



LOUISIANA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

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Poll Shows Majority of Louisiana Voters Think Healthcare Should Be Top Legislative Budget Priority

Survey shows majority consider healthcare funding critical and oppose cuts

Baton Rouge, January 6, 2010 – Nearly 70 percent of Louisiana voters said that the governor and the legislature should make healthcare funding the top budget priority and not cut funding for healthcare services in order to balance the budget, according to a new survey released by the Louisiana Hospital Association (LHA). The survey also showed that over 67 percent of voters think that the governor and the legislature should make funding for Medicaid a very high priority and not cut services for the poor and disabled. Additionally, the majority of voters said that hospitals in Louisiana cannot provide quality services to all patients if the state continues to cut the Medicaid budget.

“It is imperative that we find fiscally-sound solutions to fund healthcare for our most vulnerable residents so that the healthcare infrastructure in Louisiana does not crumble. Hospitals are not only tied to the health of our communities, but also to the health of our local and state economies,” said John Matessino, LHA President & CEO.

Nearly 97 percent of voters believe hospitals and their employees are important to the local economy, and 85 percent said that communities will suffer if state funding for hospitals is cut. Moreover, 92 percent think that hospitals provide good-paying jobs in the community, and the majority of voters think that healthcare funding cuts will lead to a loss of these jobs. An economic impact study conducted last fall by noted economist James A. Richardson showed that Louisiana hospitals are a driving force in the state’s economy. According to the study, hospitals provide vital economic contributions that support the local economy, generating more than \$27 billion annually in economic activity and directly employing more than 95,000 people throughout the state.

The majority of Louisiana voters support changing the state law that restricts budget cuts to higher education and healthcare. The survey showed that 63 percent of voters favor allowing the governor or the legislature to cut all state funded programs equally to balance the state’s budget.

Pollster Bernie Pinsonat with Southern Media & Opinion Research noted, “With the state facing a budget crisis this year, it is important that the legislature have current research about what Louisiana residents think about healthcare budget cuts and funding priorities.”

The LHA plans to work with Governor Jindal and the legislature to ensure that hospitals can continue to provide quality care to everyone in their communities.

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The poll, which was commissioned by the LHA and developed and conducted by Southern Media & Opinion Research, included telephone interviews with 603 randomly selected Louisiana voters from November 13-19, 2009. The overall margin of error is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence.

About the Louisiana Hospital Association

Established in 1926, the Louisiana Hospital Association is a non-profit organization representing more than 150 hospitals and healthcare provider groups across the state. The mission of the LHA is to support its members through advocacy, education and services. For more information, please visit the LHA website at www.lhaonline.org.

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NOTE:

See attached sheet for a list of the questions and survey results.

The Hospital Economic Impact Report by economist James A. Richardson can be found at www.lhaonline.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=444.

**LOUISIANA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION HEALTHCARE POLL RESULTS
SAMPLE SIZE (n=603)**

This poll was commissioned by the Louisiana Hospital Association and was developed and conducted by Southern Media & Opinion Research. It includes telephone interviews with 603 randomly selected Louisiana voters from November 13-19, 2009. The overall margin of error is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence.

- Medicaid is a government healthcare program for the poor and disabled. Should the governor and the legislature make funding for these people a very high priority and not cut services to them?

	YES.....	67.6
	NO	21.6
	(DNK/WS).....	10.8

- Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements about hospitals in Louisiana, excluding state, charity hospitals: (randomized)

	<u>STRONGLY</u> <u>AGREE</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT</u> <u>AGREE</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT</u> <u>DISAGREE</u>	<u>STRONGLY</u> <u>DISAGREE</u>	<u>(DNK</u> <u>/WS)</u>
• communities will suffer if state funding for hospitals is cut.....	58.7	26.8	7.0	3.3	4.2
• hospitals and their employees are important to the local economy.....	79.6	17.5	0.6	1.2	1.2
• cuts to state healthcare funding will lead to a loss of jobs in hospitals.....	53.2	30.8	7.0	6.3	2.7
• hospitals provide good-paying jobs in the community	62.6	29.8	2.5	2.0	3.2

- Do you agree or disagree that the governor and the legislature should make healthcare funding the most important area of the budget and not cut funding for healthcare services in order to balance the budget?

	AGREE	68.8
	DISAGREE	26.1
	(DNK/WS).....	5.0

- During tough economic times, the state can only cut funding for higher education and healthcare. Would you favor or oppose a change to the law that would allow the governor or the legislature to cut all state funded programs equally to balance the state's budget?

	FAVOR	63.4
	OPPOSE.....	31.2
	(DNK/WS).....	5.4

- In your opinion, can hospitals in Louisiana, excluding state, charity hospitals, continue to have their Medicaid budget cut by state government and still provide quality service to all patients?

	YES.....	30.9
	NO	62.6
	(DNK/WS).....	6.5