UF poll reveals support for state Medicaid expansion, changes to Affordable Care Act

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GAINESVILLE, Fla. — A poll of registered voters in Florida on upcoming state legislative issues by the Bob Graham Center for Public Service in collaboration with the University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research found that 67 percent of respondents support expansion of the state’s Medicaid program. Twenty-eight percent oppose expansion.

When asked about the Affordable Care Act, respondents expressed a different view: 38 percent want to repeal the law and 29 percent would like to see major changes to it. Twenty-seven percent support minor changes, while only 12 percent favor keeping the Affordable Care Act as is.

“These apparently contradictory findings are understandable,” said Paul Duncan, associate dean of the Graduate School and professor in the College of Public Health and Health Professions at the University of Florida. “The Affordable Care Act is large and complicated — just like our health care system — so when an unprecedented level of partisan political noise is added, inconsistency in public opinion is almost certain.”

Respondents were also asked to share their attitudes on other major issues that will be considered by the Florida Legislature this session, including:

- allowing undocumented students to receive in-state tuition (62 percent for and 33 percent against);
• requiring Internet retailers to pay state sales tax (50 percent for and 43 percent against); and
• allowing Las Vegas-style gambling casinos to open in the state (45 percent for and 53 percent against).

“The views of Floridians appear to be evolving significantly as the economy recovers, the jobs environment improves, daily life becomes less of a grind, and the future seems to hold greater promise,” said David Colburn, historian and director of the Bob Graham Center.

The poll also asked respondents to share their top priorities for spending a projected state surplus. As their first priority, an overwhelming percentage (42 percent) would like to see increased funding for pre-kindergarten-12th grade public education. Twenty percent would prefer that the surplus be used to protect Florida’s springs, rivers and lakes (including the Everglades) and 14 percent prefer expanded Medicaid funding.

“Everyone agrees that good teachers are crucial for successful preK-12 education, yet adjusted for inflation the average pay for Florida’s teachers is down eight percent from 10 years ago,” said UF economist David Denslow. “That Floridians favor more funding for education bodes well for reversing that trend.”

Results are based on data collected from 1,006 phone interviews of registered voters conducted between Jan. 27 and Feb. 1, with a 3 percent margin of error. Additional information about the survey, including methodology, toplines and graphs can be found at bobgrahamcenter.ufl.edu/political-polling.

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The Bob Graham Center for Public Service at the University of Florida is a community of students, scholars and citizens who are committed to renewing the values, knowledge and skills of citizenship and training the next generation of public and private sector leaders. This survey was developed and analyzed by the center with the advice and consultation of Geoff Garin of Hart Research Associates and Kristen Soltis Anderson of The Winston Group.