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AARP Poll Shows Strong Voter Opposition in Northeastern Wisconsin to Medicaid Cuts Mandated by Upcoming Budget Bill

GREEN BAY – According to a new AARP poll, a huge majority of registered voters age 50+ living in Congressman Mark Green’s northeastern Wisconsin district oppose cuts in Medicaid that will make it harder to qualify for the program’s financial assistance to help pay for nursing home coverage.

Representatives of AARP Wisconsin unveiled the results of the poll at a press conference on Monday morning at Green Bay’s City Center Holiday Inn.

81 percent of those polled oppose cutting Medicaid funding as a way of reducing the federal debt; 67 percent were ‘strongly opposed’ to such cuts.

Opposition to cutting Medicaid funding crossed all political party lines: 72 percent of those identifying themselves as Republicans, 81 percent of Democrats, and 83 percent of Independents were united in rejecting cuts in Medicaid funding.

In the first week of February, the U.S. House of Representatives will vote on a budget reconciliation bill that mandates cuts in Medicaid funding and restricts eligibility.

“We expect the vote will be close,” said AARP Wisconsin State President Patricia Finder-Stone. “We are urging Congressman Green to vote against the bill to ensure that older Americans will not be denied the help they need to help pay for nursing-home coverage.”

Every year millions of older Americans who deplete their income and savings paying for long-term care must turn to Medicaid for assistance. Yet the budget bill will severely restrict eligibility for Medicaid and

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continued . . .

could unfairly penalize those who donate to a charity or to a church—or even those who help pay a grandchild’s college tuition.

“The budget bill was intended to stop wealthier individuals from gaming the system by transferring their assets shortly before they need nursing-home care,” said AARP Wisconsin Associate State Director Lisa Lamkins. “Unfortunately, the bill casts the net too wide and will unintentionally penalize millions of middle and moderate-income Americans who have simply opened up their hearts either to their own families or to charitable causes and their communities.”

“We urge Congressman Green to vote ‘no’ on the House budget,” Lamkins continued. “This bill will make it harder for people to get long-term care services when they need them. Until we get affordable long-term care insurance, lower health-care costs and more home- and community-based services, blocking people’s access to nursing home coverage is simply cruel.”

The AARP survey, conducted by telephone from January 17 to 25, polled a representative sample of 300 registered voters living in Wisconsin’s 8th Congressional District. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 6 percent.

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. We produce *AARP The Magazine*, published bimonthly; *AARP Bulletin*, our monthly newspaper; *AARP Segunda Juventud*, our bimonthly magazine in Spanish and English; *NRTA Live & Learn*, our quarterly newsletter for 50+ educators; and our Web site, www.aarp.org. AARP Foundation is our 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.

AARP Poll's Key Findings for Wisconsin's 8th Congressional District

In January, 2006, AARP conducted a poll to assess voters' opinions on some proposed changes to Medicaid. A representative sample of 300 registered voters, age 50 and older, living in Congressional District 08 of Wisconsin were interviewed by telephone. Voters were polled between January 17th and January 25th, 2006.

The poll asked respondents about their opinion on cutting Medicaid funding to reduce the federal debt. It also asked respondents their opinion on extending the look-back period for nursing home eligibility under Medicaid from three years to five years, and whether they believe homeowners should be required to tap the equity in their home before receiving Medicaid coverage for long-term care expenses.

- A total of 8 in 10 respondents (81%) oppose cutting Medicaid funding as a way to reduce the federal debt (67% strongly oppose).
- A substantial majority of respondents across political parties oppose cutting Medicaid funding to reduce the federal debt. Nearly three-quarters of Republican respondents (72%), 85% of Democrats, and 83% of Independent respondents oppose this proposed change.
- More than three-quarters (76%) of respondents oppose extending the look-back period from three years to five years (60% strongly oppose).
- More than two-thirds of respondents across political parties oppose extending the look-back period. More than two-thirds of Republican respondents (68%) oppose this proposed change; 88% of Democrats and 73% of Independent respondents oppose it.
- Two-thirds of respondents (67%) oppose requiring homeowners to tap the equity in their homes before getting Medicaid coverage for long-term care expenses. Slightly less than one-fifth of respondents (18%) favor this proposed change and 14% don't know.
- Six in ten or more respondents or more across political parties oppose requiring homeowners to tap the equity in their homes before Medicaid will cover their long-term care expenses; 60% of Republican respondents oppose this proposed change; 72% of Democrats and 70% of Independent respondents oppose it.

AARP is a non-partisan organization. It does not contribute to political campaigns nor does it endorse or oppose any candidates for public office.