

March 2007
Rhode Island



Children's Health Coverage Survey

New Survey Shows that Rhode Island Voters Want to Expand RItE Care to Cover More Uninsured Children

March 5, 2007 – A new poll, sponsored by the New England Alliance for Children's Health¹ and funded in part by the Rhode Island Foundation, was conducted by Lake Research Partners January 26 - February 8, 2007. The survey includes a representative sample of 400 registered voters in Rhode Island. Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn from a random-digit-dial (RDD) sample, and respondents were screened on whether they were currently registered to vote. The same survey was administered in all six New England states (reported elsewhere) for a total of 2,401 interviews.

The survey examined voters' opinions about the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), also called RItE Care in Rhode Island. SCHIP is a focus for the 110th U.S. Congress and state legislatures this year. The original ten-year authorization for the SCHIP program expires in 2007, and a key issue will be how much funding is allocated for the program. While elected officials in Washington, DC debate about funding for SCHIP, Rhode Island voters are clear: *they want RItE Care expanded to cover more uninsured children.* Indeed, they support efforts to cover *all* uninsured children.

These survey results reinforce research findings from other states across the country – that health care and affordable coverage is a top priority and concern among voters. During these times, it is not surprising that voters are unwilling to cut funding for a program that provides affordable coverage – especially for children – and instead want to *expand* health care coverage.

Key findings, a chart pack, and survey methodology can be found on the following pages.

¹ The New England Alliance for Children's Health is a regional coalition of consumers, health care providers, business leaders, educators, interfaith organizations and advocacy groups working to ensure that all children have access to high quality healthcare.



Key Findings

- **Rhode Island voters not only support RIte Care, the vast majority favors expanding it to cover all uninsured children in their state.** Nearly all voters (94%) say RIte Care is an important program, and 78% consider it a very important program. (See Figure 1) Eighty-three percent favor expanding the program to cover all uninsured children in Rhode Island, and 65% feel this way strongly. This support crosses political parties, and large majorities of those with and without young children favor expanding the program. (See Figure 2)
- **Voters in Rhode Island want to increase funding for RIte Care – at both federal and state levels.** Two thirds (67%) of voters want Congress to provide enough funding to expand SCHIP. (See Figure 3) Only 7% of these voters favor keeping funding at current levels, which would result in dropping children from the program. Voters feel similarly about state funding; 82% favor increasing state funds for RIte Care. (See Figure 4)
- **Voters support RIte Care because they believe strongly that all children should have the health care they need to grow and learn.** Nearly all voters (94%) believe this – 82% strongly. (See Figure 5)
- **Economic factors, such as fewer employers providing health care coverage and expensive emergency room visits, are also seen as reasons to invest more in RIte Care.** Nine in ten (91%) voters agree that investing more in RIte Care is important with the trend of fewer employers providing coverage for workers and families. Additionally, 91% agree that RIte Care is a smart economic investment because preventative care now can avoid costly emergency room visits in the future. (See Figure 5)
- **Rhode Island voters also support offering affordable coverage to the low-income parents of children enrolled in RIte Care, if the parent's job does not offer health insurance.** Nearly nine in ten (88%) favor this policy idea, with two thirds (66%) expressing strong support. (See Figure 6)
- **Support for increasing SCHIP funding stays strong even when the price tag is attached.** More than three quarters (77%) of Rhode Island voters favor Congress increasing funding by \$8 billion, even when they hear this would cost about \$28 per American. (See Figure 7)

Figure 1: Importance of RIte Care

Q. In your opinion, do you think RIte Care is a very important program, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all an important program?

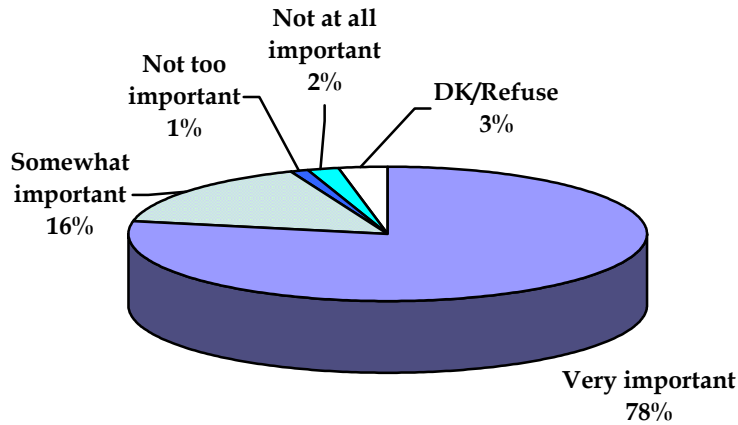


Figure 2: Expand RIte Care to Cover All Uninsured Children

Q. State elected officials will be discussing different ideas about RIte Care this year. Please tell me whether you favor or oppose each of the following ideas: Expand the program so that every uninsured child in Rhode Island can get health care coverage.

