

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 3, 2009

Contact: Esten Perez
(617) 496-4009

HARVARD POLL FINDS 58% OF 18-29 YEAR-OLDS APPROVE OF PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB PERFORMANCE GENERALLY, BUT A MAJORITY DISAPPROVE OF HANDLING OF MAJOR ISSUES

Two-Thirds of Young Adults Oppose sending more U.S. Troops to Afghanistan

Cambridge, MA – A new national poll by Harvard's Institute of Politics (IOP), located at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, finds a majority (58%) of America's 18-29 year-olds approve of President Obama's job performance generally but disapprove of the President's handling of specific issues including the economy (52% disapprove), health care (52% disapprove) and Afghanistan (55% disapprove).

Regarding the President's recent call for 30,000 additional U.S. troops to serve in Afghanistan, in mid-November when the IOP's poll was conducted two-thirds (66% oppose, 31% support) of young adults said that they opposed such a buildup. In addition, nearly one in two young Americans (48%) say that the economy is the national issue that concerns them most, more than double the next highest issue, health care (21%). A detailed report on the poll's findings is available on the Institute's homepage at www.iop.harvard.edu.

"The Institute of Politics polling project is the preeminent source of public opinion for understanding young adults and tracking their views on politics and public service," said Bill Purcell, Director of Harvard's Institute of Politics. "This is a voting block now critical to the outcome of our elections and they know it."

"We've been tracking this generation since they came of age nearly ten years ago and have seen young people become a political force," said John Della Volpe, Director of Polling for Harvard's Institute of Politics. "Our government and our political parties need to continually challenge and inspire young adults, whose support should not and cannot be taken for granted."

The online survey of 2,087 18-29 year-old U.S. citizens with a margin of error of +/- 2.2 percentage points (95% confidence level) conducted with research partner Knowledge Networks for the IOP between November 4 and 16, 2009 finds –

- ***Majority of young adults approve of President Obama's job performance generally, but disapprove of the President's handling of major issues.*** Exit poll results from the 2008 presidential election indicate that Barack Obama won the 18-29 year-old segment of the electorate by a 34-point margin (66%-32%), more

than five times the difference of Obama's next best age group (30-44 year-olds: margin of 6 points). The IOP's fall poll indicates 18-29 year-olds are now in line with the general population: a majority of young adults approve of him generally but disapprove of his handling of major issues asked about in the poll.

When asked about President Obama's job performance, nearly six in ten (58% approve, 39% disapprove) young Americans say they approve – a similar level of approval (54%) found in national polls of the entire electorate conducted by other organizations during the same time period. Among the segment of the youth electorate who are attending a four-year college or university, the President's approval rating is slightly lower than the youth cohort as a whole – 57 percent approve and 42 percent disapprove of his job performance. However, a majority of 18-29 year-olds also disapprove of his handling of every major issue asked about: Afghanistan (55% disapprove, 41% approve), health care (52% disapprove, 44% approve), the economy (52% disapprove, 44% approve), Iran (53% disapprove, 42% approve), and the federal budget deficit (58% disapprove, 38% approve).

- ***Two-thirds of young adults oppose sending more troops into Afghanistan.*** Regarding the President's recent call for 30,000 additional U.S. troops to serve in Afghanistan, a strong majority of young adults said in mid-November they would oppose such a move. The IOP's Nov. 4-16 poll revealed two-thirds (66% oppose, 31% support) of 18-29 year-olds would oppose such a buildup.
- ***Economy is unquestionably the top national issue of concern for young people today.*** Almost half of 18-29-year olds today (48%) say economic issues are their top national concern, more than double the second highest issue (health care: 21%) and nearly five times the third highest (War: 10%). More young Americans believe that the government's efforts to improve the economy will hurt (30%) rather than help (26%) their financial situation, and a plurality, 41 percent, say these efforts will have no impact.
- ***Concerning health care reform, youth are more supportive of specific reform elements than reform in general.*** On the subject of reforming the American health care system, 18-29 year-olds seem more supportive of individual elements of reform (76% favor requiring insurance companies to sell coverage to people, even if they have pre-existing conditions; 57% favor a "public option") than they are of the concept in general (48% supportive of passing major reform, 30% supportive of more limited reform, and 22% think we should leave reform for another time).
- ***Majority of young adults who volunteered for Barack Obama in 2008 would do so again.*** Among the 19% of 18-29 year olds who told us that they volunteered on behalf of the Obama campaign in 2008, 55 percent reported that they would be very likely to engage in similar activities in 2012 – and 34 percent indicated that

they would be very likely to engage on other political issues between now and 2012 if asked.

Harvard students designed the poll in consultation with IOP Polling Director John Della Volpe, whose firm *SocialSphere, Inc.* commissioned Knowledge Networks to conduct the survey. Complete results and past surveys are available online at www.iop.harvard.edu.

The survey was conducted using the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®, 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, Knowledge Networks provides at no cost a laptop and ISP connection. 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 then are sent emails throughout each month inviting them to participate in research. More technical information is available at <http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp/reviewer-info.html>.

###

Harvard University's Institute of Politics (IOP), located at Harvard Kennedy School, 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 and to stimulate and nurture their interest in public service and leadership. 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/.

Knowledge Networks delivers quality and service to guide leaders in business, government, and academia – uniquely bringing scientifically valid research to the online space through its probability-based, online KnowledgePanel®. The company delivers unique study design, science, analysis, and panel maintenance, along with a commitment to close collaboration at every stage of the research process. Knowledge Networks leverages its expertise in brands, media, advertising, and public policy issues to provide insights that speak directly to clients' most important concerns. For more information about Knowledge Networks, visit www.knowledgenetworks.com.