



PHYSICIANS AS CANDIDATES PROGRAM

*Key Findings of Research Conducted in April & May 2013
on behalf of AMPAC's Physicians as Candidates
Research Program*

Methodology

Public Opinion Strategies completed:

Focus groups among voters across the country:

- **Wednesday April 24, in Syracuse, NY (Swing Voters – 18-44, 45+)**
- **Thursday April 25, in New Orleans, LA (Swing Voters – Mixed Age)**
- **Wednesday May 1, in Denver, CO (Swing Voters – 18-44, 45+)**
- **Thursday May 2, in Phoenix, AZ (White Voters, Hispanic Voters)**

**A national online survey among 1000 registered voters
May 20-24 (+/-3.1%).**



VOTER ATTITUDES TOWARD POLITICIANS

Focus Group Insight: Political Figures

Unsurprisingly, voters across the county share pretty negative impressions of their current political figures.

When focus group respondents are asked to provide a word or phrase that comes to mind about their current elected officials, they say:

“Corrupt”

“It’s a career”

“Incompetent”

“Showmen”

“Broken”

“Discouraging”

“Self-serving”

“Out of touch”

“Puppet”

“Evil”

“Liars”

“Rhetoric”

“Exaggerators”

“Have their own agenda”

“Needs change”

“Not trustworthy”

“Greedy”

“Terrible”

“Disgust”

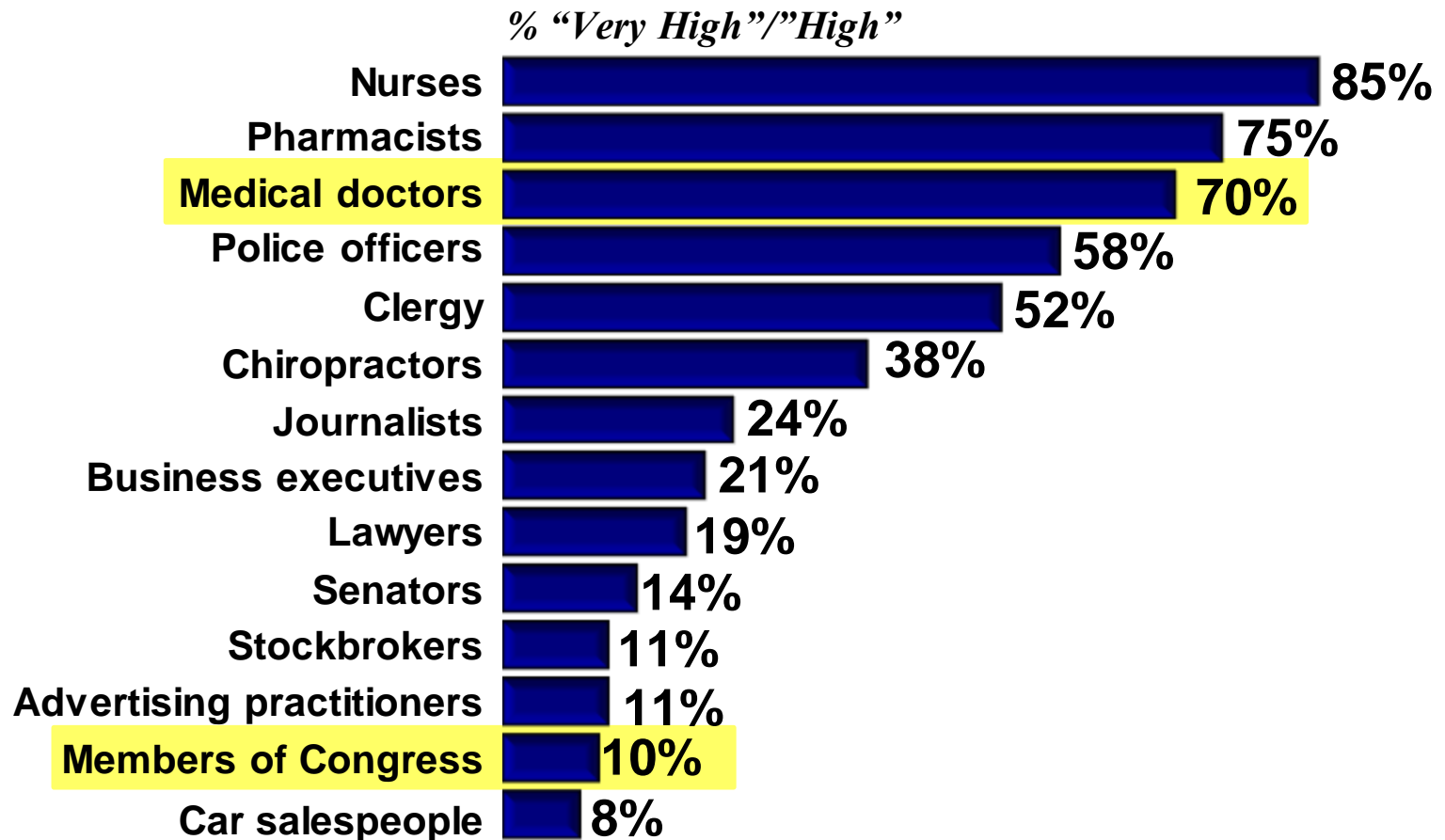
“Always controversy”



