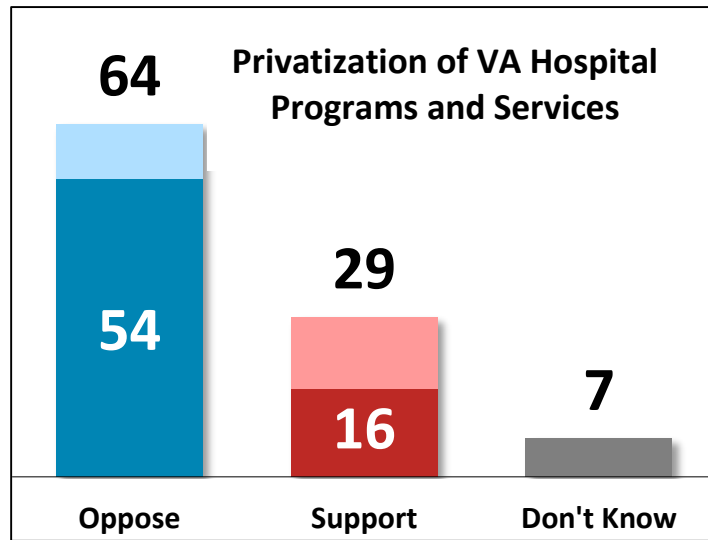


To: Interested Parties
 Cc: Vet Voice Foundation
 From: Celinda Lake and Joshua Ulibarri, Lake Research Partners and Robert Carpenter, Chesapeake Beach Consulting
 Re: Results from a Recent Survey Among Veteransⁱ
 Date: November 6, 2015

In light of proposals in Congress to move the Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals toward privatization, Lake Research Partners and Chesapeake Beach Consulting conducted a nationwide survey among veterans on behalf of the Vet Voice Foundation. The survey reveals that veterans, regardless of age, party, or branch of military, oppose privatization of VA hospital programs and services. Overall, 64% of veterans oppose privatization (54% strongly oppose it). Not only do veterans strongly oppose this proposal, they see it as a potential voting issue, with a majority unwilling to support a candidate for a major office who favored moving toward privatizing VA hospitals programs and services. Veterans overwhelmingly feel that health care was a promise made for their service and oppose vouchers that may not cover all costs. Veterans worry that private insurance companies care too much about profit and would make decisions for the care of veterans based on money. They are concerned that if the VA hospitals were privatized, veterans coming home with a war injury and their families would have to deal with private insurance and the possibility of the denial of needed coverage. They also believe that while the VA hospitals need improvements like more doctors, they are where the experts and the people who care about veterans are.



Here are the major findings:

- Veterans share a core value that after the promise of health care and their service, veterans deserve their health care to be fully paid for, not vouchers which may not cover all the costs.** Sixty-eight percent of veterans strongly agree with this (80% agree overall). The agreement that health care is a promise extends strongly across demographics. ***This is not a debate; this is a core value.***
- Veterans have positive feelings towards VA hospitals, especially towards VA hospitals in their areaⁱⁱ.** Fifty-nine percent of veterans rate their impression of VA

hospitals as favorable. When only asked about VA hospitals in their area, 61% of veterans rate their impression as favorable. **Veterans approve of the job that VA hospitals in their area are doing servicing veterans like themⁱⁱⁱ.** Fifty-one percent of veterans rate the job the VA hospitals do serving veterans like them in their area as excellent or good, while only 27% rate it as just fair or poor (51% of Republicans give an excellent or good rating; 26% give a just fair or poor rating).

- **Veterans are less favorable towards private and for-profit health insurance corporations and do not want the VA to be run like for profit private hospitals.** Forty-seven percent of veterans have a favorable impression of private health insurance companies, and only 25% of veterans have a favorable impression of for-profit health insurance corporations. Only 15% and 9% of veterans have a very favorable impression of private health care insurance corporations and for-profit health care insurance corporations, respectively (the very favorable rating drops to 11% for private and 9% for for-profit health care insurance corporations among Republicans.)

Veterans believe the VA hospitals in their area have qualified doctors and nurses (36% of veterans think this describes VA hospitals in their area very well; 65% total well), deliver good quality care (32% very well; 58% total well), and care about veterans and their health care (35% very well, 65% total well). **Veterans soundly reject that VA hospitals in their area should be run like a for-profit private hospital (12% very well; 28% total well).**

Together, these two core perspectives drive much of what veterans think about when they consider the move toward privatizing the VA hospitals. They have a favorable view of the system and believe it does a good job and at the same time they have major reservations about the private health insurance system that would take over health care for millions of veterans like them. Although veterans think that changes need to be made to the VA hospitals, their biggest want is more doctors (42% of veterans think that “needs more doctors” describes VA hospitals in their area very well).

