



# High Prices, Broken Promises

Opinion Poll: Tennessee Voters Want Action on the High Price of Prescription Drugs

September 26, 2018

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Main Findings.....	4
Healthcare Costs Rank Highest Among National Issues to Tennessee Voters.....	6
Vast Majority of Tennessee Voters are Concerned About the Cost of Prescription Drugs.....	7
Drug Costs Strike the Average Tennessee Voter as Unreasonable.....	8
Lowering Drug Prices Should be a Top Priority for Congressional Candidates.....	9
Respondents Strongly Support Allowing Medicare to Negotiate Lower Drug Prices...	10
Nearly Three-Quarters of Tennessee Voters Say They Would Be More Likely to Support a Candidate Who Wants to Negotiate Lower Prices.....	11
Respondents Disapprove of the Way the President and Both Parties in Congress are Handling Drug Costs.....	12
Nearly Nine out of 10 Respondents Say Congressional Candidates Should Support Allowing Medicare to Act to Lower Prescription Drug Prices.....	13
More Than Eight in 10 Respondents Want President Trump to Work Toward Allowing Medicare to Negotiate Directly.....	14
More Than a Third of Respondents Have Not Taken Prescribed Drugs Because of Cost.....	15
Conclusion.....	16
Methodology.....	16
Toplines.....	17
About the West Health Institute.....	21

## Executive Summary

While immigration, jobs and the economy garner headlines across the nation, the rising cost of healthcare has claimed the minds of Tennessee voters. The cost of healthcare is the single most important issue facing the country, according to 59% of Tennesseans, edging out jobs and the economy (46%) and immigration (31%), according to a scientific opinion poll of 750 Tennessee voters, conducted from Aug. 16-26, 2018. In particular, the high cost of prescription drugs weighs heavily on a stunning 85% of Tennessee voters.

The poll's findings, commissioned by the nonprofit, nonpartisan West Health Institute, could have significant repercussions for political candidates. Voters are concerned, and they have said that concern will be reflected at the polls.

Three-quarters (74%) of Tennessee voters consider the price of prescription drugs to be unreasonable, and 70% said lowering the cost of prescription drugs should be a top priority for congressional candidates. These views cut across party lines, with Democrats, Republicans and independent voters alike expressing their displeasure with the way the president and Congress have dealt with high drug costs and stating that it will factor into their voting choices for congressional candidates.

Nearly half of voters disapprove of the way President Trump and Democrats in Congress are handling the situation, and more than half disapprove of the way Republicans are handling it.

Voters also have clear views about potential ways to address the high cost of prescription drugs. According to 70% of all Tennessee voters, it's important for congressional candidates to support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with prescription drug makers to lower prices. Seven in 10 respondents (73%) said they would be more likely to vote for candidates who have committed to allowing Medicare to do just that.

Currently, the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 prohibits the government from negotiating directly with drug manufacturers for drugs used by Medicare beneficiaries. President Trump proposed changing this policy during his presidential campaign, but his plan for lowering drug prices, released in May 2018, did not include that proposal.

The high price of drugs has even led more than a third (36%) of individuals to forego filling a prescription or to take less than what their doctor prescribed—actions that undermine the health and well-being of Tennesseans.

### Five Key Stats

- ✓ 85% of Tennessee voters are concerned about the cost of prescription drugs.
- ✓ 70% said lowering drug prices should be a top priority for candidates running for Congress.
- ✓ 86% of all Tennessee voters said it's important for congressional candidates to support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prices.
- ✓ 73% of respondents would be more likely to vote for a candidate who committed to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies.
- ✓ 36% of respondents have not filled a prescription or have taken less than prescribed because of the cost of drugs.

