



AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite
Environmental Protection Agency Administrator-designate, Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt is seen on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday at his confirmation hearing before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

In break with Trump, EPA pick says climate change isn't hoax

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's choice to head the Environmental Protection Agency said Wednesday that climate change is real, breaking with both the president-elect and his own past statements.

In response to questions from Democrats during his Senate confirmation hearing, Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt said he disagreed with Trump's earlier claims that global warming is a hoax created by the Chinese to harm the economic competitiveness of the United States.

"I do not believe climate change is a hoax," Pruitt said.

The 48-year-old Republican has previously cast doubt on the extensive body of scientific evidence showing that the planet is warming and man-made carbon emissions are to blame. In a 2016 opinion article, Pruitt suggested that the debate over global warming "is far from settled" and he claimed that "scientists continue to disagree about the degree and extent of global warming and its connection

to the actions of mankind."

At the hearing before the Senate Energy and Public Works Committee, Pruitt conceded that human activity contributes "in some manner" to climate change. He continued, however, to question whether the burning of fossil fuels is the primary reason, and refused to say whether sea levels are rising.

Pruitt's testimony came shortly after NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued a joint statement affirming that 2016 was officially the hottest year in recorded history. Studies show the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets have decreased in mass, while the world's oceans have risen on average nearly 7 inches in the last century.

In his current post, Pruitt joined a multistate lawsuit opposing the Obama administration's plan to limit planet-warming carbon emissions from coal-fired power plants. Pruitt also sued over the EPA's recent expansion of water bodies regulated under the Clean Water Act.

Poll: Americans want health care fix

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sylvia Douglas twice voted for President Barack Obama and last year cast a ballot for Democrat Hillary Clinton. But when it comes to "Obamacare," she now sounds like President-elect Donald Trump. This makes her chuckle amid the serious choices she faces every month between groceries, electricity and paying a health insurance bill that has jumped by nearly \$400.

"It's a universal thing, nobody likes it," Douglas, a licensed practical nurse in Huntsville, Alabama, said of Obama's signature law. "They need to fix it with whatever works, but not make more of a mess like they have now."

That Americans agree on much of anything is remarkable after a presidential race that ripped open the nation's economic, political and cultural divisions. But on the brink of the Trump presidency, a new poll finds ample accord across those divisions on the need to do something about health care in the United States.

More than 4-in-10 Republicans, Democrats and independents say health care is a top issue facing the country, The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll showed. That's more than named any other issue in the survey, conducted Dec. 14-19.

But there seems to be little agreement on what to do about it.

Democrats say they want to fix problems in the current program — among them, rising costs and dwindling competition — but not dismantle it. They warn that the GOP is threatening the coverage gained by 20 million people under the 2010 overhaul.

Republicans want to repeal Obama's signature law but fear the political damage of stranding millions of Americans who secured coverage. Congress' nonpartisan budget analyst lent weight to that concern Tuesday, estimating that a bill passed in 2016 to only repeal — not replace — the law would result in 18 million more uninsured people and a spike in premiums.

Trump says he has a plan, but so far he's given no details. He told *The Washington Post* last weekend that his approach would provide "insurance for everybody."

Congressional Republicans say the revamp will offer "universal access" to coverage, not quite the same thing.

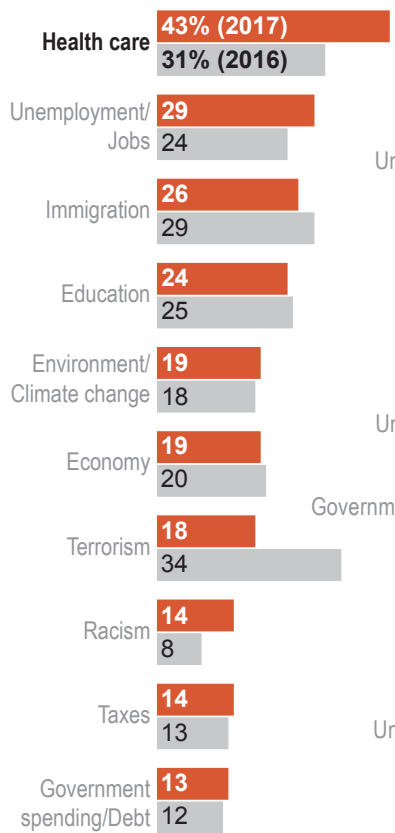
The desire to fix Obamacare stretches across party lines, but some are skeptical it can be done.

"It can't be made to work," said James Gemind, a 55-year-old restaurant worker from Orlando, Florida. "That's why both sides have been unanimous in

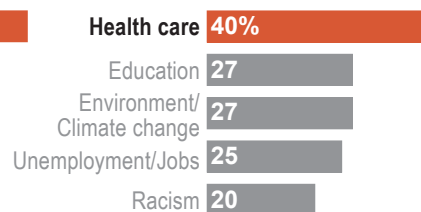
Poll: Health care fix a top priority

Americans see health care as the most important issue for the government to tackle in 2017, according to an AP-NORC Center poll.

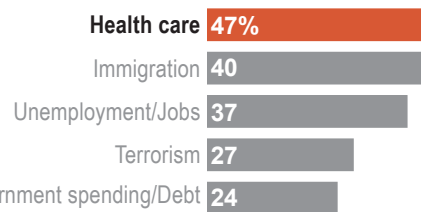
Issues Americans would like the government to address:



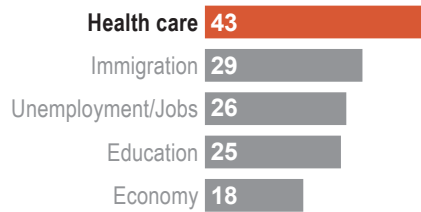
Top issues for Democrats:



Top issues for Republicans:



Top issues for Independents:



NOTE: Results based on a survey of 1,017 U.S. adults conducted Dec. 14-19, 2016, by NORC at the University of Chicago. Margin of error is ±3.7 percentage points. Respondents named up to five issues.

SOURCE: AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research AP

their agreement that it has to be repealed or replaced. Part of it is funding; it just does not exist to insure everybody."

Health care aside, in the poll there was more modest agreement on other national priorities.

About a third of Republicans and a quarter of Democrats put unemployment among their top issues. About a fifth named the economy in general as a top priority regardless of party, according to the poll. Most Americans said the government should put a substantial amount of effort toward addressing the public's priorities, but few expect much will be accomplished in the next year, the survey said.

Overall, domestic issues including health care, education, the environment and racism were cited by 86 percent of

Americans.

But Democrats were more likely to mention the environment, racism and poverty, while Republicans were more likely to cite immigration, terrorism, government spending and taxes.

Immigration was named by 40 percent of GOP respondents, compared to 15 percent of Democrats. Trump during the campaign connected immigration to national security and vowed to build a wall along the southern U.S. border and make Mexico pay for it — an idea Mexican leaders have not accepted. Trump now says Mexico will pay for it "eventually."

In a turn-around from a year ago, most Republicans now say the country is on the right course, while Democrats have become more pessimistic.

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