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New Poll Shows Concerns with Current Health Care System Remain High

AARP, AMA and ANA Jointly Release New Data

WASHINGTON – New polling released today shows that Americans 50-plus remain concerned with the current health care system, underscoring the need for reform.

Data released jointly today by AARP, the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American Nurses Association (ANA), show that about half of people over 50-years old are concerned that there won't be enough nurses or doctors to provide care in the future, and two-thirds of those polled are either very or somewhat concerned that the current system limits their ability to see the doctor of their choice.

"The fact that we need to strengthen our health care system may have been lost in some of the media coverage over the last several weeks, but this survey of Americans shows that the need is as great as ever," said AARP Executive Vice President Nancy LeaMond. "Tonight the President will address Congress, and while AARP hasn't endorsed any of the bills, it is critical – especially based on this polling – that any solution ensures that people can see the health professional they want, when they want – particularly for people on Medicare."

The polling found that nearly nine in ten people (87 percent) believed it was important for doctors to be reimbursed adequately so they continue to accept patients on Medicare.

"This summer we've heard a lot of misinformation about health reform proposals on the table. The poll we're releasing today reminds us that people have serious concerns with the health system in place now: The status quo is unacceptable," said AMA Immediate Past President Nancy H. Nielsen, M.D. "Currently, 46 million Americans don't have health insurance, and the Medicare physician payment formula threatens seniors' access to care by projecting steep cuts just as the baby boomers enter Medicare. We need to cover the uninsured, implement insurance

market reforms and repeal the flawed Medicare formula to ensure all Americans access to the care they need.”

The poll also revealed that most people believe there are not enough nurses to support the current health care system, and that the nurse shortage will remain a problem in the near future.

“Two-thirds of the poll respondents are sensing what we have recognized for the last decade – that we are experiencing a critical nursing shortage and that it will worsen as the rates of registered nurse retirements and aging Baby Boomers requiring health services each increase,” said ANA President Rebecca M. Patton, MSN, RN, CNOR. “Health care reform must ensure that the RN workforce is sufficient to make universal access to quality care a reality, not just theory. We can catch up with growing demand through increased investments in nursing workforce development and educational programs.”

Also of note – more than three-fourths (78 percent) are worried that some day either they or someone they know might incur a health care cost that wouldn’t be covered by their health insurance.

The telephone survey was conducted from September 4-7, 2009 by Woelfel Research, Inc. The RDD sample consists of 1,001 United States residents at least 50 years old. The results from the study were weighted by age and gender. The margin of sampling error is $\pm 3.1\%$.

The executive summary of the polling is available at:

http://www.aarp.org/research/surveys/care/health/hcreform/articles/hcr_concerns.html

About AARP

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. We produce AARP The Magazine, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world's largest-circulation magazine with over 35.5 million readers; AARP Bulletin, the go-to news source for AARP's 40 million members and Americans 50+; AARP Segunda Juventud, the only bilingual U.S. publication dedicated exclusively to the 50+ Hispanic community; and our website, AARP.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

About the American Medical Association

The American Medical Association (AMA) helps doctors help patients by uniting physicians nationwide to work on the most important professional, public health and advocacy issues in medicine. Working together, the AMA's quarter of a million physician and medical student members are playing an active role in shaping the future of medicine. For more information on the AMA's health system reform efforts, please visit www.hsreform.org.

About American Nurses Association

The American Nurses Association (ANA) is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 2.9 million registered nurses through its 51 constituent member nurses associations and its 24 specialty nursing and workforce advocacy affiliate organizations that currently connect to ANA as affiliates. The ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view

of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.

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