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Contact: Esten Perez; 617-496-4009

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LIKELY MILLENNIAL VOTERS UP-FOR-GRABS IN UPCOMING MIDTERM ELECTIONS, HARVARD YOUTH POLL FINDS

*In contrast to 2010, Millennials reporting they will “definitely” vote in November
prefer Republican-led Congress by slim four-point margin*

Cambridge, MA – A new national poll of America’s 18- to 29- year-olds by Harvard’s Institute of Politics (IOP), located at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, finds slightly more than half (51%) of young Americans who say they will “definitely be voting” in November prefer a Republican-run Congress with 47 percent favoring Democrat control – a significant departure from IOP polling findings before the last midterm elections (Sept. 2010 – 55%: prefer Democrat control; 43%: prefer Republican control). The cohort – 26% of whom report they will “definitely” vote in the midterms – appear up-for-grabs to both political parties and could be a critical swing vote in many races in November.

The IOP’s newest poll results – its 26th major release since 2000 – also show race and ethnicity continue to be a strong predictor of political attitudes. A detailed report on the poll’s findings is available online:

“The IOP’s fall polling shows that young Americans care deeply about their country and are politically up-for-grabs,” said Harvard Institute of Politics Director Maggie Williams. “Millennials could be a critical swing vote. Candidates for office: ignore millennial voters at your peril.”

“While Democrats have lost ground among members of America’s largest generation, millennial views of Republicans in Congress are even less positive,” said Harvard Institute of Politics Polling Director John Della Volpe. “Both parties should re-introduce themselves to young voters, empower them and seek their participation in the upcoming 2016 campaign and beyond.”

The KnowledgePanel® survey of 2,029 18- to 29- year-old U.S. citizens with a margin of error of +/- 2.6 percentage points (95% confidence level) conducted with the Government and Academic Research team of GfK for the IOP between September 26 and October 9 finds:

In Contrast to Four Years Ago, Slightly More Than Half of “Likely” Young Voters Prefer a Republican-controlled Congress. While more 18- to 29- year-olds (50%-43%) surveyed in the IOP’s fall 2014 poll would prefer that Congress be controlled by Democrats instead of Republicans, the numbers improve dramatically for the GOP when only young people who say they will “definitely vote” are studied. Among these likely voters, the IOP’s latest poll shows the preference shifting, with slightly more than half (51%) preferring a Republican-run Congress and 47 percent wanting Democrats to be in charge – a significant change from the IOP’s last midterm

election poll in the fall of 2010 when Democratic control was preferred among likely voters 55 percent to 43 percent.

President Obama's Job Approval Rating Decreases, Nears Low-Water mark. Overall, President Obama's job performance among America's 18-29 year-olds has fallen from 47% (April 2014) to 43 percent (53%: disapprove), the second-lowest rating in the IOP polls since he took office (41%: November 2013). Among 18-29 year-olds saying they will "definitely be voting in November," the president's job approval rating is 42 percent, with 56% saying they disapprove.

Deep Political Divisions Harden Along Racial Lines. The IOP's fall poll finds young whites disapprove of President Obama's job performance by more than a two-to-one margin (31% approve, 65% disapprove) while African-Americans continue to show a strong loyalty to the president, giving him a 78 percent approval rating (17% disapprove). This approval gap (47 percentage points) among Whites and African-Americans is significantly wider than the 36 percentage point gap in Obama's approval rating between African-American and whites found in fall 2009 IOP polling. On the question of which party should control Congress, young whites preferred Republicans over Democrats by a 53 to 40 percentage point margin. African-Americans, meanwhile, said by a 68 to 23 point margin that they preferred Democrats running the legislative branch. Among Hispanics, Democrats also fared better, with 59 percent preferring a Democrat-controlled Congress with 34 percent wanting Republican control.

