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RECENT POLLING ON PHARMACEUTICAL POLICY



Democrats have proposed several major reforms to pharmaceutical pricing in the most recent Congress. Some members have expressed concerns that a well-financed opposition campaign from pharmaceutical companies could erode the Democratic majority. In this survey, we subjected Democratic proposals to realistic and clear Republican counterarguments to simulate an electoral environment. Voters remained overwhelmingly supportive of the progressive pharmaceutical policies, even after hearing opposition messages.

Executive summary

- ▶ After hearing pharmaceutical company counter-arguments, voters support ending some pharmaceutical patents 48-30 percent and allowing the government to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies 65-22 percent.
- ▶ After hearing pharmaceutical company counter-arguments, large majorities of Democrats and independents support allowing the government to rescind pharmaceutical patents if prices are exorbitant, as do three in ten Republican voters.

Licensing drugs

We asked respondents if they would be willing to allow the government to annul existing patents in order to bring down prices. We included an informative statement that both primed respondents with the position of the Democrats, and with counterarguments drawn from existing material produced by advocates of the pharmaceutical industry. Our item read:

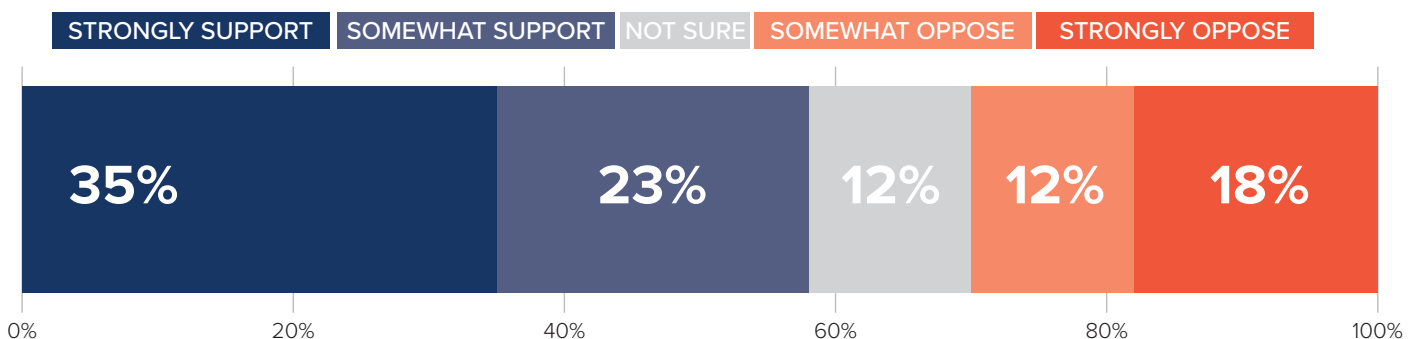
Democrats in Congress are considering a policy that would allow the government to revoke patents from pharmaceutical companies if those companies charge prices for their drugs that are too high for most people to afford them. They argue this will keep costs down and ensure Americans have access to the medicines they need.

Pharmaceutical corporations argue this is little more than giving the government the power to punish innovative pharmaceutical manufacturers on a whim, that will result in fewer new drugs being manufactured. They argue this will result in fewer innovative drugs, fewer jobs in the pharmaceutical industry, and less medical innovation.

Do you [support or oppose] allowing the government to revoke patents from pharmaceutical companies if their prices are too high?

Despite including both a partisan cue and counterarguments about the possibly counterproductive nature of such a policy, we find clear support for it. By a margin of 48 percent to 30 percent, voters support allowing the government to revoke patents from a pharmaceutical provider if a government body deems the price of the pharmaceutical drugs it manufactures to be too high.

ALLOW GOVERNMENT TO REVOKE PATENTS FROM PHARMA IF PRICES ARE TOO HIGH



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While the partisan nature of the policy description likely moved Republicans away from supporting the policy, Democrats and independents both clearly favor these reforms. Democratic and independent respondents favor allowing the government to revoke patents if prices are deemed to be too high (by margins of 78 percent to 10 percent and 51 percent to 28 percent, respectively). On net, Republicans oppose the proposal, 30 percent to 58 percent.

Allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices

Additionally, we asked voters whether they would support or oppose allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices. We limited the scope of the policy to the most-common and lifesaving drugs, giving voters the sense that this policy would include a significant but not total government intervention into the drug market. We asked voters:

Democrats in Congress are considering a bill that would allow Medicare to negotiate prices for 250

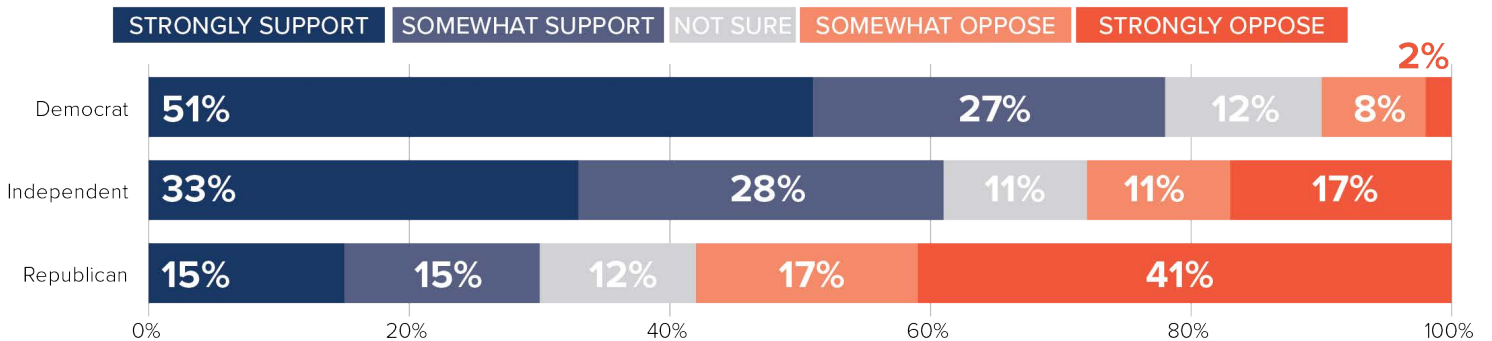
common and lifesaving medicines. They argue this will keep costs down and ensure Americans have access to the medicines they need.

Pharmaceutical corporations argue this is little more than giving the government the power to set politically appealing but economically wasteful price ceilings that will result in fewer new drugs being manufactured. They argue this will result in fewer innovative drugs, fewer jobs in the pharmaceutical industry, and less medical innovation.

Do you [support or oppose] allowing Medicare to negotiate the price of 250 common and lifesaving medicines?

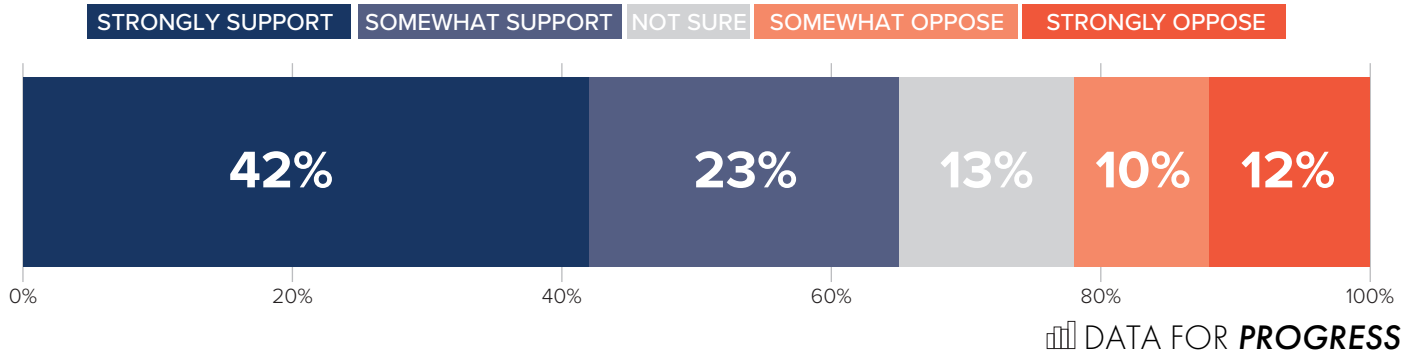
Even beyond allowing the government to revoke patents when prices are too high, voters support allowing Medicare to negotiate the prices of common and lifesaving drugs. By a margin of 65 percent to 22 percent, voters are in favor of allowing Medicare to negotiate some drug prices.

