

THE LANGUAGE OF HEALTHCARE 2009

THE 10 RULES FOR STOPPING THE “WASHINGTON TAKEOVER” OF HEALTHCARE

- (1) **Humanize your approach.** Abandon and exile ALL references to the “*healthcare system.*” From now on, healthcare is about *people*. Before you speak, think of the three components of tone that matter most: *Individualize. Personalize. Humanize.*
- (2) **Acknowledge the “crisis” or suffer the consequences.** If you say there is no healthcare crisis, you give your listener permission to ignore everything *else* you say. It is a credibility killer for most Americans. A better approach is to define the crisis in your terms. “*If you’re one of the millions who can’t afford healthcare, it is a crisis.*” Better yet, “*If some bureaucrat puts himself between you and your doctor, denying you exactly what you need, that’s a crisis.*” And the best: “*If you have to wait weeks for tests and months for treatment, that’s a healthcare crisis.*”
- (3) **“Time” is the government healthcare killer.** As Mick Jagger once sang, “*Time is on Your Side.*” Nothing else turns people against the government takeover of healthcare than the realistic expectation that it will result in delayed and potentially even denied treatment, procedures and/or medications. “*Waiting to buy a car or even a house won’t kill you. But waiting for the healthcare you need – could. Delayed care is denied care.*”
- (4) **The arguments against the Democrats’ healthcare plan must center around “politicians,” “bureaucrats,” and “Washington” ... not the free market, tax incentives, or competition.** Stop talking economic theory and start personalizing the impact of a government takeover of healthcare. They don’t want to hear that you’re opposed to government healthcare because it’s too expensive (any help from the government to lower costs will be embraced) or because it’s anti-competitive (they don’t know about or care about current limits to competition). But they are deathly afraid that a government takeover will lower their quality of care – so they are extremely receptive to the anti-Washington approach. It’s not an *economic* issue. It’s a *bureaucratic* issue.
- (5) **The healthcare denial horror stories from Canada & Co. do resonate, but you have to humanize them.** You’ll notice we recommend the phrase “*government takeover*” rather than “*government run*” or “*government controlled*” It’s because too many politician say “*we don’t want a government run healthcare system like Canada or Great Britain*” without explaining those consequences. There is a better approach. “*In countries with government run healthcare, politicians make YOUR healthcare decisions. THEY decide if you’ll get the procedure you need, or if you are disqualified because the treatment is too expensive or because you are too old. We can’t have that in America.*”

- (6) **Healthcare quality = “getting the treatment you need, when you need it.”** That is how Americans define quality, and so should you. Once again, focus on the importance of timeliness, but then add to it the specter of “*denial*.” Nothing will anger Americans more than the chance that they will be *denied* the healthcare they need for whatever reason. This is also important because it is an attribute of a government healthcare system that the **Democrats CANNOT offer**. So say it. *“The plan put forward by the Democrats will deny people treatments they need and make them wait to get the treatments they are allowed to receive.”*
- (7) **“One-size-does-NOT-fit-all.”** The idea that a “*committee of Washington bureaucrats*” will establish the standard of care for all Americans and decide who gets what treatment based on how much it costs is anathema to Americans. Your approach? Call for the **“protection of the personalized doctor-patient relationship.”** It allows you to fight to protect and improve something good rather than only fighting to prevent something bad.
- (8) **WASTE, FRAUD, and ABUSE are your best targets for how to bring down costs.** Make no mistake: the high cost of healthcare is still public enemy number one on this issue – and why so many Americans (including Republicans and conservatives) think the Democrats can handle healthcare better than the GOP. You can’t blame it on the lack of a private market; in case you missed it, capitalism isn’t exactly in vogue these days. But you *can* and should blame it on the *waste, fraud, and abuse* that is rampant in anything and everything the government controls.
- (9) **Americans will expect the government to look out for those who truly can’t afford healthcare.** Here is the perfect sentence for addressing cost and the limited role for government that wins you allies rather than enemies: *“A balanced, common sense approach that provides assistance to those who truly need it and keeps healthcare patient-centered rather than government-centered for everyone.”*
- (10) **It’s not enough to just say what you’re against. You have to tell them what you’re for.** It’s okay (and even necessary) for your campaign to center around why this healthcare plan is bad for America. But if you offer no vision for what’s *better* for America, you’ll be relegated to insignificance at best and labeled obstructionist at worst. What Americans are looking for in healthcare that your “*solution*” will provide is, in a word, **more**: *“more access to more treatments and more doctors...with less interference from insurance companies and Washington politicians and special interests.”*

You simply MUST be vocally and passionately on the side of reform. The status quo is no longer acceptable. If the dynamic becomes “*President Obama is on the side of reform and Republicans are against it,*” then the battle is lost and every word in this document is useless. Republicans must be for the *right kind* of reform that *protects the quality of healthcare for all Americans*. And you must establish your support of reform early in your presentation.

THE BIG PICTURE: AMERICA'S HEALTHCARE CLIMATE

This document is based on polling results and Instant Response dial sessions conducted in April 2009. It captures not just what Americans want to see but exactly what they want to hear. The Words That Work boxes that follow are already being used by a few Congressional and Senatorial Republicans. From today forward, they should be used by everyone.

But don't expect to reach everyone. More than one quarter of the population will back significant government involvement in healthcare and a third support "universal" care. The primary message of this document is to focus on the persuadables and generate support among wayward Republicans and conservatives. Here's how.