	Favor (Total)	Strongly favor	Somewhat favor
<i>Total: All Rhode Island Voters</i>	83%	65%	18%
Party ID			
Democrats	90%	76%	14%
Independents	80%	62%	18%
Republicans	71%	48%	23%
Parents of Children <18			
Children <18	82%	63%	19%
No Children <18	83%	67%	16%

Figure 3: Invest More Federal Funds in SCHIP

Q. Rite Care gets much of its funding at the federal level. This year, the U.S. Congress must make decisions about the federal funding for this program. Which statement best describes your thoughts on what Congress should do:

A) Keep funding the program at the same level even though that will mean dropping children from the program because of the rising cost of health care.	7%
B) Put enough money into the program so it can continue to cover the same number of children as it does now.	20%
C) Put even more money into the program so that more of the nearly nine million uninsured children nationwide can get health coverage.	67%

Figure 4: Invest More State Funds in Rite Care

Q. Now thinking about your state government, do you favor or oppose Rhode Island investing more in the Rite Care program so that it can cover more of Rhode Island’s uninsured children? (Is that strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?)

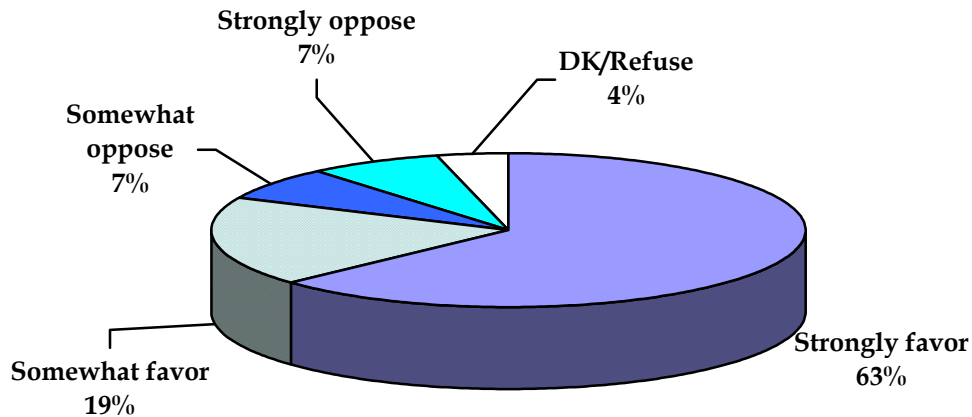


Figure 5: Why Voters Want to Invest More in RItE Care

Q. Here are some reasons people say we should invest more into the program. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following reasons to invest more in RItE Care.

	Favor (Total)	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree
All children should have the health care they need to grow and learn.	94%	82%	12%
We're too close to turn back now. RItE Care is a successful program that has worked and covered thousands of children in Rhode Island. We need to keep moving forward so that all of Rhode Island's children can get affordable healthcare coverage.	89%	72%	17%
The state budget needs to be spent wisely, and investing in children's preventive health care now, to avoid costly emergency care later, is a smart way to invest in our state's future economy.	91%	72%	19%
With fewer companies these days providing health coverage for their workers and their families, RItE Care is especially important for making sure that children in working families can keep getting the health services they need.	91%	71%	20%

Figure 6: Offering Affordable Coverage to Parents of Children Enrolled in RItE Care

Q. State elected officials will be discussing different ideas about RItE Care this year. Please tell me whether you favor or oppose each of the following ideas: Allow low-income, working parents of the children enrolled in RItE Care to get affordable health coverage for themselves through the program, if their job does not offer health insurance.