GENERAL FEELINGS ABOUT PHYSICIANS AS CANDIDATES

Doctors rank well on “honesty” and ethical standards.

*Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields -- very high, high, average, low, or very low?**



*Data from a USA Today/ Gallup poll of 1,015 adults nationwide, conducted November 26-29, 2012.

Focus Group Insight: The Ideal Candidate

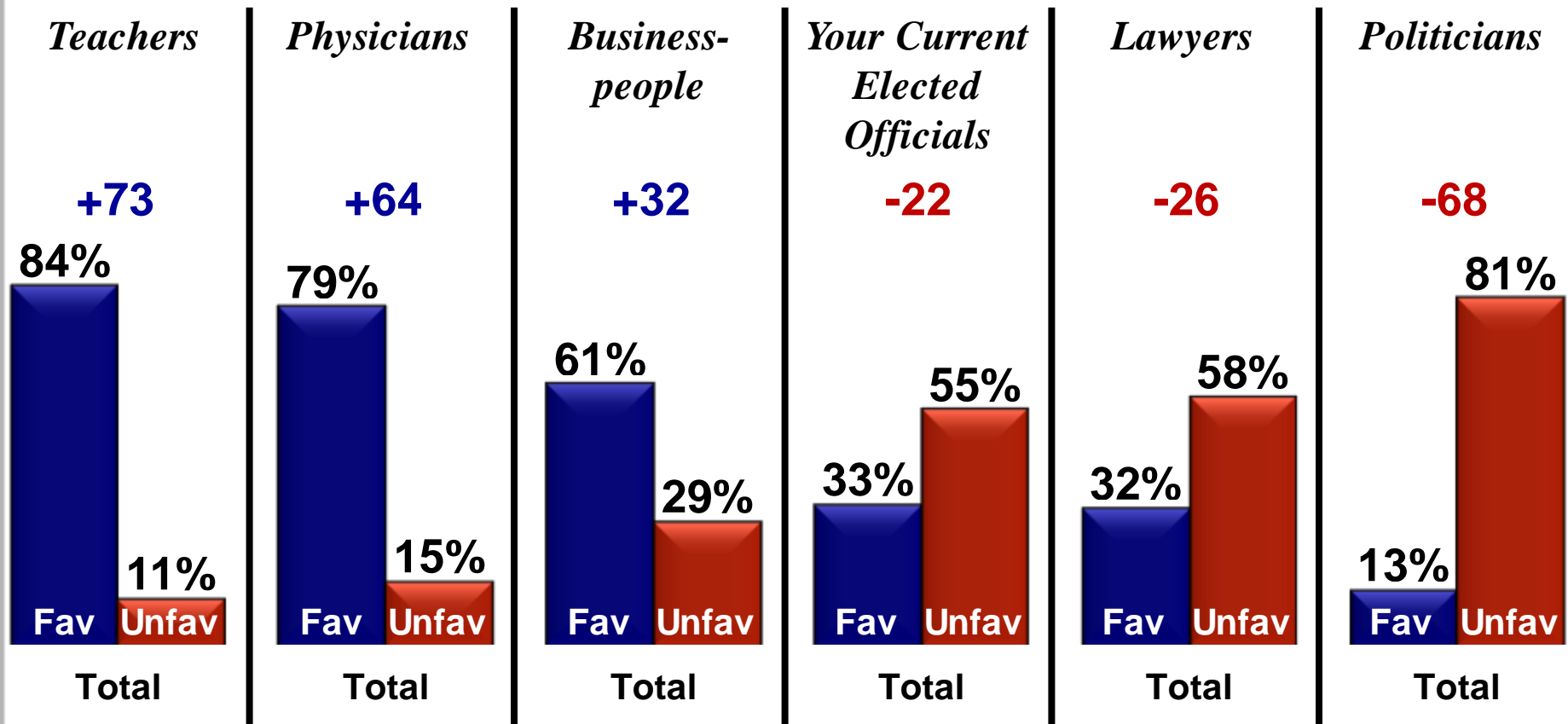
- **Few voters mentioned a candidate's background or occupation.**
- **Voters suggest a candidate shouldn't be one-dimensional, but rather people with varied experiences.**
- **Voters want to understand how their political figures/elected officials will help *them*. They speak passionately about a candidate's ability to understand the situation they, as average Americans, find themselves in.**

