

## Pollster tells governors: 'People want you to fix health care'

WILLIAMSBURG

In the blizzard of statistics presented by Frank Luntz, perhaps this was the scariest one for the 10 governors in the room:

Asked whether they agreed with the statement "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore," 72 percent of Americans polled said yes.

That sentiment is much more than a pithy line from the 1976 movie "Network," Luntz told the governors. It's a perfect summing-up of the American zeitgeist in 2009, one that politicians ignore at their peril.

Luntz, a pollster best known for his work on the power of language in politics, has worked mostly for Republicans. But he spoke Sunday at the Southern Governors' Association's annual meeting at the invitation of a Democrat - Virginia Gov. Timothy M. Kaine, the group's chairman - and his advice was bipartisan.

Exhibit A of the prevailing public mood, Luntz told the governors at Kingsmill Resort, is the hostility that has greeted many members of Congress who have held town-hall meetings on health care this month. He decried the incivility of those confrontations, but Luntz also said politicians are mistaken if they think the anger is false or manufactured.

"The public is mad," he said. "It's not fake.... People spit on me when I do focus groups, and it's not because they don't like me. They're really angry."

Ironically, he said, a majority of those polled say they are satisfied with their own health care. He suggested that the public anger springs from a more generalized dissatisfaction with the way things are going in America - with the sputtering economy at the top of the list.

"Only 34 percent of Americans believe their kids will be better off than them," he said. "If you want to understand what this economy has done, this is what it has done to people."

People are looking to their leaders to restore their faith in the future, Luntz said.

"What the public is looking for is solutions and bold action," he said. "Not just action, but bold action. They're prepared for you to do things that have never been done before because they believe that we've never been in this situation before. There is a deep and fundamental rejection of the status quo."

On the other hand, he said, Americans harbor a distrust that their leaders will be able to solve the nation's problems.

"Nobody trusts government," he said. "More people believe in the existence of UFOs than believe that Social Security will still exist when they retire.... More people would rather be mugged than audited by the IRS. And 5 percent say there's no difference."

That means politicians must walk a fine line when it comes to health care reform, Luntz said.

"The public has come to the belief that everyone has the right to health care, no matter what their physical condition and no matter what their income," he said.

The desire for reform is as strong in the South as anywhere else in the nation, if not more so, Luntz said, noting that the Southern states have the highest percentage of people who can't afford the care they need.

"Make no mistake," he said. "And as I say this I look you straight in the eye. The American people want you to fix health care.

"They want you to fix it - and not break what isn't broken."

*Bill Sizemore, (757) 446-2276, [bill.sizemore@pilotonline.com](mailto:bill.sizemore@pilotonline.com)*

**Source URL (retrieved on 08/26/2009 - 03:11):** <http://hamptonroads.com/2009/08/pollster-tells-governors-people-want-you-fix-health-care>