- **Veterans oppose proposals in Congress that would have the real effect of leading to privatized VA hospitals.^{iv}** Sixty-four percent of veterans oppose this proposal; only 29% support it. There is also real intensity in their opposition to privatizing VA services. Overall, 54% strongly oppose this plan. Democrats (63%), Independents/don’t know (57%), and Republicans (46%) are all strongly opposed to it. Veterans strongly oppose this plan regardless of age (63% of veterans under age 40, 57% of veterans ages 40 to 49, 54% of veterans ages 50 to 64, and 53% of veterans over age 65) or military branch (56% of army, 47% of air force, 58% of navy, and 51% of marine veterans).

Below is a breakdown of opposition and support to privatizing VA hospital programs and services:

Group	Strongly Oppose	Total Oppose	Total Support	Don't Know	Difference (Oppose - Support)
TOTAL	54	64	29	7	34
Under age 40	63	70	20	10	50
Ages 40 to 49	57	62	32	5	30
Ages 50 to 64	54	64	33	3	30
Ages 65 and older	53	64	28	9	36
Democratic ID	63	70	23	7	47
Republican ID	46	56	38	5	18
Independent/Don't Know ID	57	67	25	8	42
Northeast	55	62	31	6	31
Midwest	49	62	31	7	31
South	56	65	29	7	36
West	57	65	25	9	40
Have used VA hospital	62	72	21	7	51
Have not used VA hospital	46	55	38	7	16
Army	56	63	29	8	34
Air Force	47	60	32	8	29
Navy	58	69	25	6	44
Marines	51	61	35	4	26

- Importantly, veterans indicate this could be a voting issue for them and they would hold it against candidates who support privatizing the VA hospitals^v.** Overall, 57% of veterans would be less likely to vote for a candidate who supported privatizing the VA hospitals. Even a majority of Republicans indicate they would be more likely to *vote against* a candidate who supported privatization. This opposition extends across parties: 67% of Democratic, 57% of Independent/don't know, and 53% of Republican veterans say they would be less likely to vote for a candidate for high-elected office if they supported privatization of the VA hospitals.

Veterans oppose privatization of VA hospital programs and services on four particular planks:

- 1. *That health care was a promise for their service*** – veterans deserve their health care to be fully paid for.
- 2. *That private insurance corporations care too much about profits and how to cut spending***, and they make decisions about care and treatment based on money, not based on what the veteran needs.

3. ***That if Congress privatizes the VA***, veterans returning from Iraq or Afghanistan with a significant war injury and their families would have to ***deal with private insurance and having the claim denied or only partial payment or going bankrupt.***
4. ***That after two wars in the last 14 years, a record number of veterans need care,*** and only the VA serves every veteran from every war with any injury. The VA is where the experts are, and ***we need to strengthen, not weaken this system.***

Summary:

In summary, veterans oppose privatization of the VA hospital programs and services, and this opposition extends across demographics, regardless of age, party identification, or branch of the military. They strongly oppose the proposed plan in Congress, and they would vote on this issue based on their strong opposition, being less likely to vote for a candidate to high-elected office if that candidate supported privatization. Veterans share a core value that health care was a promise for their service, and their health care should be fully covered – not paid for by vouchers that may not cover all expenses and services. They believe that private insurance companies care too much about profit and would make decisions about care for veterans based on money, that veterans from service with a war injury and their families could face denial of treatment or only partial coverage, leading to possible bankruptcy, and that the VA has the experts and care about veterans the most. They believe that VA hospitals need to be strengthened, such as by adding more doctors, not weakened.

ⁱ **Survey:** Lake Research Partners and Chesapeake Beach Consulting designed and administered this national survey of 800 likely veterans by telephone between October 15-22, 2015, using professional interviewers. Respondents for the sample were generated from a list of veterans. Both landlines and cellphones were called. The data were weighted slightly by gender, race, region, education, age, and party identification. The margin of error for the total sample for the survey is +/-3.5%.

ⁱⁱ Now I'd like to ask you about some organizations. For each, please tell me whether you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable impression of that organization. If you haven't heard of the organization, or if you don't know enough to have an impression, just say so and we will move on.

ⁱⁱⁱ What about VA hospitals in your area – how would you rate the job the VA hospitals do servicing veterans like you in your area – excellent, good, just fair, or poor?

^{iv} As you may have heard, there is a proposal in Congress to change the way veterans who use the VA get their health care and services. The proposal would privatize some of the VA's hospital programs, so veterans would get a credit-card-like voucher where they would pay for their health care through a private for-profit insurance company, as opposed to VA hospitals now that cover veterans like you for all of your health care needs. This voucher would help pay for some of the costs for private insurance, and the VA hospital services would eventually go away. What do you think; do you FAVOR or OPPOSE this plan to privatize some of the VA services by giving veterans a voucher to buy private insurance, eventually doing away with the VA health care system?

^v All other things being equal, would you be much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, or much less likely to vote for a candidate for high-level elected office if they supported privatizing the VA health care system, making it more like a private for-profit system?