Focus Group Insight: The Ideal Candidate

- **And, they tend to discredit individuals who they perceive as not knowing about or understanding their lives, and would welcome more “everyday people” to the mix of potential candidates.**

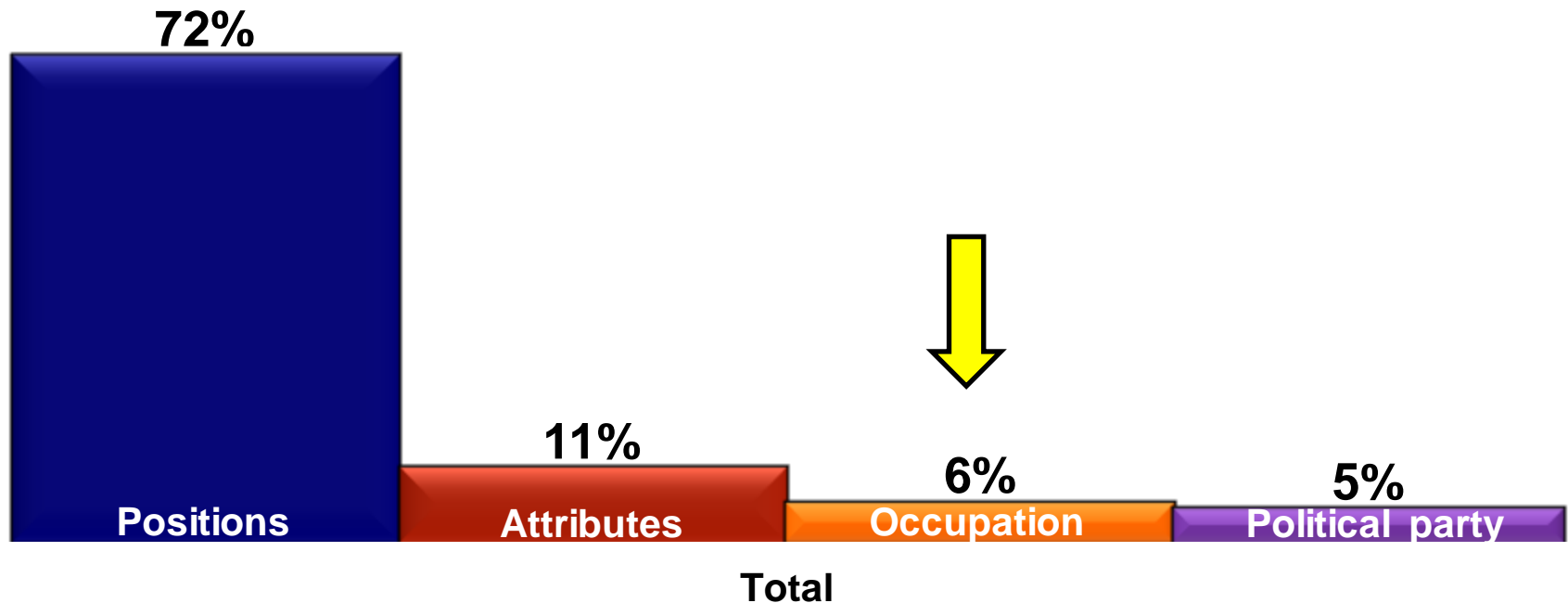
If voters cared more about occupational experience, physicians would benefit greatly.