## Main Findings

- **The cost of healthcare is the single most important national issue to Tennessee voters:** 59% of respondents said healthcare costs are the most important issue facing the country—even more important than jobs and the economy (46%) and immigration (31%).
- **More than eight in 10 Tennessee voters are concerned about the cost of prescription drugs:** 85% of respondents said prescription drug costs concern them, with 53% saying they are very concerned.
- **Drug costs strike the average Tennessee voter as unreasonable:** Nearly three-quarters of those polled (74%) feel the cost of prescription drugs is unreasonable, with 52% finding them very unreasonable. This sentiment cuts across party lines, with 70% of Republicans feeling the costs are unreasonable, and 79% of Democrats and 74% of independent voters agree.
- **Seven in 10 respondents believe lowering drug prices should be a top priority for congressional candidates:** 70% of voters believe candidates should prioritize reining in drug prices. Sixty-four percent of Republicans, 79% of Democrats and 71% of independents agreed.
- **Respondents are strongly supportive of allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to reduce the price of prescription drugs:** When asked about possible ways to reduce drug costs, 87% support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies, 85% support requiring drug companies to release information to the public on how they set their prices, and 40% support requiring drug companies to set the price for a drug based on how well it works for patients.
- **A majority of respondents would be more likely to vote for a candidate who committed to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to get lower prices on prescription drugs:** 73% of respondents said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who committed to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies. Respondents feel this way regardless of party: 75% of Republicans, 80% of Democrats and 68% of independents said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who committed to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly.
- **Respondents disapprove of the way the president and both parties in Congress are handling drug costs:** 46% of respondents disapprove of the way President Trump is handling the cost of prescriptions drugs, 52% disapprove of the way congressional Republicans are handling the issue, and 48% disapprove of the way congressional Democrats are handling it.

## Main Findings

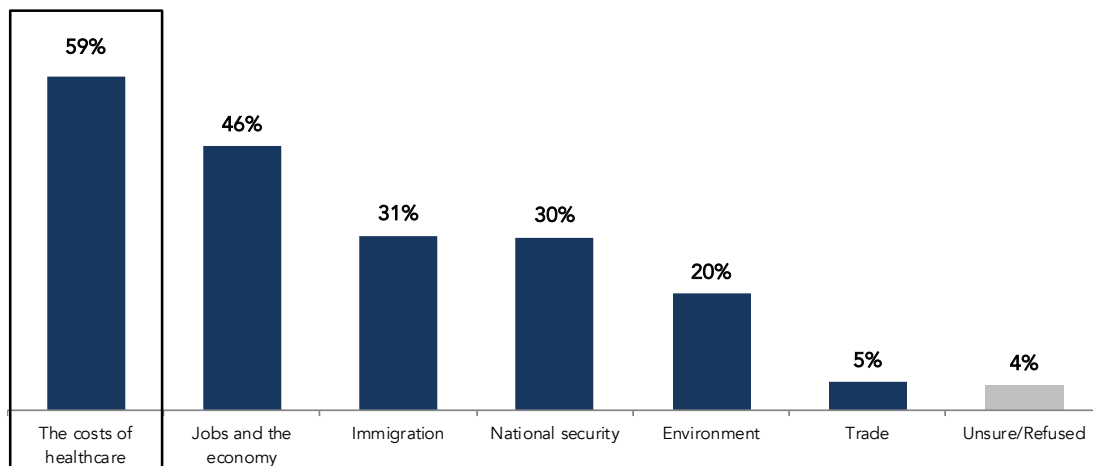
- **Nearly nine out of 10 respondents say it's important candidates running for Congress support allowing Medicare to negotiate lowering prescription drug prices:** 86% of voters think it's important congressional candidates support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies in an effort to bring down prices. That number includes 86% of Republicans, 92% of Democrats and 84% of independent voters.
- **More than eight in 10 respondents say President Trump should work toward allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies:** 85% of respondents said it is important for President Trump to work toward allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prices.
- **More than a third of respondents have not taken drugs as prescribed because of cost:** In the last year, more than a third (36%) of respondents have either not filled a prescription or have taken less than the prescribed amount because of the cost. For 26% of those who responded positively, this had occurred more than once.

## Healthcare Costs Rank Highest Among National Issues to Tennessee Voters

Out of six pressing policy issues, the cost of healthcare ranks highest in importance to Tennessee voters. More than half, or 59%, say the cost of healthcare is the most important issue facing the country, ahead of those who say jobs and the economy are the most important (46%), immigration (31%), national security (30%), the environment (20%) and trade (5%).

### The cost of healthcare is the single most important issue to Tennessee voters

**Question:** Now I am going to read a list of issues facing the United States. Please listen and let me know which **two** are most important to you personally?



