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‘Public Opinion, Health Policy’ To Be Topic of May 5 Talk at Cal Poly

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Richard E. Chard, a national health policy specialist, will discuss what’s good and what's not about U.S. health policy in a free public presentation at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 5, in Philips Hall in the Performing Arts Center at Cal Poly.

His talk, titled “Public Opinion and Health Policy,” is presented as part of the university's Lyceum speaker series. Chard will look at various models of health policy change including Medicare and the Health Security Act and related policy issues. He explains how a plan that was designed to help only a small segment of the population sailed through Congress, while a policy designed to produce a better health-care plan disappeared from the national government agenda.

He identifies the critical elements in public opinion and the players who shape it, including the U.S. president, politicians, interest groups and the media. “All were influential in transforming the debate and changing public opinion,” Chard said.

He is the author of “The Mediating Effect of Public Opinion on Public Policy.” Chard draws on data ranging from presidential approval ratings to polls conducted during the debate over the Health Security Act. “Over the last five decades, the relationship has been a complex one, yet there are clear indications that health-care policy development has been controlled to a great extent by public opinion. The underlying force is itself dynamic at times and static at others,” according to Chard.

Chard served as a senior research associate for the Association of American Medical Colleges and as a health care policy advisor to the Hawaii state legislature. He served as a research fellow for the Center for Health Policy and Management at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where he also earned a Ph.D. in political science.

The event is sponsored by Cal Poly’s Political Science Department and the College of Liberal Arts. For more information, contact Professor Dianne Long at 756-2984.

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National Health Policy Talk Planned at Cal Poly