- (1) **Acknowledge the crisis or risk the consequences.** Fully 70% of Americans consider our healthcare system to be either in a state of crisis or seriously troubled and requires significant reform. While it is true that the "crisis" response has dropped significantly in the past 15 years, the percentage of Americans who think the system needs significant reform has soared. So you say there is no healthcare crisis, you are telling those 70 percent that you are ignorant of their fears and concerns.

How would you define the state of the healthcare system in America today?

It is in crisis and needs a total overhaul.	12.0%
It is seriously troubled and needs significant revisions.	57.5%
It is adequate but still needs tweaks.	15.1%
It is a good system and only needs minor changes.	13.3%
It is one of the best systems in the world and doesn't need to be changed.	2.1%

The best approach is to empathize with the fear, anxiety and financial pain people are clearly feeling right now. So instead of dismissing their concerns, acknowledge them – up front – and then pivot to your solution. Some conservatives will undoubtedly find this distasteful. But failure to connect on a personal level at the beginning will lead to communication failure at the end.

WORDS THAT WORK

If you can't get the treatment you need, when you need it, there is a crisis.

If you are denied the ability to choose the doctor or hospital that's best for you, then it is a crisis.

If you can't afford the coverage you need for you and your family, then you have a crisis.

We need to stop looking at it from a global perspective and restore the humanity to healthcare. We need to focus more on people and less on the system.

This is the single best approach to the crisis language because it *individualizes* and *personalizes* healthcare – and shows empathy for anyone and everyone struggling right now. This plays into more favorable Republican territory by protecting individual care while downplays the need for a comprehensive national healthcare plan.

- (2) **You simply MUST be on the side of “the right reform.”** The status quo is no longer acceptable. The overwhelming majority of Americans believe significant reform is needed – and they see Republicans (and the insurance companies) as the roadblock. If the dynamic becomes “*President Obama and Congressional Democrats are on the side of reform and Republicans are against it,*” -- which is exactly what Obama has already started to promote -- the public will side with the Democrats and you will lose both the communication and the policy.

WORDS THAT DON'T WORK

We don't need a complete overhaul of our health sector. We need to support what works and change what doesn't.

The language above from a conservative website doesn't work for two reasons:

- 1) **It starts out with a negative.** Unfortunately, that's how most conservatives begin the healthcare discussion, and then they're surprised when only the most ardent followers agree with them. Start by telling them what you are for, not what you are against.
- 2) **It talks about the system, not about the individual.** Healthcare is *personal*, and so your opening statement should be personal.

Republicans must be for the *right kind* of reform that promotes “*protection*” of what Americans want and demand most:

WORDS THAT WORK A LOT BETTER

We need to carefully address America’s healthcare challenges. Let’s find immediate, measurable ways to make it more accessible and affordable without jeopardizing quality, individual choice, or personalized care. And let’s protect the doctor-patient relationship

Be sensitive to the anti-Washington bias ingrained in *both* parties. President Obama has already begun to employ an “*us vs. them*” context to the debate – hinting that those who *oppose* his reforms *support* the “*special interests*.” You need to be very careful to be seen as challenging the “Washington special interests” rather than defending them.

OBAMA WORDS THAT WORK

Now, I know people are skeptical about whether Washington can bring about this change. Our inability to reform health care in the past is just one example of how special interests have had their way, and the public interest has fallen by the wayside. And I know people are afraid we’ll draw the same old lines in the sand and give in to the same entrenched interests and arrive back at the same stalemate that we’ve been stuck in for decades. – President Obama

- (3) **It’s not enough to just say what you’re *against*. You have to tell them what you’re *for*.** Overt attacks against the Democratic proposals will fail if they aren’t balanced with your solutions. It’s okay (and even necessary) for your communication effort to center around why the Democratic-supported “*government takeover of healthcare*” is bad for America. But if you offer no vision for what’s *better* for America, you’ll be relegated to insignificance at best and labeled obstructionist at worst.

Later in this document I offer the best language to talk about the proper role of government, but it is important to note in this opening section that Republicans who simply run against Washington-run healthcare will lose the healthcare debate. It may be accurate, and it may be ideologically sound, but a campaign against government healthcare has left the GOP at least 20 points behind on the issue – perhaps more. There is a far better approach. Here is the perfect passage for articulating the Republican agenda of opposing the Democratic plan while remaining positive about your principles:

WORDS THAT WORK

Whether you call it a crisis, a problem, or a challenge is less important than tackling the real challenges to expand healthcare availability, lower costs, and ensure quality of care.

As our first priority, we need to preserve what works in America, protect the sacred doctor-patient relationship, and allow people to choose the personal care that suits their individual needs.

We should be cautious of proposed government fixes that increase taxpayer costs and shrink personal choices. And we should avoid government intrusion that decreases quality and increases bureaucracy.

We need targeted reform with measurable results that improves patient care – not a politicized, special interest-driven radical restructuring.

In the five sentences above, you have redefined the issue, personalized it, told people what you support, articulated what you're against, and offered a vision of healthcare reform that everyone – including most Democrats – can eagerly embrace.

- (4) **It's about \$\$\$: cost and profit.** Your solution HAS to address the financial component of healthcare. It's on people's minds and so it must be in your approach.

Which of the following is the American healthcare system's single biggest problem?