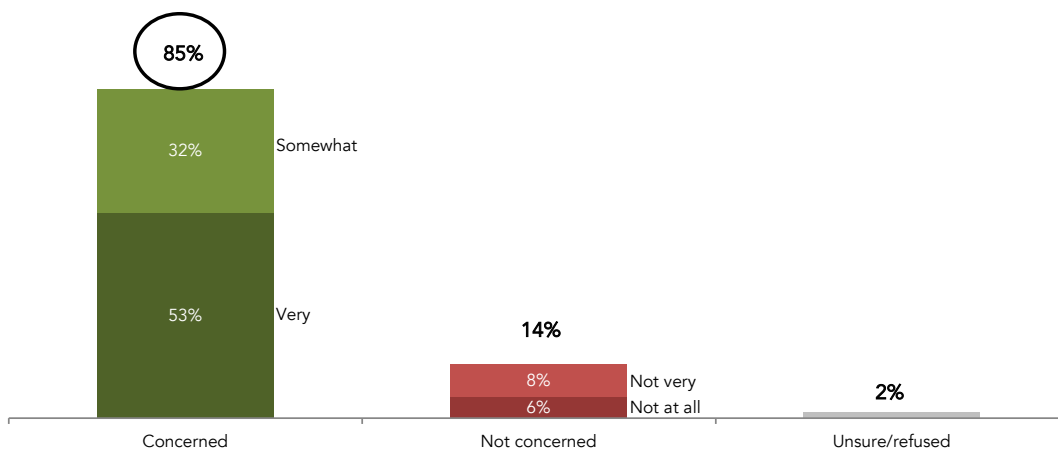
\*Numbers in the following charts may add up to less than or more than 100% due to rounding

## Vast Majority of Tennessee Voters are Concerned About the Cost of Prescription Drugs

Eighty-five percent of respondents are worried about the price of prescription drugs. More than half of all respondents said they are very concerned about the cost. One in three (32%) are somewhat concerned. Those who were not very or not at all concerned only accounted for 14% of respondents.

### 85% are concerned about the cost of prescription drugs; a majority (53%) is very concerned

**Question:** How concerned are you about the cost of prescription drugs? Would you say that you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned or not at all concerned?

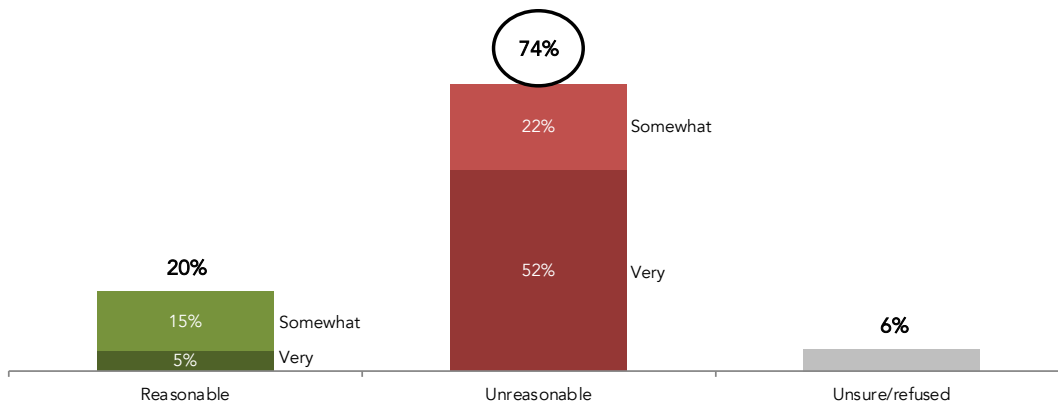


## Drug Costs Strike the Average Tennessee Voter as Unreasonable

Nearly three-quarters of those polled (74%) feel the price of prescription drugs is unreasonable, with 52% saying the costs are very unreasonable.

### Nearly three-quarters (74%) feel the cost of prescription drugs in the U.S. is unreasonable

**Question:** Do you feel the cost of prescription drugs in the United States is reasonable or unreasonable? And would you say that the costs of prescription drugs in the United States is very (reasonable/unreasonable) or somewhat (reasonable/unreasonable)?



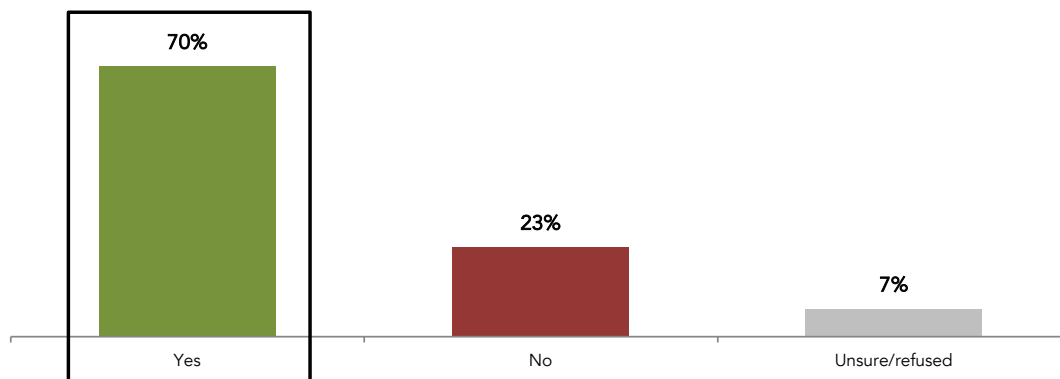


## Lowering Drug Prices Should be a Top Priority for Congressional Candidates

Seven in 10 (70%) respondents believe that reining in drug prices should be a top priority for congressional candidates. This sentiment crosses party lines: 64% of Republicans, 79% of Democrats and 71% of independent voters agreed.