Images



But, a candidate's position on the issues is far more important to voters than their occupation or work experience.

Now, when thinking about political candidates and whom to support in elections, which of the following is the MOST important in your decision-making...*the candidate's positions on the issues*...*the candidate's personal attributes, like their character*...*the candidate's occupation or work experience*...or...*the candidate's political party affiliation*?



Focus Group Insight: Motivation

- The “motivation hurdle” is not new. We observed it in 2001 in AMPAC focus groups where voters were baffled over why a physician would suddenly disrupt their “good life” of wealth, career satisfaction, and social esteem to run for political office. This year, we once again heard it from both physicians and from voters.
- It strikes voters as odd that a physician would run for office, especially when politicians are held in such low esteem. Further, while voters expect all candidates to “have a personal agenda” in their bid for public office, they seem a bit confused as to what that might be for physician candidates.

Focus Group Insight: Motivation

- Yet voters seem willing to offer that physicians may be driven to run for office based on what they're seeing and hearing each day speaking with everyday people. In other words, voters seem willing to give physicians the benefit of the doubt that they are running because they want to help people.



REASONS TO SUPPORT A PHYSICIAN CANDIDATE

Voters say that physicians' compassion, their ethics, and their knowledge of the health care system are the best reasons to support them.

Which TWO of the following would be the best reasons to SUPPORT a physician candidate for elected office?



What attributes do you like the most about physicians that you want them to bring to elective office?

Voters focus on two core characteristics of physicians:
Their problem-solving capabilities and their caring nature.

Voters say they are looking for political figures who can deliver results in office. They believe that years of medical school and medical practice have provided physicians with experience at being “diagnosticians.”
“They seek solutions based on symptoms.”

Voters believe this ability to think systematically, rationally, and unemotionally to solve complex problems has practical benefits in the political realm. In an environment of political dysfunction, voters think that their medical experience could help “get things done.”

What attributes do you like the most about physicians that you want them to bring to elective office? (continued)

Voters want someone who can reach them on a personal level. Respondents from the survey describe physicians as “compassionate,” “caring,” “empathetic,” and “honest.” Apart from their analytical proficiencies, voters feel that these emotional qualities help them to better understand people.