Too profit-driven	59.9%
Too bureaucratic	38.5%
Too inaccessible	20.5%
Too complicated	19.3%
Too restrictive	12.6%
Too confusing	12.4%
Too limited	10.5%
Too unsafe/intimidating/unpredictable/ insensitive	Less than 10 %

- (5) **The availability and bureaucracy of healthcare causes significant frustration.** A quick scan of the polling data below shows that there is no love lost for insurance companies – primarily because of their perceived profitability, a lack of accessibility, their lack of accountability, and an excess of bureaucracy. In fact, notice how many of the top complaints involve health insurance in some way.

We suggest ratcheting up the rhetoric against insurance companies to almost the same degree as you do against Washington bureaucracy. Call the Democratic plan a ***“bailout for the insurance industry”*** – both because it *is*, and because it will build lasting credibility by going after the two things the American people hate most: Washington bureaucracy and insurer greed.

Which of the following is the greatest short-coming of America's healthcare system?

Not having health insurance	49.8%
Dealing with the insurance companies	43.0%
The lack of focus on preventative medicine	39.6%
That healthcare is not yet universal	34.5%
Inflexibility of healthcare plans	30.9%
Insurance companies' refusal to cover preexisting conditions	30.9%
Too many frivolous lawsuits	30.4%
Too much gov't regulation/intervention	11.3%
Not enough gov't regulation/oversight	5.9%
Poor quality of care	5.8%

Very few Americans are complaining about *“not enough general practitioners,” “not enough specialists,”* or *“too unsafe.”* In fact, only 6% say *“poor quality of care”* is one of their three top concerns. The lesson is this: people do believe that American healthcare TODAY offers good quality and the doctors we need. *Use this to your advantage.* Raise the prospect of what happens when – with all the *other* problems we have in healthcare and with everything we *already* know about government – we follow the Democratic proposal and jeopardize our quality of care and access to good doctors by putting politicians in charge of *your* healthcare.

- (6) **Your political opponents are the Democrats in Congress and the bureaucrats in Washington, not President Obama.** Every time we test language that criticized the President by name, the response was negative – even among Republicans. Americans want solutions, not politics. Here is a better approach:

WORDS THAT WORK

Now is not the time to play politics with healthcare. Now is the time for everyone to work together to achieve what matters most: more affordable, more accessible, more individualized and personalized healthcare.

Therefore, we ask the President to commit to the principle that the government that can't even run a company should not be running healthcare.

We ask him to commit to the principle that doctors and patients should be making healthcare decisions, not some Washington bureaucracy.

And we ask him to commit to patient-centered, not government-centered healthcare. In turn, we commit to working with him on his stated goals of increasing efficiency and lowering healthcare costs for all.

If you make this debate about Republicans vs. Obama, you lose. But if you make it about Americans vs. politicians, you win. When asked directly what would be the best reason to oppose what President Obama is trying to do regarding healthcare, Americans gave us two clear winners:

- 1) *“It could lead to the government setting standards of care, instead of doctors who really know what’s best.”*
- 2) *“It could lead to the government rationing care, making people stand in line and denying treatment like they do in other countries with national healthcare.”*

And if you find that you must challenge the president, we suggest the following.
“President Obama wants to put the Washington bureaucrats in charge of healthcare. I want to put the medical professionals in charge, and I want patients as an equal partner.”

A BALANCED APPROACH: “AFFORDABILITY, QUALITY, & ACCESS”

OVERVIEW

Cost remains king of the healthcare crisis. Americans of all political stripes and demographic backgrounds will agree that their number one complaint about healthcare today is how much they have to pay for it and how profit-driven it has become.

However, if you ask a certain question a certain way, you change the game entirely:

THE QUESTION YOU MUST ASK EVERY HEALTHCARE TOWN HALL FORUM

Would you rather...

“Pay the costs you pay today for the quality of care you currently receive,”

-- OR--

“Pay less for your care, but potentially have to wait weeks for tests and months for treatments you need.”

Their Answer:

OVERWHELMINGLY KEEP THE CURRENT ARRANGEMENT

Put slightly differently, here are the results from our national survey:

And if the federal government were to offer a healthcare plan that was 20 percent less expensive than what you probably pay now and gives you many but not all the benefits and choices you have now, would you be more likely to sign up for the cheaper government plan or pay for the more expensive private plan?

More expensive private plan	63.0%
Cheaper government plan	37.0%

Note: Even the most liberal Obama voters narrowly preferred the private plan by 51%-49%. As you move across the spectrum, preference for the more expensive private plan grows exponentially: 54%-46% for moderate Obama voters, 71%-29% for moderate McCain voters, and 86%-14% for conservative McCain voters.

Americans will prioritize cost over quality right up until the moment they realize that it's *their* quality that they are sacrificing. So put it these terms, because this is exactly the choice that the healthcare legislation is putting before Americans today. Here's the best way to do it:

WORDS THAT WORK:

THE PERFECT PLATFORM FOR HEALTHCARE REFORM

“As a matter of **principle**, Republicans are firmly **committed** to providing **genuine** access to **affordable, quality** healthcare for **every** American. The time has come to create a **balanced, common sense** approach that will **guarantee** that Americans can receive **the care they deserve** and **protect** the **sacred doctor-patient relationship**. We will oppose any **politician-run system** that **denies you the treatments you need, when you need them**.

TALKING ABOUT AFFORDABILITY

When it comes to healthcare costs, **the biggest cost concern among all cost components is the threat of catastrophic expenses**. “*The potential costs I would be responsible for in a catastrophic situation*” is the first or second biggest fear among two-thirds of Americans, followed by “*the monthly premiums that I have to pay*” at just over 55%. Co-pays, deductibles, out-of-network costs, and even prescription medications barely register.