Seven in 10 (70%) feel that lowering drug prices should be a top priority for candidates running for Congress

**Question:** Do you feel that lowering drug prices should be a top priority for candidates running for Congress in your state this year?

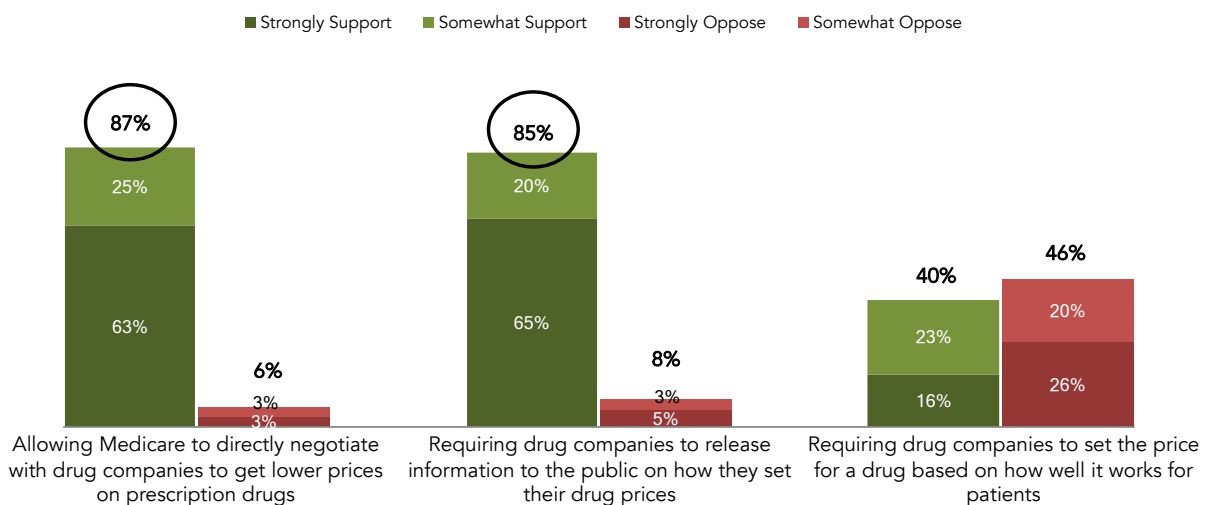


## Respondents Strongly Supportive of Allowing Medicare to Negotiate for Lower Drug Prices

When asked about possible ways to reduce drug costs, 87% of respondents support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies, 85% support requiring drug companies to release information to the public on how they set their prices, and 40% support requiring drug companies to set the price for a drug based on how well it works for patients.

### What are the most popular ways to reduce the cost of prescription drugs?

**Question:** Now I am going to read you a list of possible ways to reduce the cost of prescription drugs. Please listen to each and let me know if you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose each one.

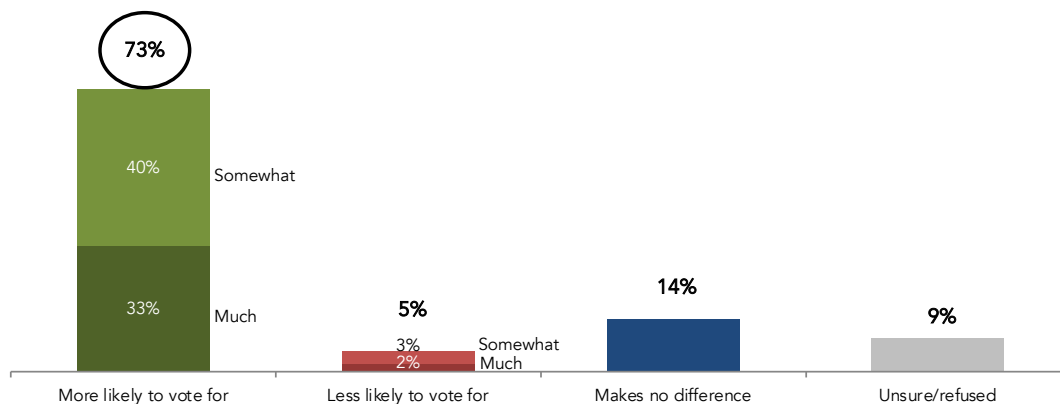


## Nearly Three-Quarters of Tennessee Voters Say They Would Be More Likely to Support a Candidate Who Wants Medicare to Negotiate Lower Prices

