

'16 election changing health care debate

By Noam N. Levey, Los Angeles Times

With the first primaries of the 2016 presidential campaign just months away, the national healthcare debate is poised to enter a new phase, more focused on consumers' pocketbooks than on re-litigating the 5-year-old Affordable Care Act.

Hillary Rodham Clinton, who is campaigning on a detailed program to crack down on rising drug prices and runaway medical bills, is making a play for the hearts of voters increasingly irritated about what they have to pay for healthcare.

Clinton has issued an implicit challenge to her Republican rivals who continue to campaign with broadsides against Obamacare but few details about how they would address consumers' basic healthcare worries.

Most Americans want their elected leaders to protect them from surprise out-of-network medical charges. They want government to ensure health plans have sufficient networks. And they want more information about the prices of doctors' visits, tests and procedures, according to the poll, by the nonprofit Kaiser Family Foundation.

By contrast, fewer than half the respondents want their elected officials to deal with concerns about the Affordable Care Act. Just a third want it fully repealed.

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