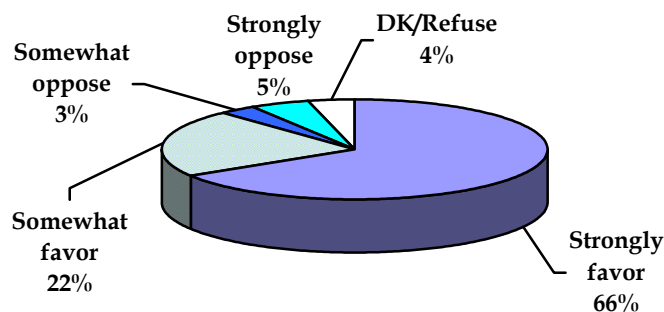
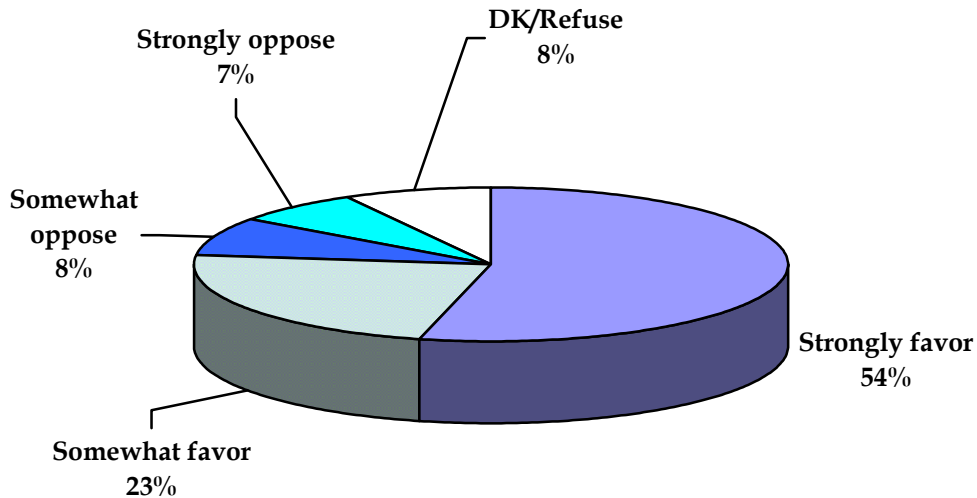


Figure 7: Increase SCHIP Funding by \$8 Billion -- \$28 per American

Q. Leading child health experts estimate that we could cut the number of low-income uninsured children in America in half if the US Congress invests 8 billion dollars more per year over the next five years. This would be about \$28 a year per American. Would you favor or oppose Congress increasing funding for Medicaid and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program by 8 billion dollars a year for the next 5 years? *N=200, split sample*



Sample Composition

Of the 400 registered voters surveyed in Rhode Island:

45% were male and 55% were female; 17% were 18 to 34 years old, 23% were 35 to 44, 21% were 45 to 54, 14% were 55 to 64, and 23% were 65 or older; and, 86% were white, 4% were African American and 3% were Latino.

In terms of income, 31% have household incomes of less than \$40,000 per year; 24% earn \$40,000 to \$80,000; 12% earn \$80,000 to \$100,000; and 12% earn \$100,000 or more. Twenty-one percent refused to give or do not know their household income.

Ninety-one percent have health insurance. Thirty-four percent have children under age 18 living with them.

Twenty-two percent self-identify as a strong Democrat, 7% as not so strong Democrat, 12% as Independent who lean Democrat, 29% Independent, 6% Independent who lean Republican, 4% as not so strong Republican, and 8% as a strong Republican. Eleven percent refused to answer the question or responded “don’t know” or “other.”

Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey which was conducted by telephone using professional interviewers from January 26 through February 8, 2007. The survey was conducted among 2401 registered voters age 18 and older in New England. A total of 400 interviews were conducted in each New England state: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn from a random-digit-dial (RDD) sample in each state. The sample was executed in replicates, using a seven callback design. A screening question asked respondents if they were registered to vote at their current address. Only those who said “yes” were included in the survey. The data were weighted slightly by gender, age, and race to reflect their proper proportions according to the U.S. Census.

In interpreting survey results, all probability sample surveys are subject to possible sampling error; that is, the results of a survey may differ from those which would be obtained if the entire population were interviewed. The size of the sampling error depends upon both the total number of respondents in the survey and the percentage distribution of responses to a particular question. The margin of sampling error for the Rhode Island survey results is ± 4.9 percentage points. When looking at smaller subgroups within the sample, the margin of error will be greater. The table below represents the estimated sampling error for different percentage distributions of responses based on sample size.

**Margin of Sampling Error
for Different Percentage Distributions and Different Sample Sizes
(95% confidence)**

SAMPLE SIZE NEAR	PERCENTAGES NEAR								
	<u>10%</u>	<u>20%</u>	<u>30%</u>	<u>40%</u>	<u>50%</u>	<u>60%</u>	<u>70%</u>	<u>80%</u>	<u>90%</u>
1,000	1.9	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.0	2.8	2.5	1.9
800	2.1	2.8	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.2	2.8	2.1
600	2.4	3.2	3.7	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.2	2.4
400	2.9	3.9	4.5	4.8	4.9	4.8	4.5	3.9	2.9
200	4.2	5.5	6.4	6.8	6.9	6.8	6.4	5.5	4.2
100	5.9	7.8	9.0	9.6	9.7	9.6	9.0	7.8	5.9

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