Nearly three-quarters of respondents said a stance in favor of letting Medicare negotiate directly with drug companies could influence their vote: 73% of respondents said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who committed to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies. This is a sentiment that pervades all parties, including 75% of Republicans who would be more likely to vote for a candidate who committed to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly, with 80% of Democrats and 68% of independents agreeing.

73% would be more likely to vote for a candidate if he/she committed to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies

**Question:** Would a Congressional candidate's commitment to allow Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to get lower prices on prescription drugs make you more likely or less likely to vote for that candidate? And would you say that you are much [more likely/less likely] or somewhat [more likely/less likely]?

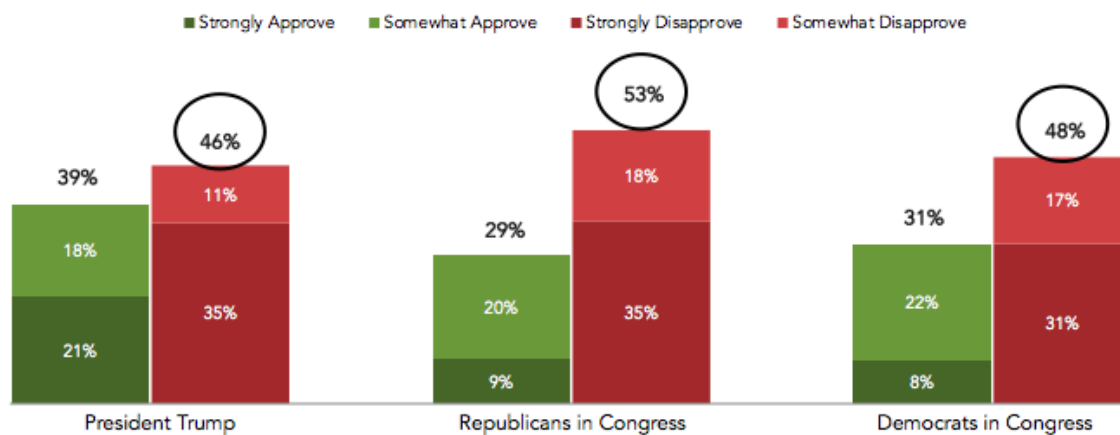


## Respondents Disapprove of the Way the President and Both Parties in Congress are Handling Drug Costs

Almost half of respondents (46%) disapprove of the way President Trump is handling the cost of prescription drugs; 53% disapprove of the way congressional Republicans are handling the issue, and 48% disapprove of congressional Democrats' handling of high drug costs.

### Voters disapprove of how the president and Democrats and Republicans in Congress are handling drug costs

Question: Would you say that you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove or strongly disapprove of the way each of the following is handling prescription drug costs?

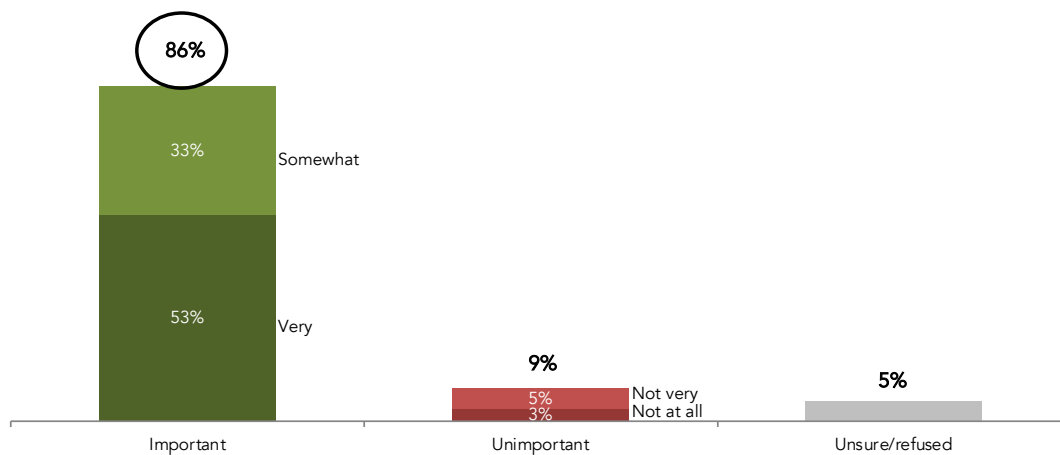


## Nearly Nine out of 10 Respondents Say Congressional Candidates Should Support Allowing Medicare to Act to Lower Prescription Drug Prices

It's important for candidates running for Congress to support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies in an effort to bring down prices, say 86% of Tennessee voters. That includes 86% of Republicans, 92% of Democrats and 84% of independent voters.

