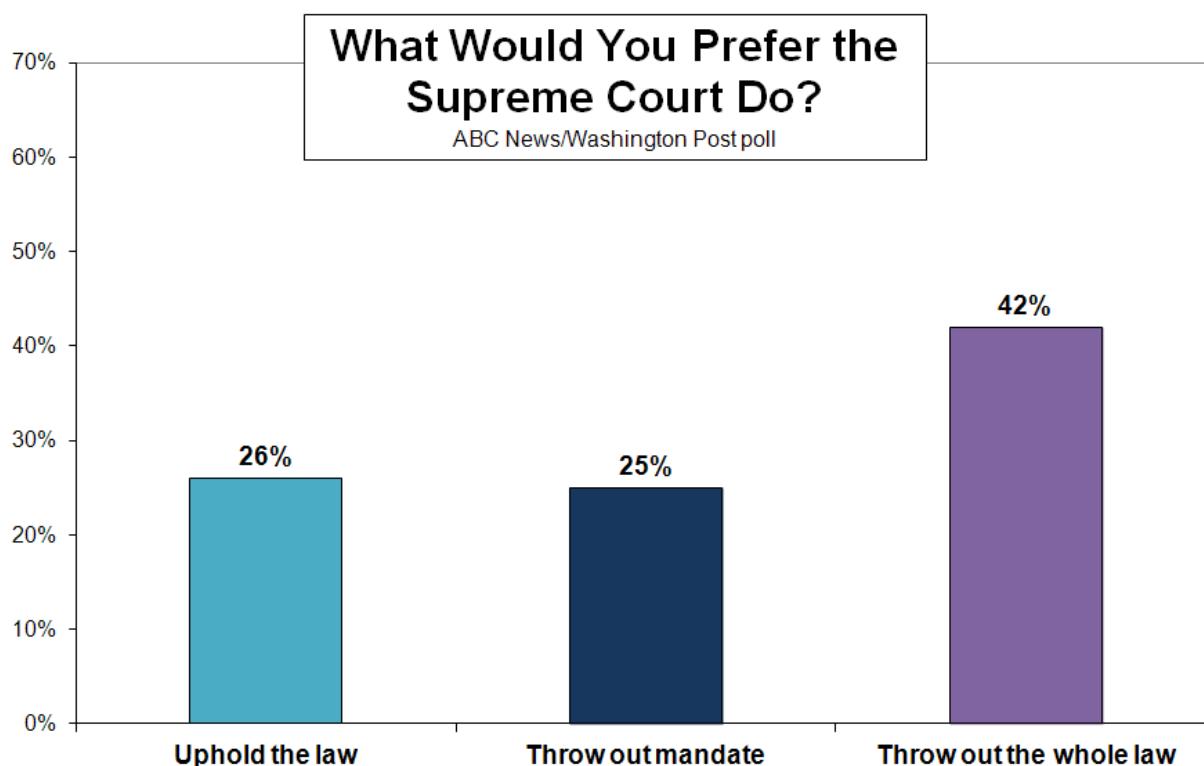


As Health Care Law’s Trial Approaches, Two-Thirds Say Ditch Individual Mandate

Two-thirds of Americans say the U.S. Supreme Court should throw out either the “individual mandate” in the federal health care law or the law in its entirety – signaling the depth of public disagreement with that controversial element of health care reform.

This ABC News/Washington Post poll finds that Americans oppose the law overall by 52-41 percent. And 67 percent think the high court should either ditch the entire law (so say 42 percent) or at least the portion that requires nearly all Americans to have coverage (25 percent).

The high court opens hearings on the law’s constitutionality a week from today.



The law never has earned majority support in ABC/Post polls – and this update, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), finds a strong sense its critics are dominating the debate. Seventy percent of Americans report hearing mainly negative things about the law lately; just 19

percent say the buzz has been positive. Even among its supporters, 53 percent are hearing more negatives than positives. Among opponents this soars to 88 percent.

Intensity of sentiment is more negative as well: Forty-one percent strongly oppose the law, known as the Affordable Care Act (ACA), while only a quarter strongly support it.