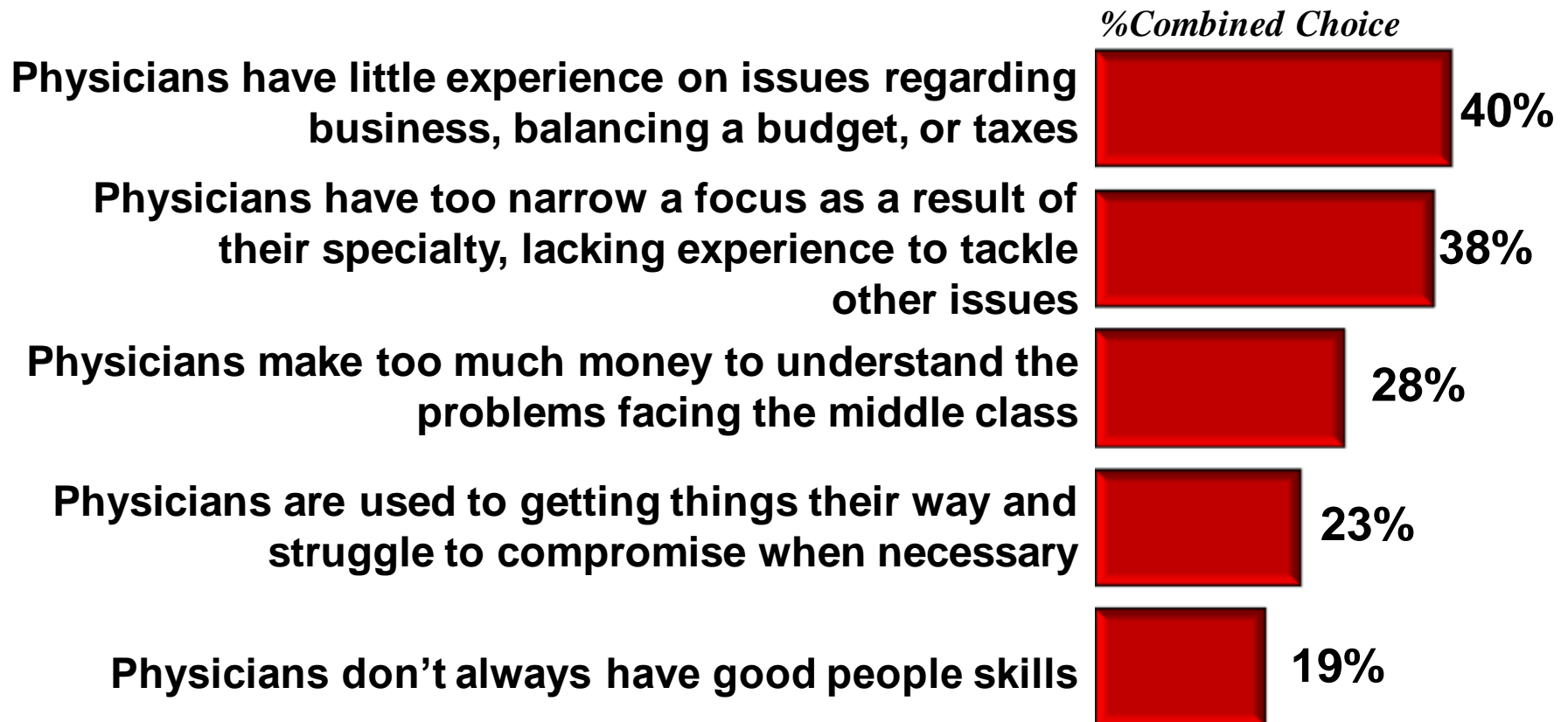
Their experience listening to others and helping solve problems lends itself to an added sense of trust in their ability to honestly “serve the public good.”