ALLOW GOVERNMENT TO REVOKE PATENTS FROM PHARMA IF PRICES ARE TOO HIGH
BY PARTY ID

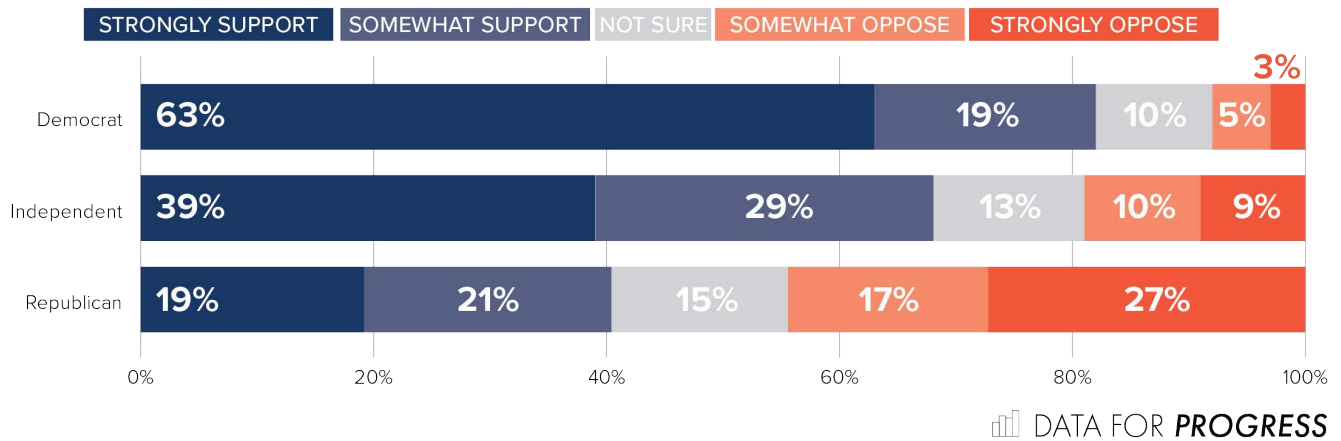


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ALLOWING MEDICARE TO NEGOTIATE THE PRICE OF 250 COMMON AND LIFESAVING MEDICINES



ALLOWING MEDICARE TO NEGOTIATE THE PRICE OF 250 COMMON AND LIFESAVING MEDICINES BY PARTY ID



Both Democrats and independents overwhelmingly favor such a policy, including 82 percent of Democrats and 68 percent of independents. Despite involving a significant role for the government in the market, Republicans are statistically split on this policy, with about 40 percent of Republicans supporting and about 44 percent opposing the policy.

Conclusion

Even as H.R. 3 faces a coordinated opposition from the pharmaceutical industry, it is unlikely to move the legislation from being broadly popular. Even after hearing opposition messages, there is majority support for Medicare negotiating the prices of drugs. Likewise, there is majority support for even bolder reforms that revoke patents for high-price drugs.

On behalf of Data for Progress, YouGov Blue fielded a survey including 1,159 US voters using YouGov's online panel. The survey fielded from October 19 through October 21, 2019, and was weighted to be representative of the population of US voters by age, race/ethnicity, sex, US Census region, and 2016 presidential vote choice.

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