- (7) **WASTE, FRAUD, ABUSE & MISMANAGEMENT are your best targets for bringing down costs**. Make no mistake: the high cost of healthcare is still public enemy number one – and the hardest for Republicans to attack. Republicans are currently blaming the lack of real competition, but in case you missed it, capitalism isn't exactly in vogue these days. Moreover, fixing the problem utilizing the tax code sounds disingenuous to some, dangerous to others, and ineffective to almost everyone. But the combination of *waste, fraud, and mismanagement* along with the consequences of the ongoing *lawsuit abuse* is both credible and accurate.

WORDS THAT WORK

As a matter of principle, every American should have access to affordable, quality healthcare. How? By ending all the waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement in the system -- and by eliminating all the unnecessary tests and procedures that are being imposed on patients by doctors practicing defensive medicine rather than preventative medicine.

We need to keep healthcare patient-centered rather than government-centered. With a greater focus on preventing waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement, and by promoting greater access to information, prevention, and wellness for all Americans – we can do it.

- (8) **Shift the healthcare focus to “preventative treatments” and “early detection.” Tell people that the single best way to reduce healthcare costs is to promote “wellness.”**

Wellness emerged from our research as one of the four most important core values for American healthcare. Apply the principle to lower costs and you have a solid answer for cost-conscience Americans.

WORDS THAT WORK

We have a system that rewards insurance companies for insuring people who are not sick and are not going to get sick, and then we penalize companies that insure people who are sick. Five diseases account for 75% of all healthcare dollars in this country – five preventable diseases. Prevention is the key for us if we want to control healthcare costs.

– Senator Tom Coburn

WORDS THAT WORK

The earlier we detect, the more options we have. The better we educate, the better prevention works. And consequently, the less expensive healthcare is for the American family.

– Senator Richard Burr

TALKING ABOUT QUALITY

- (9) **Healthcare quality = “getting the treatment you need, when you need it.”** That is how Americans define quality, and so should you. The key opportunity here is that **this commitment goes beyond what the Democrats can offer.** Their plan will deny people treatments they need and make them wait to get the treatments they can actually receive. This is more than just rationing. To most Americans, rationing suggests limits or shortages – for others. But personalizing it – **“delaying your tests and denying your treatment”** -- is the concept most likely to change the most minds in your favor.

(10) **“One-size-does-NOT-fit-all.”** The idea that a “*committee of Washington bureaucrats*” will establish a single standard of care for all Americans and decide who gets what treatment based on how much it costs is an anathema to Americans. There are a number of ways to attack this:

- Demand the ***“protection of the personal doctor-patient relationship.”***
- Compare the personalized relationship with their doctor to the distant, cold, calculations of a federal medical panel.
- Utilize examples of medical breakthroughs that would be undermined or jeopardized.

WORDS THAT WORK

The problem with federal standardization is that one size doesn't fit all.

It's true that research can tell us what usually works best, and doctors use that research all the time. They rely on *The New England Journal of Medicine* and other studies to develop a set of best practices.

But they also know that healthcare is very personal, so doctors combine that knowledge with the essential freedom to tailor care to the individual. This has led to some exciting advances, like in genomics research, which allows doctors to prescribe medications that are designed to suit your individual body.

So one size definitely does not fit all, and we should never allow a federal panel of bureaucrats to erase these great gains in personalized care.

– Senator Jon Kyl

FEDERAL BUREAUCRATS, WASHINGTON LOBBYISTS & OUT-OF-TOUCH POLITICIANS: REFORM AMERICA DOESN'T WANT

“No Washington bureaucrat or healthcare lobbyist should stand between your family and your doctor. The Democrats want to put Washington politicians in charge of YOUR healthcare. We can and must do better. Say no to a Washington takeover of healthcare and say yes to personalized patient-centered care.”

The best anti-Democrat message

Americans of all political stripes agree on this: the government does a poor job regulating healthcare today. Even if they disagree on *why* it does a poor job, they all share a distrust of mixing Washington with their healthcare. Consider:

How effective is the government at regulating healthcare in the U.S.?

Extremely Effective	0.6%
Very Effective	3.1%
Somewhat Effective	21.6%
Somewhat Ineffective	19.3%
Very Ineffective	32.4%
Extremely Ineffective	20.5%

Surprisingly, there was little difference between Democrats and Republicans; people from both parties skewed heavily towards the “ineffective” answers. This sets the context for the entire message campaign that follows.

- (11) **The arguments against the Democrats’ healthcare plan must center around politicians, bureaucrats, and Washington... not the free market, tax incentives, or competition.** Simply, healthcare is too personal and vital to Americans to put a price tag on it. They don’t want to hear that you’re opposed to government healthcare because it’s too expensive or anti-competitive. But they are deathly afraid that government will lower their quality of care – so they are extremely receptive to the anti-Washington approach.

Allow me to shout, for I fear conservatives will continue to make this mistake if someone doesn't stand up and shout out:

Healthcare is NOT an *economic* issue. It's a *personal* issue.

