reform law**, and more than half agree the state should use the law to expand the Medicaid program to insure more poor citizens, according to a WNYC/Rutgers-Eagleton poll released today.

The telephone poll asked 790 people whether Medicare should stay the same or be turned into a voucher senior citizens could use to buy their own insurance. Sixty-nine percent said leave Medicare alone; 25 percent said it should be changed and 6 percent said they were undecided.

The poll conducted between Sept. 27-30 also asked participants whom they trusted more to provide insurance. Private insurance companies were deemed more trustworthy by 44 percent, while 35 percent said government was more trustworthy. A combined 22 percent said neither or they didn't know.

"New Jerseyans are for the most part supportive of the affordable health care act," David Redlawsk said, the director of the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling. "While not all that supportive of government making health insurance decisions, they are still quite happy with the prospects of keeping children on parents' policies and not being denied coverage for pre-existing conditions."

Not surprisingly, vastly more Democrats approved of the Supreme Court ruling (78 percent) and more Republicans disapproved of it (74 percent). Just 46 percent of senior citizens supported the ruling, compared to 61 percent of young people ages 18 to 29, and 63 percent of the AARP-set, ages 50 to 64.

State Senate Democratic leaders responded to the poll by releasing a statement urging Gov. Chris Christie to stop delaying action on implementing aspects of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, also known as "Obamacare."

Christie, one of Republican Presidential nominee Mitt Romney's most outspoken supporters, has said he would wait until the outcome of the election before making any policy changes because Romney has said he would overturn "Obamacare," if he wins. The governor also has questioned whether the state should expand Medicaid coverage to working poor people with slightly higher incomes.

New Jersey Policy Perspective, a liberal research organization, has estimated the Affordable Care Act will provide the state with \$22 billion in Medicaid reimbursements through 2022. Medicaid enrollment in the state — currently about a million residents — would rise by 442,000 by 2016. Those who earn no more than 133 percent of the poverty rate — \$30,657 for a family of four — would qualify.

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While not saying what he will do, Christie applauded this part of the health care ruling. "If you're looking for a ray of sunshine on an otherwise cloudy day is that it does strike down the federal government's ability to pull back Medicaid funding if you don't agree to all the strings attached to it. That's a good thing," Christie said during a radio interview.

In upholding the law, the Supreme Court gave the states the option of expanding Medicaid.

"I believe the need is obvious by just looking at the number of people it will help and the financial benefits to the state," said Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg (D-Bergen), who released a statement with Sens. Nia Gill (D-Essex) and Joseph Vitale (D-Middlesex) and Senate President Steve Sweeney, (D-Gloucester). "I hope the governor isn't using political calculations to determine his position."



Enlarge

Heather L. Rohan

This combination of file pictures shows US President Barack Obama (L) boarding Air Force One at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland on January 19, 2012 to leave to visit Walt Disney World Resort in Florida, US Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney (R) disembarking from his campaign plane at St. Paul International Airport in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on August 23, 2012. AFP PHOTO/Jewel Samad-/AFP/Getty Images

Obama and Romney in pictures gallery (35 photos)

The poll may be found at <http://eagletonpollblog.wordpress.com/>

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