



The Long View

BY ROB LONG

FOR AARP STRATEGY GROUP ONLY

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Focus Group Results

AARP Medicare and Entitlement Reform Messaging Strategy

Present:

MODERATOR
MALE, AGE 19
MALE, AGE 22
MALE, AGE 27
FEMALE, AGE 18
FEMALE, AGE 25
FEMALE, AGE 29

MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, and thanks for coming. As you know, there are currently several proposals being talked about nationally about the problem with soaring Medicare costs, and I wanted to get your thoughts on these. You all represent a generation that will, in effect, be financing the health-care costs for the generations ahead of you, and I thought we could spend the next hour reflecting on statements about health-care expectations. Okay? Can we begin?

MALE 19: There's pizza, right?

MODERATOR: Yes, sir, there's pizza on the way.

MALE 22: Vegan?

FEMALE 25: Yeah, we were promised vegan options. I feel very strongly that you should offer vegan, vegetarian, and cruelty-free pizza choices.

MODERATOR: Understood. It's all taken care of. The pizza is on the way. Now, if I could, I'd like you all to think about what kind of health-care system you expect when you reach retirement age. As you know, the current system will be technically insolvent well before you reach retirement age. I'd like each of you to reflect on that as I ask you to respond to the following statement: "I personally

believe the government has a duty to provide health care for its citizens." Who would like to go first?

MALE 19: I think the pizza guy is here. MODERATOR: No, he's not. That's just the cleaning staff next door.

MALE 27: That's racist. MODERATOR: I wasn't trying to be racist. But the noise next door is, in fact, coming from the cleaning crew. MALE 27:

You assume. But you don't know for a fact. You're a racist. MODERATOR: I wonder if we could table that discussion and get back to reacting to some statements on health care.

FEMALE 29: I'm concerned that there isn't enough diversity on this panel to reach a meaningful consensus. MODERATOR: We're not trying to reach a consensus. We're trying to get some reactions to a series of statements that—

FEMALE 25: Is there anyone on this panel right now who self-identifies as a member of the LGBT community?

MALE 22: I don't like to be categorized as a letter.

FEMALE 25: I'm sorry.

MALE 22: Letters are reductive. If anything, I'm a number. Or one of those letters that's like two letters together.

FEMALE 25: Like that a-and-e thing in French?

MALE 22: Totally.

FEMALE 25: That's very cool.

FEMALE 29: My larger concern here is that we're supposed to be quote-unquote reacting to health-care statements when in fact we haven't either gathered a diverse group of voices or dealt with the nation's massive environmental problems.

MALE 22: That's so true. It's like, what about health-care for the planet?

MODERATOR: Okay. Yes. Fine. But for right now, for right now in this room, can we just respond to health-care statements. For instance, how would you, as people in your twenties, respond to this statement: "I'm concerned that the generations ahead of mine will bankrupt the nation before I can receive my benefits"?

FEMALE 29: Who benefits? That's a good question.

MALE 27: That's a very corporate way to look at it. It's offensive.

MODERATOR: Come *on!* Can we please focus? I have five statements I need to get your reaction to. That's it. My *God* it's hard to get people your age to think about anything for longer than ten seconds.

MALE 22: I find your anger threatening.

MODERATOR: I'm sorry.

FEMALE 29: I feel very at risk.

MODERATOR: I said I was sorry. I'm just frustrated. I'm trying to get through this.

MALE 27: That's an awesome tattoo.

FEMALE 25: Thanks. It's the Chinese symbol for "peaceful transformation into empowerment."

MODERATOR: No, it's not.

FEMALE 25: Excuse me? It is.

MODERATOR: I speak Mandarin, okay? It's the symbol for "diesel fuel only."

FEMALE 25: That's not what my tattoo guy said.

MODERATOR: Oh, then by all means, forget I said anything.

FEMALE 29: I'm offended by this conversation.

MALE 22: I'm offended too. As an a-and-e combination.

MALE 27: This is so typical. You see our generation with our awesome tattoos and big round things in our ears, with our denim and our stocking caps, and you instantly think we're stupid. You want to know what we think about health care? We think it should incorporate more alternative cures like herbs and body rubs.

FEMALE 29: Especially herbs.

FEMALE 25: Especially body rubs.

MALE 22: With a vegan option.

MODERATOR: If you'll excuse me, I'm going to call the AARP and tell them not to worry. Sir, miss? Sir? Miss?

MALE 19: Hmmm? FEMALE 18: Yeah?

MODERATOR: I don't want to interrupt your, urn, socializing, but the focus group is over.