Let me be as clear and definitive as I can about this assertion. Every message by every Republican speaker that delved into an economic argument about healthcare was poorly received. Every polling question that asked about the economic (private sector, free market, competition, etc.) component of healthcare failed. Consider the following:

*Which healthcare system would you most like to see
America adopt in the coming years?*

Patient-centered Healthcare	61.8%
Free Market Healthcare	20.3%
Private Healthcare	9.3%

If you're still not convinced, consider the following:

*Who or what would you say is most to blame
for the high cost of healthcare today?*

Waste, fraud & abuse	47.5%
Insurance companies	42.5%
Mal-practice lawsuits	31.5%
Pharmaceutical companies	26.3%
Lack of regulation & oversight	13.8%
Lack of private competition	6.5%

Nobody is asking for "*private healthcare*" or "*free market healthcare*." There is no demand for more "*competition*." Those are economic terms. They want patient-centered healthcare – healthcare that's individualized, personalized and humanized. So if you want to demonstrate to Americans that you understand and empathize, stop bringing in economic terminology into a debate about healthcare.

- (12) **What Americans do care about: “denial” of care.** It is essential that “deny” and “denial” enter the conservative lexicon immediately because it is at the core of what scares Americans most about a government takeover of healthcare. Then add to it the source of that denial and you have the perfect anti-government, anti-Washington and anti-Democratic message:

*What would you be most concerned about
if the government were to further regulate healthcare?*

Being denied a procedure or medication because a Washington bureaucrat says no	33.1%
Quality of care going down	24.6%
Putting special interests’ needs before the public’s needs	23.4%
Getting in the way of the doctor-patient relationship	22.3%
A longer list of regulations will lead to longer lines and longer waits for care	20.8%

Note: ALL of the more abstract or economic arguments like “*inhibiting research into new cures*” “*forcing doctors to study regulations instead of medicine,*” or “*increasing the national debt*” failed to make the list above. Why? Because they aren’t *personal*.

WORDS THAT DO NOT WORK

There’s another thing that Americans should be concerned about if we are going to have government run healthcare: 75% of all the innovations in healthcare in the world come out of this country.

There’s a reason for that. It’s because even though we don’t have a good market, the market we still have generates entrepreneurship, invention, advancement, and excellence in terms of new ideas and new cures and new treatments in healthcare. That will go away under government run healthcare, and with it tons of jobs.

(13) **Maximize your attacks on the Democratic plan by choosing the BEST words.** For instance, calling it the “*Democratic plan*” isn’t your best bet; doing so makes it political in the *wrong* way. It makes the issue Republicans vs. Democrats – which doesn’t favor you. The issue needs to be Americans vs. Washington. So here are the words to use:

- **“This plan puts *politicians* in charge of your healthcare” is even better than “*bureaucrats.*”** Bureaucrats are scary – but at least they are professionals. But politicians? They bring *all* the wrong things to something as vital as healthcare. Both words do damage to the Democratic plan, but “*politicians*” does the most.
- **“Washington” beats “Government.”** Washington has all the problems of every other level of government, and more.
- **“Washington Takeover” beats “Washington Control.”** Takeovers are like coups – they both lead to dictators and a loss of freedom. What Americans fear most is that *Washington politicians will dictate what kind of care they can receive.*

(14) **Americans believe and fear that if the Washington gets involved in their healthcare, quality of care will greatly diminish.** Most agree that if the government runs healthcare, it will take longer to get the care they need – if they can even get it at all. The point here is to remind people *why* they should oppose the Washington-centric, politician-based healthcare system by **personalizing** the harm:

“YOUR quality of care will go down if THEY in Washington make YOUR healthcare decisions for you.”

WORDS THAT WORK

This plan may sound good rhetorically, but at the end of the day, we are moving very swiftly towards a Washington-engineered, bureaucratic controlled, healthcare system. And we all know that when the government gets in the middle of anything, the quality can quickly diminish.

– Eric Cantor

Note that in this case, saying healthcare *system* is actually okay – because you are using the word as a weapon to describe what the Democrats are trying to do.

- (15) **ISSUE: Federal Standardization. Oppose this policy idea by attacking bureaucrats in the name of protecting the doctor-patient relationship.** Polling reveals two attacks that work best against the creation of a federal panel that would determine a standardized approach to medical care.

- *“It would have federal bureaucrats determining healthcare standards rather than the doctors who are actually providing the care.”*
- *“It will take the power away from patients and doctors to choose what treatment the patient receives and give it to the politicians in Washington.”*

WORDS THAT WORK

Science and research should be used to enhance and improve healthcare quality, not limit a patient’s choices or options. We should encourage doctors and healthcare professionals to share best practices and learn from each other’s experiences, but we need to recognize that every patient is different and every illness needs an individualized, personalized approach. Statistical analysis can help, but healthcare requires a human approach, timely decisions, and the right of patients to try an innovative approach if everything else has failed.

A federal panel that looks at healthcare from a national perspective will not be flexible enough to react to individual patient needs. The ultimate power to decide the best treatment needs to remain with the patient and the doctor.

There are specific words here that are particularly effective:

- *“Every patient is different”* because it’s as truism we already believe. Similarly, *“a human approach”* puts the humanity back into healthcare.
- *“Healthcare by committee”* because it suggests an impersonal approach to important decisions;
- *“Inefficiency”* because it suggests more waste, fraud and mismanagement.
- *“Letting doctors make the decisions”* because we believe they are the most qualified, capable, and have our best interests at heart.

The following Words That Work box puts it all together:

WORDS THAT WORK

Federal standardization is healthcare by committee – and we don't need the inefficiencies of government committees making healthcare decisions.

Doctors are our true experts. The best system is where a patient and a doctor make the decisions about care. Doctors have to go through a pretty rigorous plan to get "Dr." next to their name, and the overwhelming majority of them are great doctors.