### 86% of voters say that it's important for congressional candidates to support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies

**Question:** How important is it for candidates running for Congress to support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prescription drug prices? Would you say that it is very important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important?

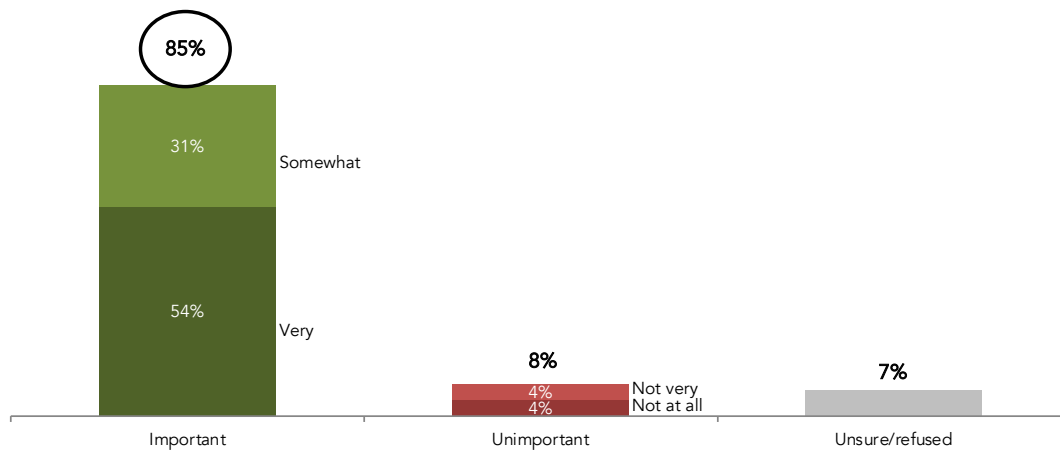


## More than Eight in 10 Respondents Want President Trump to Work Toward Allowing Medicare to Negotiate Directly

More than eight in 10 voters (85%) think the president should also work toward allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prescription drug prices.

### 85% say that it is important for President Trump to work towards allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies

**Question:** How important is it for President Trump to work towards allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prescription drug prices? Would you say that it is very important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important?

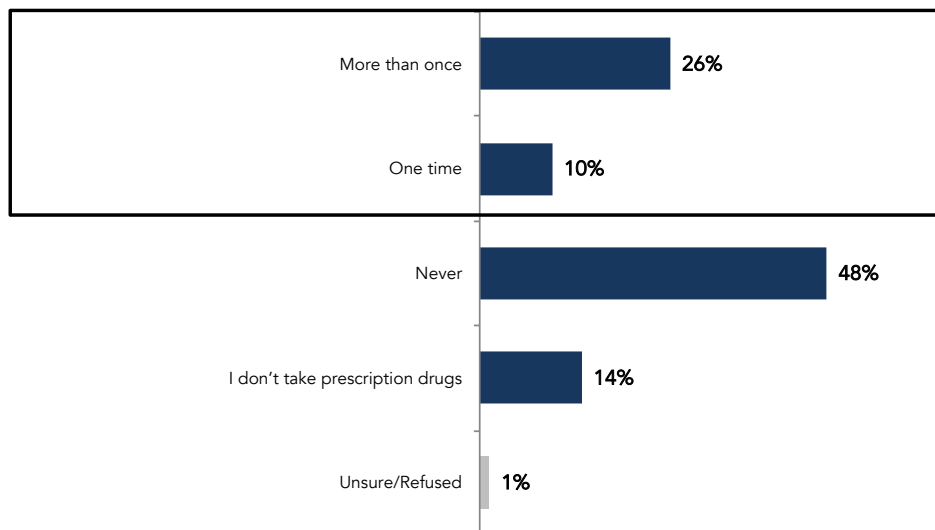


## More Than a Third of Respondents Have Not Taken Prescribed Drugs Because of Cost

More than a third (36%) of respondents said that in the last year, they have either not filled a prescription or have taken less than the prescribed amount because of the cost. Taking these measures is a repeat occurrence for 26% of those who responded positively.

