

## A Communications Perspective on Implementing Health Reform

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### Health Care's Passage...

- Did not garner support for Democrats, the White House, or anyone
- Messaging that was used to pass reform doesn't resonate as strongly any more
- But... some of the earliest research on values IS resonating

## Current Climate is Tough

- Lack of trust
- Lack of knowledge/belief
- Lack of openings to move people
- An exhausted public
- Frustration with the economy

## Most of the Public Now Knows

- Pre-existing conditions
- Expands coverage
- Keep your doctor and coverage
- Tax credits for small businesses

## Most of the Public Believes

- Government can't fix problems
- Government can't regulate
- I've got a bad feeling about this
- The new law is for that other (undeserving) person, not me

## Big Government is Bad Government

- This law requires that members of Congress get their healthcare coverage from the same plans as millions of Americans. If it's good enough for them, it's good enough for us.



## Washington is the Problem

- That's what they said after Social Security. That's what they said after Medicare. How many of health care reform's opponents are declining Social Security and Medicare? None. They're trying to have it both ways, and it's not fair.

## More Attacks

- Repeal and replace
- Don't need a new law – just better oversight
- Government telling us what to do
- Premiums are rising – it's reform's fault
- We're paying for the undeserving

## The Best Defense is a Good Offense

- The best messaging
- The right messengers and the right mediums
- Know your audience

## The Messaging

- Values and beliefs outweigh facts
  - Individual responsibility
  - Accountability/fairness
  - Effective oversight
  - Peace of mind (choice and control)
- Concrete evidence, not just rhetoric



## The Public Needs to Know

- Members of Congress get the same plans as millions of Americans
- Law promotes effective oversight; accountability; personal responsibility
- Benefits start in the first year (what are mine?)
- Closes the donut hole (seniors are key)
- Not a government-run health care program

## Messengers

- News sources: 61%
- Doctors and nurses: 16%
- AARP: 10%

## Key Populations



- Seniors
- Women
- Health care providers
- Youth
  
- Above all...  
independent voters

## State Issues

- In your handout:
  - Rising premiums
  - Individual mandate
  - Medicaid expansion and state budgets
  - Ideological objections i.e. “socialism”
  - System changes
  - Access to providers
  - Reform “on the backs of seniors”

## Emphasize the Benefits This Year

- Starting to close the donut hole
- No more rescissions
- Coverage for kids with pre-existing conditions
- Coverage for kids up to 26 years old
- Tax credits for small businesses
- Etc.

## General Messaging Advice

- Reinforce:
  - Accountability
  - Responsibility
  - Affordability
  - Sustainability
- Be realistic about the time line
- Remember:  $Q = A + 1$ 
  - Quick response
  - Discredit the source
  - Reinforce your own point

## Questions?

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