

Arkansas Survey: Small Businesses Need Healthcare Reform

The high cost of health insurance is a financial burden for small businesses.

Small businesses in Arkansas support healthcare reform to relieve them from skyrocketing health insurance rates, according to results of a telephone survey conducted in May 2009 and sponsored by Small Business Majority. The survey found:

- Only 36% of Arkansas small business owners polled reported that they pay for health insurance for their employees. Of those, 65% say they are really struggling to do so.
- Of the 64% of small employers who don't provide insurance, 83% say they can't afford it.
- 71% say healthcare reform is important for getting the economy back on track.
- The number one concern for Arkansas small businesses in healthcare reform is controlling costs, followed by assuring high-quality standard minimum benefits and providing coverage for everybody.

Small businesses want reform in many parts of the system.

- A large majority of respondents (85%) agree that people should be able to buy health insurance without regard to any past health problems, and 75% see these preexisting condition rules as barriers to starting a business.
- Arkansas small business owners appreciate choice—69% prefer the option of a public or private health plan, while just 20% are interested only in a private plan, and 8% prefer only a public option.

Many employers agree they have a role in expanding health coverage.

- 64% say it's important for individuals, employers, insurers, the government and healthcare providers to share the responsibility for making healthcare more affordable.
- 50% believe that their company has a responsibility to provide health insurance for its employees.
- 48% agree that employers should pay some percentage of their payroll toward their employees' insurance if they don't offer a plan themselves.

Respondents are politically varied.

- 29% of respondents identified themselves as Republican, 26% as Democrat and 37% as independent.

About this research: This is a telephone poll of 200 randomly selected small business owners in Arkansas conducted by the national public opinion firm Lake Research in May 2009. The survey included owners of companies with fewer than 100 employees as well as sole proprietors. It has a margin of error of 6.9%.