We don't need some committee rationing care and telling people what they can and can't have. We need to give patients the best choices of health plans and doctors and let them make their own decisions.

– Senator Jim DeMint

- (16) **The cure rate differentials between the United States and countries with government-run healthcare is a powerful weapons.** You need to assemble a list of the five most staggering facts that show better cure rates in the United States than our neighbors in Canada and our cousins in Great Britain. Focus on the kinds of diseases that touch the most people in the most personal ways, like cancer and heart disease. The facts *must* be accurate – because our research indicates that this kind of information really will move people. It personalizes the harm of government-run healthcare in a powerful way.

WORDS THAT WORK

Why is it that we have a 50% higher cure rate in cancers that anybody else in the world? And why is it if you get breast cancer in America, you are into your treatment within three weeks and in the rest of the world it's four months or six months or nine months?

– Senator Tom Coburn

PERSONALIZE, HUMANIZE, AND EMPHASIZE THE DOCTOR-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

OVERVIEW

Notice how the highest priorities below are highly personalized – and none is more important than the personal doctor-patient relationship. It’s not about healthcare in general. It’s about MY doctor and MY choice – without any interference.

Which TWO concepts or phrases do you AGREE with the MOST?

Decisions about my healthcare should be between me and my doctor and no one else	58.3%
I should have the right to choose the healthcare that’s right for me	52.5%
Healthcare dollars should follow me, the patient, not lobbyists and special interests.	41.8%
Everybody is different. My healthcare should reflect those differences.	26.5%
The right to spend my own healthcare dollars must be protected and preserved.	11.8%
My healthcare belongs to me.	9.3%

There’s a message in all this: humanize your approach. Abandon and ALL references to the “*healthcare system.*” This entire issue is about *people*. Individualize. Personalize. Humanize. Talk about *health* and *care* as distinct qualities, values, and objectives ... rather than a massive system. Americans think about their care as a highly personal issue. So should you. It’s not about the *public healthcare system*. It’s about personal health.

- (17) **STOP talking about “consumers” and START talking about “human beings.”** The term consumer reeks of the economic arguments about competition, free markets, and private insurance companies – none of which gets you anywhere with persuadables. Talking about “*patients*”... or better still “*human beings*” ... casts the whole discussion in the humanized approach we strongly advocate. In fact, this is exactly what Americans *want* to be called:

Which of the following best describes the way in which you WANT to think of yourself when you use the health care system?

A Human Being	32.5%
A Patient	26.8%
A Person	14.5%
A Customer	8.8%
A Consumer	7.0%
The Boss	6.5%
A Client	4.0%

(18) **Call for a creation of a “patient-centered” approach to healthcare.** What the Democrats offer is a “Washington-run healthcare system”. What you advocate is a patient centered approach. The rhetorical value of emphasizing this difference is immense.

(19) **Always place protecting the doctor-patient relationship an essential priority for any healthcare initiative.** Your three most powerful phrases are:

- *“No Washington politician or bureaucrat should stand between you and your doctor.”*
- *“Decisions about you and your healthcare should be between you and your doctor and no one else.”*
- *“Let your doctor decide.”*

WORDS THAT WORK

Government should not stand between the patient and the physician. The government should not be able to tell you how much care you can get. Nobody in the government should tell you that you can’t get a medication that’s going to help prolong your life or a treatment that’s going to make it easier for you. Imagine needing a new hip that will make it easier to get around, but just because you’re over 75, the government denies you that surgery. We can’t allow that to happen in America.

– Senator Jon Kyl

WORDS THAT WORK

The axiom in medical schools all across this country is “if you will listen to the patient, they will tell you what is wrong with them.”

We’ve had a shift in our country, as physicians have tried to keep up with the declining reimbursements: they can’t listen as well. The practice guidelines they have to follow totally disregard the *art* of medicine.

I can give you example after example of people who I’ve diagnosed with diseases that don’t fit in the guidelines. In these situations, diagnosing through the *art* of medicine has saved their life. And the guidelines would have never captured what was needed to save their life.

Under this approach we ignore 40% of the physician’s capability to actually make a difference in somebody else’s life because we force them to practice cookie cutter medicine that a bureaucrat in Washington decides on. -- Senator Tom Coburn

- (20) **Personalizing the issue isn’t just about the individual. It’s even *more* about their *children and their families*.** For the parents we talked to, the idea of waiting in line for the treatment they need -- or being flat-out denied that treatment – was deeply worrying. But the idea that their *children* might not get life saving treatment in time? Unacceptable. And yet this is exactly what can happen under the Democrats’ proposed plan. Children will not be immune from waiting lines and rationing – and parents need to be aware of this fact.

Most parents said they could tolerate waiting and enduring for certain treatments for themselves. They acknowledge that they often put off going to the doctor for their own treatments because of cost or a lack of time, but they don’t hesitate to take their children in right away. The urgency to get *the care you need when you need it* is significantly heightened when it becomes *the care your CHILD needs when he or she needs it*.

Similar feelings apply to *elderly parents* who in many ways are equally vulnerable as children. Appealing to the *family* of persuadable middle age voters must be a key part of your approach.

- (21) **A perfect way to articulate this parental concern is to talk about your desire to protect your own family.** It takes the discussion out of the political realm and puts it where it belongs – with the people most impacted by the policy. Below is more than just good language – it's perfect.