Millennial Interest in Midterm Voting Similar to 2010 Levels; Conservatives Seem More Enthusiastic. Roughly one-in-four (26%) young Americans under the age of 30 say that they will "definitely be voting" in the fall, a very similar proportion to that seen during a similar time period prior to the 2010 midterm elections (27%: Sept. 2010). Further, compared to the last midterm election of 2010, traditional Republican constituencies seem to be showing more enthusiasm than Democratic ones for participating in the upcoming midterm elections and are statistically more likely to say they will "definitely be voting." By a significant 12-point margin, 42 percent to 30 percent, a greater proportion of young Republicans say they are definitely going to vote in November than young Democrats, a wider margin than seen in Sept. 2010 IOP polling (38%: Republicans "definitely" voting; 33%: Democrats "definitely" voting). Others who are more likely to participate than their counterparts include: college students (31% say they will definitely vote), college graduates (40%), males (31%), Romney voters (57%), Whites (29%) and African-Americans (28%) compared to Hispanics (17%).

Hispanic Support for President Obama is Weakening. Support for the president among young Hispanics, who just two years ago supported Obama over Mitt Romney by 51-points (74% to 23%), appears to be weakening. The president's job approval rating among Hispanics now sits at the lowest since the IOP began tracking the administration in 2009, with only 49 percent saying they approve (46% disapprove) – a significant drop from six months ago among the young Hispanic community (60%: April 2014) and a sharp slide from five years ago (81%: November 2009).

Concerns Over Terrorism Exist, as Support is Seen for Expanded U.S. Campaign Against ISIS. Sixty-one percent of millennials say they are "a great deal" or "somewhat" worried about

another terrorist attack. Women, by a 66 to 56 percent margin, are more concerned about it than men. Among ethnic and racial lines, Hispanics were most worried, with 66 percent fearing another attack, compared to 61 percent of whites and 54 percent of African-Americans. Republicans (73 percent) are more concerned about an attack than Democrats (62 percent). By nearly a two-to-one margin (39 percent to 20 percent), millennials approve of President Obama's expansion of the US air campaign against ISIS (38%: unsure; 3%: refused). Men are more likely than women to support the expanded strikes, by a 44 to 33 percent margin, but outright opposition to the campaign is fairly similar, with 19 percent of men and 21 percent of women opposing the strategy.

Social Networking Preferences Vary by Race and Ethnicity. Even in social media use – common among young people in general – the preferred method of communication differs. White millennials are substantially more likely than African-Americans to use Facebook and Snapchat, and are more than twice as likely as African-Americans to use Pinterest. African-Americans, on the other hand, are more likely than whites to prefer Instagram and Twitter.

Methodology

The goal of the project was to collect 2,000 completed interviews with young Americans between 18 and 29 years old. The main sample data collection took place from September 26 through October 9. A small pretest was conducted prior to the main survey to examine the accuracy of the data and the length of the interview.

Four thousand, four hundred and thirty seven (4,437) KnowledgePanel members were assigned to the study. The cooperation rate was 45.7 percent resulting in 2,029 completed interviews. Eighty seven (87) interviews were conducted in Spanish with the remainder done in English. The web-enabled KnowledgePanel® is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of telephone numbers and residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®. For those who agree to participate, but do not already have Internet access, GfK provides a laptop and ISP connection at no cost. People who already have computers and Internet service are permitted to participate using their own equipment. Panelists then receive unique log-in information for accessing surveys online, and are sent e-mails throughout each month inviting them to participate in research. More technical information is available at <http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp/reviewer-info.html> and by request to the IOP.

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Harvard University's Institute of Politics (IOP), located at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, was established in 1966 as a memorial to President Kennedy. The IOP's mission is to unite and engage students, particularly undergraduates, with academics, politicians, activists, and policymakers on a non-partisan basis to inspire them to consider careers in politics and public service. The Institute strives to promote greater understanding and cooperation between

the academic world and the world of politics and public affairs. More information is available online at www.iop.harvard.edu.

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