



NEWS RELEASE

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NEARLY 80% OF NEW YORKERS REJECT HIGHER HEALTH INSURANCE TAXES TO CLOSE BUDGET GAP

New Yorkers Think Congress Should Provide Funding Rather than the State Adding to Insurance Premiums

Nearly 80 percent of New Yorkers reject the idea of increasing health insurance taxes to close the state budget gap, according to a recent Siena College poll of New York registered voters. The questions to understand measures to address the state budget deficit were included in the poll at the request of the New York Health Plan Association (HPA).

With New York State currently facing a \$14 billion dollar deficit and state leaders considering many options to close that gap, voters were asked a series of questions on whether increasing health insurance taxes should be among the measures to address the budget shortfall. According to the poll:

- 77 percent opposed increased taxes on health insurance while 16 percent chose to increase taxes;
- Of those that supported higher health insurance taxes, nearly a third (32 percent) would prefer a different approach if it meant increasing what they pay for health insurance; and
- 79 percent felt that consumers should not have to pay more for health insurance in order to close the state's budget deficit as opposed to 18 percent who would be willing to accept an increase in what they pay for health insurance.

"Health insurance taxes are the third largest source of state revenue behind sales and income taxes, adding more than \$5.2 billion to the cost of health insurance each year. New Yorkers already pay enough. Measures to close the state budget gap should not include higher health insurance taxes that makes the cost of health care more expensive for consumers, employers and union benefit funds," said HPA President and CEO Eric Linzer.

"As employers, businesses large and small, shoulder much of the health insurance premium burden. We are heartened to see that vast majority of New Yorkers strongly agree with us that tax increases on health coverage is the wrong way to close the state's budget gap," said Heather Briccetti, President and CEO of The Business Council of New York State.

When asked about the measures to close the budget deficit, nearly half (47 percent) of respondents favored Congress providing funding to help New York due to the impact of COVID-19, while 20 percent supported reducing overall state spending. Eighteen percent of respondents supported postponing nonessential state spending and 11 percent wanted the state to utilize money from the New York's Rainy Day Fund or other state reserves.

Linzer continued, "Given the pandemic's impact on the economy and health care system, it's critical that Congress provide hard-hit states, like New York, with the resources they need to avoid measures that will exacerbate the toll COVID-19 has inflicted, such as increasing taxes on health insurance, and threaten the availability of affordable, quality health care for consumers and businesses going forward."

The poll questions and responses follow.

With New York State currently facing a \$14 Billion dollar deficit, state leaders are considering many options to close that gap. One of those options may be to increase taxes on health insurance. Do you support or oppose increasing taxes on health insurance?	
Oppose	77%
Support	16%
Don't know/No Opinion	6%

Would you still support increasing taxes on health insurance to close the state budget deficit if it meant increasing what you pay for health insurance, or would you prefer a different approach to close the state budget deficit?	
Prefer a different approach	32%
Increasing what you pay for health insurance	65%
Don't know/No Opinion	3%

Of the following, which approach would you be most likely to choose to close the budget deficit?	
Congress should provide funding to help New York due to the impact of COVID-19	47%
Reduce overall state spending	20%
Postpone nonessential state spending	18%
Utilize money from the New York's Rainy Day Fund or other state reserves	11%
Don't know/No Opinion	4%

Knowing that any tax increase on health insurance will increase costs for consumers to some degree, would you be willing to accept an increase in what you pay for health insurance as part of closing the state budget deficit, or do you feel that consumers should not have to pay more for health insurance in order to close the state's budget deficit?	
Consumers should not have to pay more for health insurance in order to close the state's budget deficit	79%
Willing to accept an increase in what you pay for health insurance as part of closing the state budget deficit	18%
Don't know/No Opinion	3%

The survey was conducted by the Siena College Research Institute (SCRI) from August 30 – September 3, 2020, by random telephone calls to 388 New York adults via landline and cell phones and 407 responses drawn from a proprietary panel (Lucid) of New Yorkers. Data from the telephone and web samples were blended and statistically adjusted by age, race/ethnicity, party and gender to ensure representativeness. SCRI reports this data at a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of +/- 3.7 points. The Siena College Research Institute, directed by Donald Levy, Ph.D., conducts political, economic, social and cultural research primarily in NYS. SCRI, an independent, non-partisan research institute, subscribes to the American Association of Public Opinion Research Code of Professional Ethics and Practices.