



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on May 23, 2012

HHS Signs \$20M Public-Relations Contract to Bolster ObamaCare

In an effort to curb growing discontent with President Obama's controversial Affordable Care Act, the Health and Human Services Department (HHS) has hired a public relations firm to help underscore portions of the healthcare reform law. The contract, which is worth a hefty \$20 million, will be going to Porter Novelli, the same company that launched the USDA's infamous healthy food pyramid.



"The campaign will inform the American people about the many preventive benefits now available to those with Medicare, Medicaid, and private health insurance as a result of the Affordable Care Act," an HHS representative [affirmed](#).

The initiative, which was required by the law, will [explain](#) the importance of healthcare prevention while hawking the preventive benefits provided by ObamaCare. HHS officials will highlight a variety of advantages, such as the law's provision that supplies preventive services to patients without co-pays or deductibles, as well as new preventive benefits provided to Medicare patients.

The PR thrust is part of the Obama administration's efforts to sell the unpopular law to the American people, who have become increasingly skeptical about some of its more controversial provisions. In fact, a [Rasmussen poll](#) released last week showed that the majority of voters support repeal of ObamaCare; moreover, the belief that repeal would add fuel to the economy has reached its highest level since late 2010. "[Fifty-six percent] of Likely U.S. Voters at least somewhat favor repeal of the health care law, while 37% are at least somewhat opposed," Rasmussen reported. "This includes 46% who Strongly Favor repeal of the measure versus 26% who Strongly Oppose it."

Last year, the HHS pushed Congress to quadruple the budget for its PR office, as well as double the office's employee list. The agency [claimed](#) the changes were critical to "help Americans understand and access their benefits and information under the law." According to the budget document, the spending hike would address an array of responsibilities, such as maintaining the HHS website, managing special events that spotlight top HHS officials, and promoting web, radio, and TV appearances for the HHS Secretary and other chief department officials.

As the popularity of ObamaCare continues to wane, the administration has been scrambling to patch up the law's paling reputation. Judicial Watch filed a Freedom of Information Act request last year [revealing](#) the extraordinary lengths to which administration officials have gone to tout the law's benefits to a largely skeptical public:

- The Obama HHS launched a campaign to track Internet searches and to use online search engines such as Google and Yahoo to drive traffic to a government website promoting Obama's health care overhaul. Using "pay-per-click" advertising tools, such as Google Adwords, HHS purposely targeted people searching the term "ObamacCre," a word that has been described as "disparaging" by political agents of the President.



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- According to a budget summary prepared by Ogilvy, from October 2010 through February 2011, the Obama administration spent \$1,435,009 on these online advertisements alone, including advertising campaigns with Google and Yahoo, almost \$300,000 per month.
- A number of documents address the need to target the ObamaCare propaganda campaign to Hispanics, blacks, and women. For example, according to an email from Chris Beakey, vice president of Ogilvy PR Worldwide, to HHS officials on Dec. 16, 2010, summarizing a conference call, "You want to utilize the bulk of their paid media efforts (which would include expenditures for Radio One and Univision) on media that reaches African Americans and Hispanics. The money will go farther and these audiences continue to be a top priority."
- A Jan. 18, 2011, email from Ogilvy to HHS New Media Communications Director Julia Eisman notes with respect to a Spanish banner ad campaign, "I realize we really can't use the blond mom and child for this audience."

Furthermore, the White House has also worked with media organizations and various liberal groups to push its agenda. "Remind people that the law is already benefiting millions of Americans by providing health care coverage, reducing costs and providing access to healthcare coverage," [read](#) a memo that was transmitted to liberal groups, such as Health Care for America Now, Families USA, and the Center for American Progress." This message will include the ideas that these are benefits that politicians/the Court art [sic] trying to take away from average Americans."

"Frame the Supreme Court oral arguments in terms of real people and real benefits that would be lost if the law were overturned," the memo continued. "While lawyers will be talking about the individual responsibility piece of the law and the legal precedence, organizations on the ground should continue to focus on these more tangible results of the law."

Considering the convenient timing of the administration's new PR campaign, one could only surmise that the \$20-million effort is, in fact, a move to bolster the President's reelection campaign. Meanwhile, the White House and liberal-leaning media outlets continue to excoriate Republican super PACs for spending tens of millions of dollars to prop up GOP candidates.

For example, when Crossroads GPS, a conservative group established by Republican political strategist Karl Rove, unveiled a [\\$20-million ad effort](#) honing in on the President's economic record, liberal critics and Obama campaign officials decried the initiative, blaming Republicans for tainting the electoral process with big-money fundraising schemes.

But while pro-Obama super PACs are also raising tens of millions of dollars, the President has the largest and most influential "super PAC" of all, one that includes an invaluable resource that GOP campaign groups do not have access to: an endless stream of taxpayer dollars.



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