The Obama administration long has had trouble convincing Americans of the benefits of the law. In a January 2011 ABC/Post poll, for example, more people expected the law to increase rather than decrease the deficit (62-29 percent), hurt rather than help the economy (54-39 percent) and cut rather than create jobs (46-38 percent).

INDIVIDUAL MANDATE – Previous polling also has found that some aspects of the law are broadly popular – for example, extending the age at which parents can cover their children, prohibiting denial of coverage because of pre-existing conditions and extending coverage to millions of uninsured Americans.

Another, though, seemingly outweighs these – the individual mandate, which requires nearly everyone to obtain health insurance by 2014, or face a fine. It's been a main point of attack for the law's critics. (An individual mandate was signed into law by then Gov. Mitt Romney in Massachusetts in 2006, one focus of criticism by his opponents in the Republican primaries.)

While 67 percent of Americans favor throwing out either the whole law or at least the mandate, the data also can be construed to show that 51 percent favor either keeping the whole law or the law minus the mandate (26 and 25 percent, respectively). Keeping the law without the mandate, though, is a difficult task, since insurers say it's needed to restrain coverage costs.

KEEP OR KILL – Given that reality, respondents in this survey who prefer to keep the law but without the mandate were asked which they'd prefer if that option were not available: keep the law entirely, or kill it entirely. They tipped toward killing it, 52-44 percent.

Adding that group to the rest, who already favored keeping or killing the law, produces a net result of 55 percent who favor throwing it out, 37 percent who would keep it – another equation in which the legislation comes up short in public support.

PARTY – Opposition to the ACA peaks in breadth and depth among Republicans, with swing-voting independents leaning their way. Sixty-three percent of Democrats support the law in general, 41 percent strongly, while three-quarters of Republicans oppose it, six in 10 strongly. Independents oppose the law by 51-43 percent, with strong opponents outnumbering strong supporters by 2-1.

That makes Barack Obama's signature domestic policy accomplishment a potential liability in the presidential election. He could find cover, though, via Romney's own history on health care legislation.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone March 7-10, 2012, among a random national sample of 1,003 adults, including landline and cell-phone-

only respondents. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 4 points for the full sample. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by Abt-SRBI of New York, N.Y.

Analysis by Gregory Holyk.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

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Full results follow.

1-12, 17-46 previously released.

13. Changing topics: Overall, do you support or oppose the federal law making changes to the health care system? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
3/10/12	41	24	17	52	11	41	7

Compare to: Overall, given what you know about them, would you say you support or oppose the changes to the health care system that have been enacted by (Congress) and (the Obama administration)?

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
1/16/11	45	25	20	50	14	36	5
12/12/10	43	22	21	52	14	37	6
10/3/10	47	26	21	48	13	35	5
3/26/10	46	32	13	50	10	40	4
2/8/10*	46	22	25	49	11	38	5
1/15/10	44	22	22	51	12	39	5
12/13/09	44	25	19	51	11	40	5
11/15/09	48	30	18	49	10	39	3
10/18/09	45	26	19	48	12	36	7
9/12/09	46	30	16	48	12	36	6
8/17/09	45	27	18	50	10	40	5

*2/8/10 and prior: "proposed changes...that are being developed by"

14. Have the things you've heard about this law recently been mainly (positive) or mainly (negative)?

	Mainly positive	Mainly negative	Mixed (vol.)	No opinion
3/10/12	19	70	5	6

15. The U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments about the health care law later this month. Of these three options, which would you prefer to have the Supreme Court do: 1) (uphold the entire law), 2) throw out the part of the law that requires individuals to have coverage and keep the rest of the law, or 3) (throw out the entire law)?

	Uphold entire law	Throw out part of the law	Throw out entire law	No opinion
3/10/12	26	25	42	7

16. (IF THROW OUT PART OF THE LAW) What if removing the coverage requirement forces the rest of the law to be dropped because there's no way to pay for it. In that case would you prefer to - (keep the mandate to save the rest of the law), or (throw out the entire law)?

	Keep the mandate	Throw out entire law	No opinion
3/10/12	44	52	4

15/16 NET:

	-- Uphold entire law --			- Throw out entire law -			No
	NET	At first	Now do	NET	At first	Now do	opin.
3/10/12	37	26	11	55	42	13	8

*** END ***