HESITATIONS IN SUPPORTING A PHYSICIAN CANDIDATE

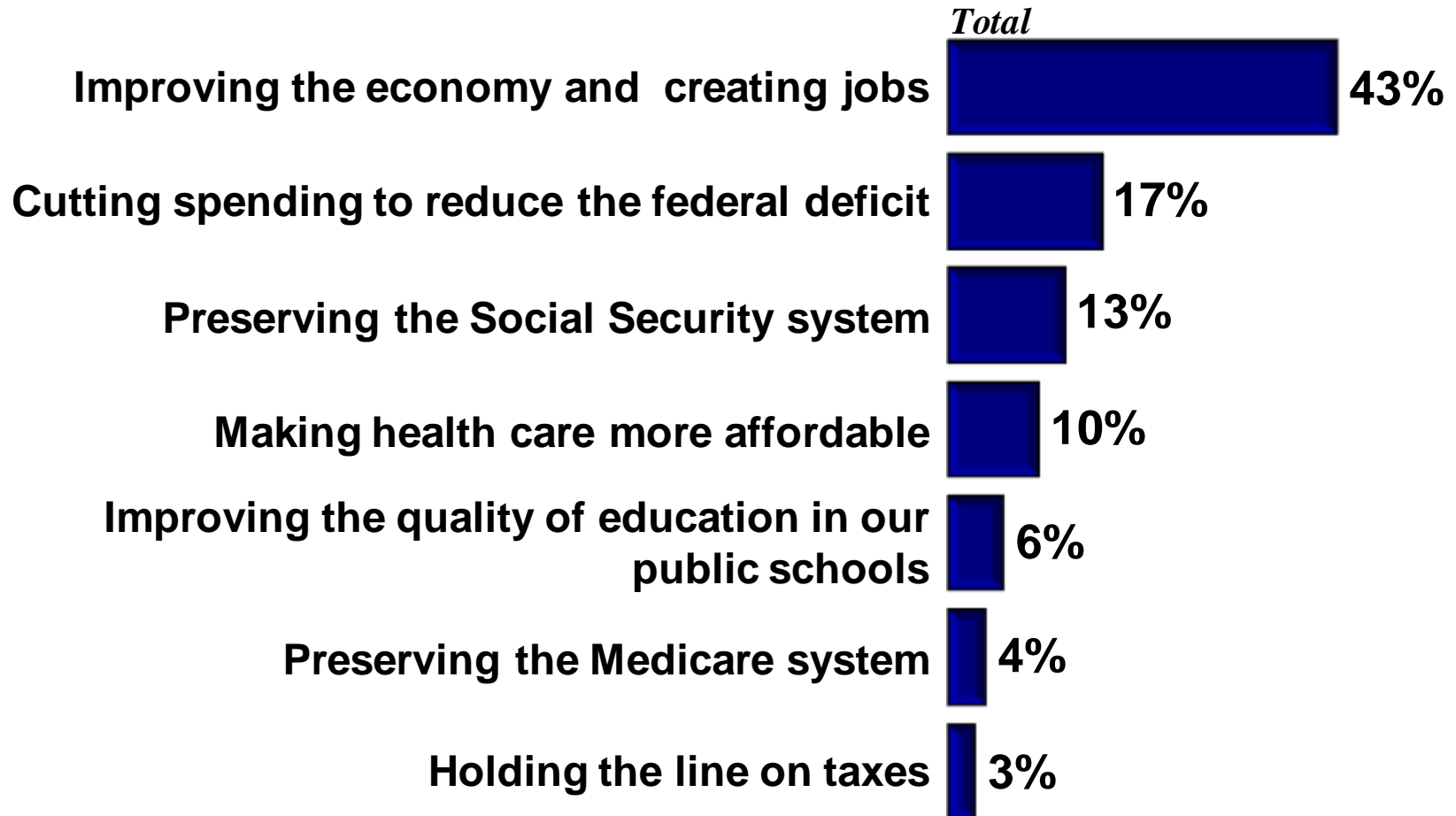
Voters say physicians' lack of economic experience and their "narrow focus" are their biggest hesitations.

Which TWO of the following would be your biggest hesitations for supporting a physician candidate for elected office?



That narrow focus is more of an issue when concern is so high about the economy.

Which ONE of the following DOMESTIC ISSUES do you believe should be the top priority for the President and Congress in the coming year?



What attributes do you like the least about physicians that you hope they don't bring to elective office?

Arrogant, money hungry doctors who have little concern for personal connections are the type of physicians voters hope DON'T run for political office.

Voters say they are concerned that some physicians would bring their “god complex,” “know-it-all” attitude to politics, when one needs the ability instead to compromise and work with others with differing points of view.

Voters also worry that some physicians are resistant to change and may be too set in their ways to get things done in elective office.

Further, the image of physicians as well-off plays into the sense that some voters have that they are out of touch with middle-class Americans and aren't fully able to understand their day-to-day concerns.

What attributes do you like the least about physicians that you hope they don't bring to elective office? (continued)

Finally, voters are concerned that physicians lack the necessary experience to hold political office. Simply put, there's a belief that doctors may hold "too narrow a specialty," and as a result, they might lack the necessary background to do the job.