### Over one-third (36%) have not followed prescription instructions at least once within the past year because of cost

**Question:** In the past 12 months, how often have you not filled a prescription or taken less than the prescribed dose of medicine because of the cost?



## Conclusion

Heading into the midterm elections in November, the high cost of prescription drugs is a top-of-mind issue for Tennessee voters. Most voters believe prescription drug prices are unreasonable and think Congress and the president should play a stronger role in lowering them.

As these results show, the cost of prescription drugs will figure significantly in voters' minds as they head to the polls this November. Candidates seeking to gain favor with voters should take the issue of healthcare and prescription drug costs seriously, while laying out a strategy to work to bring them down—specifically, committing to allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower the cost of drugs.

## Methodology

This poll reflects a telephone survey of 750 voters statewide in Tennessee. The poll was conducted by J Wallin Opinion Research for West Health Institute with a margin of error of +/- 3.6%. The survey was conducted from August 16 through August 26, 2018.



## Toplines

### Tennessee Statewide Voter Survey Interview Schedule

Field Dates: Friday, August 16 through Sunday, August 26, 2018  
 Universe: Tennessee  
 Language: English, Spanish  
 N = 750  
 Margin of Error = +/-3.6%

1. In your own words, what do you feel is the most important issue facing your community today?  
 [PROBE HEAVILY, CAPTURE AND CODE]: \_\_\_\_\_

Crime/Public Safety	25.7%
Jobs/Economy	14.7%
Health Care	7.7%
Education	7.3%
Moral Issues	6.9%
Government	4.7%
Traffic/Transportation	4.0%
Immigration	2.9%
Growth/Population	2.3%
Poverty	2.1%
Affordable Housing	2.0%
Homelessness	1.5%
Environmental	1.1%
Taxes	0.9%
Other	6.9%
None/Nothing	2.1%
Don't Know	5.2%
Refuse	1.9%

2. Now I am going to read a list of issues facing the United States. Please listen and let me know which two are most important to you personally?  
 [ROTATE]

The costs of healthcare	58.5%
Jobs and the economy	46.3%
Immigration	30.7%
National security	30.4%
Environment	20.4%
Trade	4.9%
Unsure [DO NOT READ]	4.0%
Refused [DO NOT READ]	0.4%

## Toplines

3. How concerned are you about the cost of prescription drugs? Would you say that you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned or not at all concerned?

<b>Concerned (NET)</b>	<b>84.8%</b>
<i>Very concerned</i>	52.9%
<i>Somewhat concerned</i>	31.9%
<b>Not concerned (NET)</b>	<b>13.7%</b>
<i>Not at all concerned</i>	5.5%
<i>Not very concerned</i>	8.3%
Unsure [DO NOT READ]	1.1%
Refused [DO NOT READ]	0.4%

Would you say that you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove or strongly disapprove of the way each of the following is handling prescription drug costs?

Approve (NET)		Disapprove (NET)		Unsure/ Refused (DO NOT READ)
Strongly approve	Somewhat approve	Strongly disapprove	Somewhat disapprove	

(ROTATE Q4-6)

4. <b>President Trump</b>	20.8%	<u><b>38.4%</b></u>	17.6%	<u><b>45.9%</b></u>	34.8%	11.1%	15.7%
5. <b>Republicans in Congress</b>	8.7%	<u><b>28.5%</b></u>	19.9%	<u><b>52.7%</b></u>	35.1%	17.6%	18.8%
6. <b>Democrats in Congress</b>	8.3%	<u><b>30.5%</b></u>	22.3%	<u><b>47.5%</b></u>	30.8%	16.7%	22.0%

7. Do you feel the cost of prescription drugs in the United States is reasonable or unreasonable? [IF REASONABLE/UNREASONABLE] And would you say that the costs of prescription drugs in the United States is very (reasonable/unreasonable) or somewhat (reasonable/unreasonable)?

<b>Reasonable (NET)</b>	<b>20.4%</b>
<i>Very reasonable</i>	5.2%
<i>Somewhat reasonable</i>	15.2%
<b>Unreasonable (NET)</b>	<b>73.9%</b>
<i>Very unreasonable</i>	51.9%
<i>Somewhat unreasonable</i>	22.0%
Unsure [DO NOT READ]	5.6%
Refused [DO NOT READ]	0.1%

## Toplines

Now I am going to read you a list of possible ways to reduce the cost of prescription drugs. Please listen to each and let me know if you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose each one.

