

For Immediate Release

*Amanda Barney (401) 946-7887 ext. 111
amandab@hari.org*

POLL: MAJORITY OF VOTERS REJECT HOSPITAL PAYMENT REDUCTIONS FOR CARE TO MEDICARE AND MEDICAID PATIENTS

CRANSTON, RI (December 11, 2012) - A national public opinion poll of American voters conducted by Public Opinion Strategies for the American Hospital Association (AHA) reveals that over two-thirds of respondents (69 percent) reject reductions in reimbursements to hospitals for the care they provide to Medicare and Medicaid patients. The opposition to reduced hospital reimbursements is wide-spread and broad-based, crossing political parties, gender, age, race, and region of the country.

Among the 31 percent of respondents that identified spending and budget issues as one of the most important issues facing the country, 71 percent oppose a proposal to reduce federal spending for health care.

Elected officials must make important decisions in the coming days regarding the “fiscal cliff” – the approaching expiration of Bush-era tax cuts and Social Security payroll holiday, Medicare physician fee schedule, extension of unemployment benefits and the pending implementation of sequestration. Without action, hospitals in Rhode Island will be faced with more than \$630 million in payment reductions over the next ten years. This comes on top of more than \$700 million in cuts over the next decade related to the Affordable Care Act, the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act and the effect of the 2 percent sequestration.

When respondents were asked about the impact of proposed \$70 billion Medicare and Medicaid payment reductions to hospitals nationwide over ten years, 66 percent of voters said such cuts would result in decreased access to health care for seniors.

"Hospitals in Rhode Island are extremely concerned about congressional proposals that would cut Medicare and Medicaid payments to hospitals to help address the country's fiscal problems," said Edward J. Quinlan, president, Hospital Association of Rhode Island. "Strong and stable hospitals are critical to a vibrant Rhode Island."

"Under the original Affordable Care Act health reform law, hospitals nationwide already have accepted shared sacrifice amounting to \$155 billion in payment reductions - \$574 million in Rhode Island alone," Quinlan said. "If sequestration goes into effect on January 1, Medicare payments to hospitals in our state will be reduced by \$107 million over ten years. Recommendations to cut even more reimbursements to hospitals would decimate the health care delivery system by decreasing access to care, eliminating community services, and eliminating jobs. "

Quinlan emphasized that hospitals are major economic contributors, and that further cuts to hospital reimbursements will lead to job losses, which will have direct implications for the local economy. More than 21,000 Rhode Islanders count on hospitals for employment. This represents 6 percent of the state's private sector employment. In addition, hospitals contribute \$6.3 billion annually to the state's economy.

The national survey of 800 registered voters was conducted during November 2012 by Public Opinion Strategies of Virginia. The margin of error for the total sample is plus or minus 3.46 percent.

###

Founded over a half century ago, the Hospital Association of Rhode Island is a statewide trade organization that assists member hospitals in effectively meeting the health care needs of Rhode Island, through advocacy, representation, education and services. HARI members work collaboratively to improve the quality of care delivered and address issues threatening access to health care including increasing health costs, workforce shortages and decreasing reimbursement. HARI members work together to ensure that all Rhode Islanders will receive comprehensive, high quality health care.