Although voters believe that having certain medical knowledge would be beneficial on issues such as health care reform, they worry that physicians would be lacking on issues such as taxes and the economy. Echoing this sentiment, one respondent argued that physicians are "clueless on real-world issues."



DESCRIPTIONS OF A PHYSICIAN CANDIDATE

We tested twelve different descriptors that a physician candidate could use as part of their campaign for political office. Voters were asked to rate each descriptor on a scale of zero to ten, with zero meaning they didn't find the descriptor to be believable at all, and ten meaning they found it very believable.



PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

Focus Group Insight: What Are Voters Looking For?

This is easy: an honest person who can deliver results.

When focus group participants are prompted to provide characteristics of their “ideal political figure,” they use words and phrases such as “honest,” “integrity,” “trustworthy,” “keeps promises,” “gets things done,” and “serves the people.”

It’s pretty clear that voters think about their “ideal political figure” through a prism of what is perceived to be lacking now in Washington.

Focus Group Insight: What Are Voters Looking For?

There's a clear impatience among voters – they want someone who will get things done, and not just rely on campaign promises.

Physician candidates score well on “making difficult decisions,” “protecting the elderly” and showing “judgment” and “compassion.”

*Descriptor Mean Scores
(On a scale of 1-10)*

	Total
Can make difficult decisions under pressure.	7.8
Would work to protect programs that help the elderly.	7.5
Would show good judgment in making decisions.	7.4
Would take compassionate positions on issues.	7.3
Can be trusted to tell people what he/she thinks.	7.2
Would be in touch with the local community.	7.2
Would be responsive to the needs of their constituency.	7.1
Would weigh both sides of an issue before making a decision.	7.1
Would work well with other elected officials to get things done.	6.8
Would be effective in political office in getting things done.	6.7
Would be knowledgeable on a wide range of issues.	6.6
Would be independent of special interest groups.	5.9



MESSAGING NARRATIVES FOR PHYSICIAN CANDIDATES

We tested eight different messaging narratives that a physician candidate could use as part of their campaign for political office. Voters were asked to rate each statement on a scale of zero to ten, with zero meaning they didn't find the statement to be convincing at all, and ten meaning they found it extremely convincing.



PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

Linking back to health care expertise is the top scoring potential message.

*Statement Mean Scores
(On a scale of 1-10)*

Total

Because physicians work in health care on a daily basis, they bring a clear understanding of the problems facing our health care industry, including the bureaucratic red tape that is strangling health care providers and driving up the cost of health care for most Americans.

7.1

“Listening” messages also score very well with voters.

*Statement Mean Scores
(On a scale of 1-10)*

	Total
We just can't keep electing the same people and expect things to change for the better. Physicians are good listeners, they understand their options, and they aren't afraid to make tough decisions. That's the kind of person we need in political office.	6.9
A physician's job starts with listening. If more politicians actually listened to the people they represent, government would work better. Electing more physicians to office is a good start in getting government to listen to the people.	6.9
Physicians hear their patients' concerns each and every day. Who better than a physician to serve us in elected office? At least we'll have someone in office who actually knows and understands who they're representing.*	6.5
Every day, physicians keep the best interests of their patients in mind. And, if they're elected to serve you in political office, they will continue to keep your best interests at heart.	6.5

Knowing that physicians will “do the right thing” is another strong narrative.

*Statement Mean Scores
(On a scale of 1-10)*

Total

Physicians are exactly what we need in elected office today. In their medical practices, they have to make difficult decisions to do the right thing for their patients, even if it's not easy. We need more of that type of thinking from our political figures.

6.5

It's also important for physicians to demonstrate their understanding of challenges faced by regular people.

*Statement Mean Scores
(On a scale of 1-10)*

Total

Physicians deal with patients everyday who are a medical bill away from economic insecurity or losing their job. They understand what regular people are going through. Who better than a physician to serve us in elected office? At least we'll have someone in office who actually knows and understands who they're representing.^

6.2

^Asked Only Sample B, N=500

It's a bit of a “reach” to position physicians as having business experience.