Support (NET)		Oppose (NET)		Unsure/Refused (DO NOT READ)
Strongly support	Somewhat support	Strongly oppose	Somewhat oppose	

(ROTATE Q8-10)

8.	Allowing Medicare to directly negotiate with drug companies to get lower prices on prescription drugs	62.5%	<b>87.1%</b> 24.5%	3.3%	<b>6.3%</b> 2.9%	6.7%
9.	Requiring drug companies to release information to the public on how they set their drug prices	64.7%	<b>84.9%</b> 20.3%	5.3%	<b>8.7%</b> 3.3%	6.4%
10.	Requiring drug companies to set the price for a drug based on how well it works for patients	16.3%	<b>39.6%</b> 23.3%	26.4%	<b>45.9%</b> 19.5%	14.5%
11.	Do you feel that lowering drug prices should be a top priority for candidates running for Congress in your state this year?					
	Yes					<b>69.7%</b>
	No					<b>23.1%</b>
	Unsure [DO NOT READ]					7.2%
	Refused [DO NOT READ]					0.0%
12.	How important is it for candidates running for Congress to support allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prescription drug prices? Would you say that it is very important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important?					
	Important (NET)					<b>86.3%</b>
	<i>Very important</i>					53.2%
	<i>Somewhat important</i>					33.1%
	Unimportant (NET)					<b>8.5%</b>
	<i>Not at all important</i>					3.3%
	<i>Not very important</i>					5.2%
	Unsure [DO NOT READ]					4.9%
	Refused [DO NOT READ]					0.3%

## Toplines

13. Would a Congressional candidate's commitment to allow Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to get lower prices on prescription drugs make you more likely or less likely to vote for that candidate? [RECORD] [IF MORE LIKELY OR LESS LIKELY>>>] And would you say that you are much [more likely/less likely] or somewhat [more likely/less likely]?
- |                                      |              |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>More likely to vote for [NET]</b> | <b>72.8%</b> |
| <i>Much more likely</i>              | 32.5%        |
| <i>Somewhat more likely</i>          | 40.3%        |
| Makes no difference [DO NOT READ]    | 13.5%        |
| <b>Less likely to vote for [NET]</b> | <b>5.2%</b>  |
| <i>Much less likely</i>              | 1.9%         |
| <i>Somewhat less likely</i>          | 3.3%         |
| Unsure [DO NOT READ]                 | 8.1%         |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]                | 0.4%         |
14. How important is it for President Trump to work towards allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prescription drug prices? Would you say that it is very important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important?
- |                             |              |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Important (NET)</b>      | <b>85.2%</b> |
| <i>Very important</i>       | 53.9%        |
| <i>Somewhat important</i>   | 31.3%        |
| <b>Unimportant (NET)</b>    | <b>8.1%</b>  |
| <i>Not at all important</i> | 4.1%         |
| <i>Not very important</i>   | 4.0%         |
| Unsure [DO NOT READ]        | 6.0%         |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]       | 0.7%         |
15. In the past 12 months, how often have you not filled a prescription or taken less than the prescribed dose of medicine because of the cost?
- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| <b>More than once</b>                  | <b>26.4%</b> |
| <b>One time</b>                        | <b>10.0%</b> |
| <b>Never</b>                           | <b>48.1%</b> |
| <b>I don't take prescription drugs</b> | <b>14.1%</b> |
| Unsure [DO NOT READ]                   | 1.3%         |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]                  | 0.0%         |
16. And finally, for demographic purposes only, which of the following best describes your ethnic background?
- |                               |              |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Latino/Hispanic</b>        | <b>2.9%</b>  |
| <b>White/Caucasian</b>        | <b>78.7%</b> |
| <b>Black/African American</b> | <b>10.3%</b> |
| <b>Asian</b>                  | <b>0.8%</b>  |
| <b>Mixed race</b>             | <b>3.2%</b>  |
| <b>Something else</b>         | <b>1.5%</b>  |
| Refused [DO NOT READ]         | 2.7%         |

## ABOUT THE WEST HEALTH INSTITUTE

Solely funded by philanthropists Gary and Mary West, West Health includes the nonprofit and nonpartisan Gary and Mary West Health Institute and Gary and Mary West Foundation in San Diego and the Gary and Mary West Health Policy Center in Washington, DC. These organizations are working together toward a shared mission dedicated to lowering healthcare costs and enabling seniors to successfully age in place with access to high-quality, affordable health and support services that preserve and protect their dignity, quality of life, and independence. For more information, visit [westhealth.org](http://westhealth.org) and follow [@westhealth](https://twitter.com/westhealth).

For more information about the poll, contact [hccosts@westhealth.org](mailto:hccosts@westhealth.org).