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Rock the Vote Polling Data Reveals Young Voters Remain Engaged, While Battling Feelings of Cynicism

****Candidates and Issues Trump Party ID***

****59% are more cynical than they were two years ago***

****Jobs, economy, college costs & healthcare are top concerns***

WASHINGTON -- A Rock the Vote poll released today revealed young voters are paying attention to the upcoming November election (58%), and are closely attuned to pocketbook issues, including the economy, healthcare, and college affordability. Despite expressing deep concerns about the influence of corporate and special interests on the pace of change, they say they still plan to turn out for the midterms, with 77% overall and two-thirds of those who participated in 2008 saying they plan to vote.*

Of concern to both parties as they head into the midterms: A plurality of this age group (36%) says that it doesn't matter to them which party is in control of Congress. While the question of partisan control may be less important, addressing major issues like unemployment, the cost and quality of education, the national debt, sexual health and reducing our dependence on foreign oil is vital.

This voting bloc remains confident in its ability to affect change while, at the same time, it struggles to work past doubts about the political process. An overwhelming majority (83%) still says they believe their generation has the power to change our country, yet 59% say they feel more cynical about politics than they did two years ago.

In pursuit of that change, there is a strong desire among young people for current political leaders, including President Obama – who they voted for at 2-to-1 rates in 2008 – to deliver on the promise of change. Favorability ratings indicate that President Obama (56%) and the Democratic Party (46%) still receive the highest marks, with the Republican Party (36%) trailing behind. Sarah Palin (28%) and the Tea Party (26%) receive lower favorability ratings.

In terms of endorsements, President Obama is more of an asset to candidates looking to energize young voters than Sarah Palin and the Tea Party. Half of young people say they are more likely to support a candidate endorsed by President Obama, while only 26% say the same about Sarah Palin (64% less likely) or the Tea Party (54% less likely).



In addition, they were more likely to back a candidate for U.S. Congress who supports investing in new technology to create jobs, seeks to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, and will provide leadership on key social issues like immigration, marriage rights and sexual health education.

“Young people still embrace the primary message from the 2008 election -- believing that their generation has the ability to make change through voting,” says Rock the Vote President Heather Smith. “This generation relates to candidates more than political parties, and as a result, despite voting for Obama 2-1, they are less concerned with which party will win in 2010 and instead gravitate toward the candidate who speaks most clearly and directly to their interests and concerns.”

Rock the Vote commissioned the first midterm election poll of young adults with the bi-partisan polling team of The Tarrance Group and Anzalone Liszt Research.

Key findings from the survey include:

Party ID

- When asked party affiliation, young voters considered themselves Democrats (35%), Republicans (26%) and Independents (29%), which is down from an 18-point advantage Democrats held over Republicans in 2008.
- Young voters rate the Democratic Party more favorably (46% to 41% unfavorable) than the Republican Party (36% favorable versus 50% unfavorable), but the Democrats advantage is down from a net +40 favorability (65% to 25%) prior to the last midterms in 2006, while the Republicans favorability remains about the same as 2006.
- When asked whether they would prefer Democrats to keep control of Congress or for Republicans to take over, a plurality of 18 to 29 year olds say that they it doesn't matter to them (36% versus 34% preferring Democrats and 28% preferring Republicans).

Political Climate

- 49% feel the direction of the country is on the wrong track.
- 86% are concerned about the influence of corporations and special interests in our political system.
- 59% feel more cynical about politics than they did in 2008.
- 77% are concerned that the U.S. will suffer another major terrorist attack.

Issues

- 96% are concerned about the level of unemployment in this country.
- 93% are concerned about the national debt.
- 86% are concerned about America's dependence on foreign oil.



- 69% are concerned that the country is failing to take action on global warming or climate change.
- 74% believe teaching young people about safe sex and birth control would be a better way to reduce teen pregnancy, and 69% support making condoms available in high schools.
- 55% support the legalization of gay marriage.

Candidates

- 89% would be likely to support a candidate who supports increasing investment in renewable energy sources to help reduce our dependence on foreign oil.
- 57% would be likely to support a candidate who voted for the passage of healthcare legislation.
- 86% would be likely to support a candidate who wants to increase government grants to help make college and post-graduate education more affordable.
- 77% would back a candidate who supports expanding safe-sex education in schools.
- 70% would be likely to support a candidate who wants to pull all U.S. troops out of Afghanistan.
- 50% would back a candidate who supports providing illegal immigrants with a path to citizenship.

Pollsters from both parties interpreted the data to be an opportunity to connect with young people.

"This data makes clear that there is real value for Republican candidates to target voters under age 30," says conservative pollster Brian Nienaber, Vice President of The Tarrance Group. "These voters have an improving image of the Republican Party. In addition, the top concerns of these voters are the same pocketbook issues that are the focus of nearly every Republican candidate in the country. Thoughtful messaging and appropriate targeting could yield a significant level of support with these voters."

Says progressive pollster John Anzalone, "In past election cycles we've heard about soccer moms and NASCAR dads, but in this cycle Democrats would be wise to target young people. Since moderates and independents are leaning Republican going into the November midterms, Democrats should appeal once again to the young people ages 18 to 29, who have not given up on them since the 2008 election. For all the criticisms that they don't vote, this does show they are willing to engage when we go out and get them. Candidates who neglect young people are taking a major risk, as they will be the swing group for either party in 2010."

This year, Rock the Vote is running our most aggressive midterm election campaign in history with the goal of registering 200,000 young people, which will quadruple our 2006 registration levels by focusing primarily on newly-eligible voters and those who have moved since the 2008 election. Through our online voter registration tool, mobile marketing, on-



the-ground registration at festivals and college campuses, an online voter information center and voter guides, and get-out-the-vote events, we are reaching out, building on the energy and activism of young adults, and empowering them to make their voices heard.

The full *Rock the Vote 2010 Young Voter Poll* and analyses from The Tarrance Group and Anzalone Liszt Research are available at www.rockthevote.com.

The survey was designed by both Anzalone Liszt Research and The Tarrance Group and administered by Anzalone Liszt Research using professional interviewers. The survey reached 1,000 young adults (18-29) nationwide. The base sample of 1,000 interviews nationwide included 200 respondents reached on cell phones, 500 respondents reached on landlines, and 300 who completed the survey online. The survey was conducted August 24-30, 2010. Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn using random digit dial (RDD). The data were weighted slightly by region, race, party identification, and phone usage in order to ensure that it more accurately reflects the population. The margin of error for the survey is around +/- 3.7 percentage points, based off of the 800 telephone interviews.

*NOTE: Exit polling data indicates that in 2006, the voter turnout rate among 18-to-29-year-olds increased 3 percentage points more than 2002 levels, going from 22 percent to 25 percent, and breaking a trend in declining electoral participation among young people since 1982. An estimated 10.8 million young people voted, an increase of almost 2 million voters. (Data from CIRCLE.)

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About Rock the Vote
www.rockthevote.com

Rock the Vote engages young people in our democracy and builds their political power by registering, educating and turning them out to vote, by forcing the candidates to campaign to them, and by making politicians pay attention to youth and the issues they care about once in office. For 20 years, we have used music, popular culture, new technologies and old-fashioned grassroots organizing to engage and mobilize young people to participate in every election. By providing them with the information and tools they need since 1990, Rock the Vote has registered more than 5 million young people, including more than 2.5 million in the historic 2008 election. In 2010, Rock the Vote seeks to register 200,000 young voters as part of the largest midterm elections outreach strategy in our organization's history.