*Statement Mean Scores
(On a scale of 1-10)*

Total

Physicians have an understanding of the economy. As businesspeople who run their own offices, they hire employees and create jobs, pay taxes, and know how to balance a budget. We need political figures with that type of experience in elected office.

5.9

Focus Group Insight: Physicians as Businesspeople

Voters just don't make the connection between being a physician and running a business – leading respondents to question how they would understand the economy.

For many focus group respondents, considering physicians as businesspeople doesn't even dawn on them as it is just not the way they've viewed physicians previously. So, making the case that a physician IS a businessperson can be a challenging argument and is likely to be met with skepticism.



IN VOTERS' WORDS: BEST THING ABOUT A PHYSICIAN CANDIDATE FOR OFFICE

What would you say is the best thing that a physician running for political office could bring to that office?

Voters highlight physicians' honesty and their passion for helping people, as well as their ability to listen and their extensive knowledge of the healthcare system.

Simply put, voters trust their own physicians and feel that trust would carry over to public office; that physicians will be able to understand the problems of their constituents and connect with them.

Physicians deal with patients of diverse backgrounds and unique circumstances on a daily basis; this experience will help them understand and solve the issues facing the people they are representing.



THE DOCTOR IS IN: PRESCRIPTIONS FOR SUCCESS

Prescriptions for Success

Diagnosis: Voters want to hear WHY a physician would give up their successful medical career for politics.

Rx *Voters are likely to be the most accepting of a physician candidate who makes the office bigger than themselves. Explain to voters that as a physician, you believe that serving in elected office would be a continuation of the work you've done as a physician – you want to keep helping people and keep fighting and working hard to make things better.*

Further, indicating a passion for fixing a problem in office – in ADDITION to health care – such as the economy, government spending, or education – may also help answer the WHY question.

Prescriptions for Success

Diagnosis: Voters are looking for honest political figures who can get results for their constituents.

Rx *Voters are frustrated with the way things are going now in politics – hearing the same promises year in and year out, with successful results too few and far in-between. There’s an opportunity for physicians to demonstrate their ability to make the tough decisions and get the job done.*

Prescriptions for Success

Diagnosis: Voters want someone who listens to them.

Rx *Physicians should have an advantage on “listening.” Voters believe that most physicians do that well – they have to listen, assess the situation, diagnose, and then make critical decisions. But, it starts with listening.*

When running for office, hold frequent town hall meetings or tele-town halls to reach voters and listen to them.

Prescriptions for Success

Diagnosis: Voters want a candidate for political office who can relate to them on a personal level.

Rx *Touting academic credentials will only put distance between yourself and the voters, and that's not nearly as important as showing that you understand their issues, concerns and problems.*

Voters don't believe that physician candidates have ever once worried about losing their job. They have the kind of job security that most people can only dream of. But, they deal with patients everyday who are a medical bill away from economic insecurity or losing their job. Talk about those people. Share their stories. It's about them.

Prescriptions for Success

Diagnosis: Voters have negative impressions of their current political figures.

Rx *Voters are tired of career politicians and the revolving door of politics.*

For many, a physician candidate would be viewed as a breath of fresh air, someone who can bring new ideas to the system. The current political environment suggests an anti-status quo candidate could appeal to many voters.

Prescriptions for Success

Diagnosis: Voters want someone who is not one-dimensional.

Rx *Physicians should highlight other aspects of their careers and background that go beyond their medical practice. Voters want to know that you're not just a "Johnnie-one-note," focused on your medical practice to the exclusion of everything else.*

Highlight your community involvement, from Little League to PTA. Your varied background makes you a stronger candidate, a more appealing figure and less one-dimensional.

Prescriptions for Success

Diagnosis: Being an expert on health care issues is NOT enough for a physician candidate to be successful.

Rx *Voters don't automatically give physicians the benefit of the doubt on the issues of government spending and reform, but physician candidates are more credible on government bureaucracy and red tape. The health care red tape that is strangling health care providers and driving up the cost of health care could be an easy and believable target.*

Don't over-reach on trying to highlight your physician business experience – voters are skeptical – they tend to believe it's the nurses who run the office, not the doctors.