WORDS THAT WORK

Other than my freedom, the most important thing in the world to me is my family's health. And I think that's true with most people. I am going to fight as hard as I can for a system that enables me to take care of my family as best I can.

I don't want somebody telling me that I can't have good healthcare for my family. I don't want a government bureaucrat telling me that I can't have some medication or procedure that's going to prolong my life or my mother's life. And I fear that the kind of rationing that's involved in the planning that's being done right now is going to prevent me, or at least my children, from having the same kind of high quality healthcare that I've had.

– Senator Jon Kyl

RATIONING

“We should be very skeptical of government control of healthcare. With government run healthcare, federal bureaucrats make coverage decisions. They decide what you get for what you’re charged. They also decide when you can’t have certain coverage because it’s too expensive or because you are disqualified based on criteria like age.

Other countries with government healthcare can and do deny treatment for hip replacement or knee replacement based on age. We must never get to the point in our country where some bureaucrat in Washington is telling us what we can or can’t have for ourselves or our families.”

-- Senator Jon Kyl (the perfect anti-rationing language)

“Rationing” is one of the rare examples when the word itself is a less powerful concept than the meaning. Put simply, while Americans would oppose the concept (and reality) of healthcare rationing, it is the impact of rationing – the long waits for tests, the denial of care, the thousands of people fleeing to America to get the care they can’t get in their own countries – this is what truly frightens the public more than the word rationing itself.

(23) **The healthcare horror stories from Canada & Co. do resonate, but you have to humanize them.** It’s not enough to say “*we don’t want a government run healthcare system like Canada or Great Britain.*” That assertion itself doesn’t pack much of a punch. Instead, you have to attach the human element to it:

-- “*With government run healthcare, politicians and bureaucrats make your healthcare decisions for you.*”

-- *They decide if you are eligible or disqualified because a treatment is too expensive or you are too old. Imagine being turned down – and no way to appeal.*

(24) **The word “rationing” does induce the negative response you want, but what you really want audiences to focus on is the “consequences of rationing.”** As you can see, “rationing” tests very well against the other healthcare buzzwords that frighten Americans:

Which TWO concepts or phrases would FRIGHTEN you the most?

Healthcare Rationing	43.9%
One-size-fits-all Healthcare	36.3%
Healthcare by Lobbyist	34.9%
Socialized Medicine	26.4%
Politicized Healthcare	25.6%
Nationalized Healthcare	17.4%
Hilary-Care	10.1%

However, when asked which of eight different consequences would “scare people more” about the future of American healthcare, “rationing came in 7th at just 14%. In first place by far was “the government will decide what treatment I can or can’t have” at 43%. Yup, that’s rationing – only by a better name.

A better approach than simply saying “rationing” is to personalize just what that means. The three best lines? See below.

**WORDS THAT WORK:
THE BEST WAYS TO PERSONALIZE “RATIONING”**

Top Ranked Answers:

That the government will decide what treatment I can or can’t have.

That it will be government-run, bureaucratic-controlled, and special interested driven.

That healthcare will become a “one-size-fits-all” system that takes my options and choices away.

- (25) **“Delayed care is denied care.”** While this comes towards the end of the analysis, it may well be the single most important language finding in our work to date. Of the roughly 30 distinct messages we tested, nothing turns people against what the Democrats are trying to do more immediately and intensely than the specter of having to wait for tests and treatment thanks to a government takeover of healthcare by nameless, faceless bureaucrats. The polling data is conclusive:

Which consequence of government involvement in healthcare would anger you more?

Waiting weeks or even months to get the procedure or treatment you need	44.4%
The rationing of healthcare which limits your choices and options	26.3%
That America's seniors may be denied some treatments based on their age	19.1%
Interference in the private doctor-patient relationship	10.3%

The choice that *personalized* the harm the *most* is the one that *won*. And as people emphasize in dial sessions, delayed care is denied care – a genuine a life and death decision. In fact, when asked which was a higher priority – spending less on healthcare or being treated in a timely fashion – timely treatment beat cost almost unanimously. Add to it the inability to appeal the government decision and you have the single strongest argument against the Democratic proposal.

WORDS THAT WORK: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

As a matter of principle, America should strive to offer the most people the best quality, most timely healthcare in the world. What does that mean?

First, Americans should not have to wait weeks for the tests they need or months for treatment.

Second, no one should be denied the healthcare they need because of government limits, restrictions, or rationing.

Third, no government bureaucrat should interfere in the doctor-patient relationship.

And forth, we have the right to know all the information about our condition and our treatment options.

As we prepare for much needed healthcare reform, let's learn form the mistakes of Canada and Europe and not repeat them.

