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More Than 5.8 Million Latinos Planning to Vote in Presidential Election

July 27, 2000 - This year's U.S. Presidential candidates have been putting more effort into reaching the nation's estimated 31.3 million Latinos, and a new survey indicates their attention is well warranted. A June-July poll conducted by a group of public broadcasters indicates that U.S. Hispanics believe strongly that they have a stake in this year's presidential election - and that more than 5.8 million Latinos are preparing to vote.

The Public Broadcasting Latino Poll 2000, a partnership between six public television and radio organizations, polled 1,000 Latinos in the heavily Hispanic states of Texas, New York, Illinois, California and Florida. The results indicated that 49.9 percent of Hispanics are registered to vote this fall, and another 14.9 percent are likely to register. What's more, of those Hispanics registered or likely to register, 59.2 percent said they were "very likely" to vote.

A separate survey of 200 Latinos in Massachusetts was also conducted and those results closely mirrored those of the other five states.

"This poll sends a strong message to candidates, to the political parties and to Latino leaders that U.S. Hispanics feel connected to the political process," says Dr. Edward Rincon, president of Rincon & Associates, a market research firm specializing in ethnic consumers, which conducted the poll. "It's clear that these respondents not only believe that their vote will matter, but that they're ready to exercise their right to vote."

The Public Broadcasting Latino Poll 2000 is specially telling in that it sought the views of broad cross-section of the Latino population. "Most of the polls that have been done specifically exclude Latinos who are not registered to vote," says Rincon. "We understand that the nation's burgeoning Latino population is due lately to immigration, and believe that those immigrants may eventually be active in the political process."

Among the poll's findings: that while Latinos' candidate of choice varied from state to state, and Latinos polled identified with a broad range of political affiliations, there was a striking congruency on selected issues. For example, 87.4 percent favored stronger gun control laws; 94.3 percent favored health insurance for those who cannot afford it: 90.7

percent favored bilingual education; and 92 percent favored stronger penalties for companies polluting the environment.

Other findings:

Respondents identified the top five problems facing Latinos as racism and discrimination; education; jobs and employment; immigration; and English-language barriers.

Those polled were positive about the direction of the U.S. economy and believed their own financial conditions had improved over the past four years.

Latinos are sensitive to the strategies used by candidates to court Hispanics. They believe the most effective strategies include those focusing on legislation that would help Hispanics, and helping serve family values.

Among the candidates, Vice President Al Gore enjoyed a strong margin of support from Latinos polled. When asked their candidate choice if the presidential election were held today, 53.8 percent of registered voters favored Gore and 33.3 percent favored Texas Gov. George Bush, with .8 percent favoring candidate Pat Buchanan and .5 percent favoring Ralph Nader.

"This poll provides a news media with a snapshot of Latino opinion, backed up by hard facts, to provide context to the election season dialogue," says Yolette Garcia, news director at KERA 90.1-Dallas/Fort Worth. "The poll will also offer Hispanic voters a solid basis for comparing their views with those of other Latinos."

The Public Broadcasting Latino Poll 2000 was based on 1,000 completed interviews with a margin of error of plus- or minus-3 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval.



[Return to Frontpage](#)