

# Ohioans want Medicaid expansion

**Poll: State's voters oppose governor's plan on sales, income tax**

By JIM PROVANCE

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COLUMBUS — Buckeye voters side with Gov. John Kasich in his battle with some fellow Republicans over expanding Medicaid to cover hundreds of thousands of currently uninsured Ohioans, a new poll released Friday shows.

But the latest Quinnipiac University poll also found they don't like his plan to swap greater sales-tax collections for an income-tax cut, the cornerstone of his \$63.3 billion, two-year budget proposal now before lawmakers.

“Although voters overall like expanding Medicaid, Republicans oppose it 65 to 24 percent, a significant number given the GOP House could block the plan,” said Peter A. Brown, assistant director of the Connecticut-based polling institute.

The Republican governor has engaged in a balancing act in selling the plan.

He emphasizes his disdain for President Obama's Affordable Care Act while also playing accountant to say the numbers make sense for Ohio.

The expansion is expected to draw greater federal dollars, raise more tax revenue from the health-care industry, and provide savings elsewhere in his budget.

The income eligibility threshold would be raised to 38 percent over the federal poverty level.

That would cover a family of four earning \$31,800.

The federal government has promised to pay 100 percent of the added cost for the first three years of the expansion.

The reimbursement rate would then gradually drop to 90 percent.

By a margin of 48 percent to 42 percent, voters think the expansion is a good idea even as they also continue to disapprove of the 3-year-old health-care reform law by 48-39 percent.

Meanwhile, 48 percent of registered voters dislike the governor's tax plan, while 42 percent approve.

Support drops further when newly taxed services are detailed in the question, even when partnered with Mr. Kasich's plan to drop the state sales-tax rate by half a penny, to five cents on the dollar: disapproval climbed to 50 percent and approval dropped to 40 percent.

The plan expands sales taxes to include more services, including haircuts, legal services, accounting, debt and investment counseling, advertising, and many others.

That would help to underwrite a net \$1.4 billion income-tax cut over three years — a 20 percent cut for individuals and 50 percent cut for small businesses.

By 58 percent to 32 percent, those polled like Mr. Kasich's proposal to hike taxes on shale natural gas and oil drilling, mostly in eastern Ohio, to help offset the income-tax cut.

There's been little movement on the state level to curb access to guns.

Nevertheless, Ohioans' attitudes largely mirror what Quinnipiac found in other states as the federal government ponders action.

The poll found 90 percent of Ohio voters favor background checks on all gun purchases, and 53 percent support a nationwide ban on assault weapons.

Voters like the idea of placing an armed police officer in schools by a margin of 64-31 percent and would support a ban on the sale of high-capacity ammunition by 54-42 percent.

"On gun policy, public opinion might be seen as a paradox," Mr. Brown said.

"Voters overwhelmingly favor background checks for those buying guns and want to ban assault weapons and ammunition clips with more than 10 bullets, positions that are in opposition to those espoused by the NRA [National Rifle Association].

"Yet they see the NRA more in tune with their views on gun policy than President Barack Obama, who favors background checks and bans on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines."

The poll questioned 1,011 registered voters between Feb. 21 and 26. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

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