THE HEALTHCARE GLOSSARY: WORDS THAT WORK & WHAT NOT TO SAY

NEVER SAY	INSTEAD SAY
<p><u><i>Most important healthcare values.</i></u></p> <p>Hopeful (1.0%) Less stress (2.5%) Personal Security (5.1%) Security (6.5%) Valued (6.8%)</p>	<p><u><i>Most important healthcare values.</i></u></p> <p>Informed (23.4%) Peace of Mind (21.6%) Wellness (21.0%) In Control (20.6%) Hassle-free (15.8%)</p>
<p><u><i>The state of healthcare in America is...</i></u></p> <p>Healthcare in America a good system but still needs tweaks (15.1%)</p> <p>Healthcare in America is one of the best systems in the world and doesn't need to be changed (2.1%)</p>	<p><u><i>The state of healthcare in America is...</i></u></p> <p>Healthcare in America is seriously troubled and needs significant reform (57.5%)</p>
<p><u><i>Healthcare is...</i></u></p> <p>Too Unsafe (1.5%) Too Intimidating (1.8%) Too Unpredictable (6.8%)</p>	<p><u><i>Healthcare is...</i></u></p> <p>Too Profit-driven (59.9%) Too Bureaucratic (38.5%)</p>
<p><u><i>When it comes to healthcare, people should treated like...</i></u></p> <p>A Client (4.0%) A Consumer (7.0%) A Customer (8.8%)</p>	<p><u><i>When it comes to healthcare, people should treated like...</i></u></p> <p>A Human Being (32.5%) A Patient (26.8%)</p>
<p><u><i>Which of the following scares you the most?</i></u></p> <p>It will become unfriendly to patients like Canada and Great Britain (9%)</p> <p>Healthcare rationing (14.4%)</p>	<p><u><i>Which of the following scares you the most?</i></u></p> <p>The gov't will decide what treatment I can or can't have. (42.8%)</p> <p>It will be gov't run, bureaucratic-controlled and special interest driven (38.8%)</p>

NEVER SAY	INSTEAD SAY
<p><u>Whom do you blame for the cost of healthcare?</u></p> <p>Hospitals (4.0%) Doctors (5.0%) Lack of private competition (6.5%)</p>	<p><u>Whom do you blame for the cost of healthcare?</u></p> <p>Waste, fraud & abuse (47.5%) Insurance companies (42.5%) Lawsuit abuse (31.5%)</p>
<p><u>What concerns you most about gov't regulation?</u></p> <p>It will get in the way of research & development for new and advanced treatment options (7.1%)</p> <p>It will increase generational debt that our children will have to pay (8.4%)</p> <p>Doctors will have to be more concerned about learning and practicing regulations than they are about learning and practicing medicine (9.3%)</p>	<p><u>What concerns you most about gov't regulation?</u></p> <p>We will be denied a procedure or medication because a Washington bureaucrat says no (33.1%)</p> <p>The quality of care will go down (24.6%)</p> <p>It will put special interests' needs before the public's needs (23.4%)</p> <p>It will get in the way of the doctor-patient relationship and decision-making (22.3%)</p>
<p><u>What would anger you more?</u></p> <p>That America's seniors may be denied some treatments based on their age (19.1%)</p>	<p><u>What would anger you more?</u></p> <p>Waiting weeks or even months to get the procedure or treatment you need (44.4%)</p> <p>The rationing of healthcare which limits your choices and options (26.3%)</p>
<p><u>The most important part of access is...</u></p> <p>Access to non-traditional therapies, such as acupuncture, chiropractic care, etc. (9.0%)</p> <p>Access to full and complete information about your healthcare choices and options (10.4%)</p> <p>The ability to buy as much or as little coverage as you want for your own needs (10.8%)</p>	<p><u>The most important part of access is...</u></p> <p>The ability to see the doctor of your choice when you want (40.8%)</p> <p>Complete access to healthcare and medical specialists (38.9%)</p> <p>Access to the most advanced medical technology, procedures and medications (32.9%)</p>

NEVER SAY	INSTEAD SAY
<p><u>Which healthcare system do you want most?</u></p> <p>Private healthcare (9.3%) Free market healthcare (20.3%)</p>	<p><u>Which healthcare system do you want most?</u></p> <p>Patient-centered healthcare (61.8%)</p>
<p><u>Which healthcare policy do you want the most?</u></p> <p>My healthcare belongs to me (9.3%)</p> <p>The right to spend my own money for my own healthcare must be protected/preserved (11.8%)</p>	<p><u>Which healthcare policy do you want the most?</u></p> <p>Decisions about my healthcare should be between me and my doctor and no one else (58.3%)</p> <p>I should have the right to choose the healthcare that's right for me. (52.5%)</p>
<p><u>Which healthcare statement do you agree with?</u></p> <p>Government-run healthcare will be too impersonal, too bureaucratic and too uncaring (11.3%)</p> <p>It's my life. I want complete control over my healthcare. (13.3%)</p>	<p><u>Which healthcare statement do you agree with?</u></p> <p>Freedom and flexibility matter most. The freedom to choose the doctor, hospital and plan that's best for me, and the flexibility to change my mind and change my plan. (46.8%)</p> <p>Everybody is different. Healthcare should have the flexibility to fix my health problems. (30.8%)</p>
<p><u>Which healthcare "right" matters most?</u></p> <p>The right to take your healthcare coverage with you when you change jobs or move. (6.5%)</p> <p>The right to know what your policy does and does not cover in plain language. (11.1%)</p>	<p><u>Which healthcare "right" matters most?</u></p> <p>The right to choose the doctor, hospital and policy that fits your individual needs, not a set of government mandates. (43.5%)</p>
<p><u>Which is the best reason to oppose Obama?</u></p> <p>It will cause America to lose its position as the world leader in developing cures for diseases. (5.1%)</p> <p>It will put private healthcare providers out of business so that everybody will eventually be in a lower quality gov't program. (15.5%)</p>	<p><u>Which is the best reason to oppose Obama?</u></p> <p>It will lead to the gov't setting standards instead of the doctor who really knows best. (38.9%)</p> <p>It will lead to the gov't rationing care, making people stand in line and denying people treatment like they do elsewhere. (33.1%)</p> <p>There is no good reason (30.9%)</p>