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THE TARRANCE GROUP

MEMORANDUM

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To: Leslie Reed, Missouri Foundation for Health
From: Lake Research Partners and The Tarrance Group
Subject: Analysis of Key Survey Findings
Date: February 28, 2007

This memo outlines the key findings of 800 voters in the state of Missouri in an effort to understand the public's attitudes towards the current state Medicaid program and perceptions of what aspects are most important in the program.¹

- Health care concerns are front and center in Missourians' issue agenda. Affordable health care for themselves and their families is a great concern for voters, eclipsed only by concern over the uninsured and underinsured in the state.
 - When asked about the most important issue to them personally health care (21 percent) tops the list by more than 6-points over the next highest concern, jobs and the economy (15 percent).
 - This represents an increase in concern from even last fall when jobs and the economy (18 percent) was slightly stronger than health care (15 percent) – which fell second in an October survey.
 - Voters are concerned about providing affordable health care for themselves and their families. Eight-in-ten voters (80 percent) say they are concerned about this.
 - They are even more concerned about the number of people who are uninsured or underinsured in

¹ The survey was using professional interviewers. The survey reached 800 adults, 18 years or older, who are registered to vote in Missouri using a random digit dial. The survey was conducted between January 17th and 21st, 2007. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3.5%.

Missouri—87 percent say this is a concern for them, with just 11 percent saying it is not really a concern.

- By a two-to-one, voters see the federal government rather than the state government as responsible for providing healthcare to the uninsured. Forty percent of voters cite the federal government as being responsible while 20 percent say the state government. But voters think government offering health care programs is important no matter the level.
 - Voters cite the importance of the government offering health care insurance to the uninsured and underinsured as high—86 percent say it is important with a strong majority (58 percent) saying it is very important.
 - Seniors and families on fixed incomes, and children are cited as the highest priorities to receive more help than they do paying for health care costs.
- However, despite placing more responsibility with the federal government, solid majorities would like to see the state restore cuts to Medicaid, even if it means raising taxes. When faced with the current state budget surplus restoring the cuts is clearly the top choice for voters.
 - Three-quarters (75 percent) of voters support restoring the cuts to Medicaid, while just 14 percent support maintaining the cuts.
 - Restoring the cuts is supported across party lines, with Democrats the most supportive (90 percent) followed by independents (71 percent). Republicans are somewhat less supportive though a majority still supports restoring the cuts (56 percent). Support is consistent across media markets as well, with those in St. Louis (76 percent) and Kansas City (76 percent) the strongest supporters of restoring the cuts, followed closely by Paducah-Cape Girardeau (69 percent) and Springfield (68 percent).
 - A small tax increase does not deter voters who still support restoring the cuts by nearly a two-to-one margin (60 percent support, 32 percent oppose). Voters across party lines continue to support restoring the cuts, even with the tax increase provision (Democrats 70 percent support, independents 54 percent, Republicans 53 percent).
- Restoring the Medicaid cuts is also the top choice for 54 percent of voters when asked what to do with the budget surplus. This is followed distantly by saving the money to avoid future shortfalls, which is supported by just 13 percent of the voters.

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- When asked about the surplus with specific regard to Medicaid, a plurality (42 percent) would like to see the cuts restored AND the program expanded.
 - This is true across party lines, with a plurality of voters in all parties saying that they would want to see cuts restored and the program expanded – Democrats 50 percent, independents 46 percent, Republicans 32 percent.
 - When it comes to the direction of health care—both personally and more generally for the state—voters tend to be much more of one mind that things are getting worse rather than better.
 - A plurality (44 percent) of voters say the quality of the health care system in Missouri has stayed the same, however nearly four-in-ten voters (38 percent) say it has gotten worse. Just 11 percent say the system has gotten better. This is an even more negative perception than we saw in the fall when 18 percent thought the system had improved and 36 percent thought it had stayed the same (38 percent gotten worse).
 - Looking at their own health care coverage voters are similarly negative. More than one-third (35 percent) of voters say their personal health care coverage has gotten worse, 46 percent say it has stayed the same, and 16 percent say it has improved. These numbers are slightly better than the fall when 38 percent said their own coverage had gotten worse and 13 percent said it had improved (46 percent stayed the same).
 - When asked to consider various aspects of Medicaid coverage, voters tend to prioritize affordable co-pays, allowing access to providers without having to go to the emergency room first and within a reasonable amount of time, and allowing participants to see the same health care provider.
 - A strong majority (57 percent) of voters cite affordable co-pays so participants can afford necessary medical treatments as extremely important (10 on a scale of 1-to-10 in importance). Most Missourians would like all Medicaid recipients to pay on a sliding scale based on income and family size.
 - Voters also want participants to be able to see the same health care provider each time (56 percent), distinct from seeing a physician in the same health care providers group (46 percent). Similarly strong feelings are expressed around being able to see a health care provider without going to the emergency room first (56 percent).
 - While still important, voters are less adamant about allowing participants the ability to choose their healthcare provider (44 percent), allowing them to see the top quality health care providers available to those with private

insurance (46 percent), not restricting treatments (44 percent), and mandatory coverage of preventative care (44 percent).

- Missouri voters are negative about the health care system in the state, though they are more positive about the providers themselves and their own health care.
 - When asked to rate the state's health care system one-fourth (26 percent) give it a poor rating (67 percent give it a just fair or poor rating), just 2 percent say it is excellent while another 22 percent say it is good. The gap is somewhat smaller when voters are asked specifically about Medicaid, though they are still disproportionately negative (20 percent excellent/good, 54 percent just fair/poor). Similarly, 22 percent of voters say that Medicaid is doing a poor job providing health care to the uninsured (54 percent just fair/poor), 19 percent say it is doing an excellent or good job.
 - Voters across party lines give the state health care system negative job performance ratings—including Republicans who have a net positive overall impression of the system (Democrats -53, independents -37, Republicans -25).
 - When asked about their feelings towards the state's Medicaid system voters also have a negative perception with 39 percent giving it an unfavorable rating (19 percent very unfavorable). Just less than one-third of voters (32 percent) give the system a positive rating and they do so with much less intensity (5 percent very favorable). Three-in-ten voters (30 percent) are not familiar enough with the system to give it a rating. When the question is framed as the state system for low-income children and seniors the ratings are even more negative, 43 percent have an unfavorable view when asked this way (23 percent very unfavorable) compared to 31 percent favorable (10 percent very favorable).
 - Only Republicans have a favorable impression of the system (+10), while both Democrats (-21) and independents (-14) view it negatively. However, when the question is framed as the system for low-income children and seniors even Republican voters express negative views (-8, Democrats -21, independents -13).
 - Voters in the St Louis (-10) and Paducah-Cape Girardeau (-10) media markets also view the system negatively, while those in the Kansas City (0) and Springfield (0) media markets are split on their views.
 - Views of health care providers in the state however are very favorable (60 percent favorable, 31 percent unfavorable), with voters' impressions of their own health care providers even stronger (70 percent favorable, 23 percent unfavorable).