



The Texas Lyceum

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 26, 2008

Contact: Margaret Justus
281-250-8253

Texas Lyceum Poll: Day Two
The Economy Replaces War in Iraq as most important issue
Results detect growing sour mood about the political environment
McCain leads Obama; Cornyn, Noriega in tighter race, large undecided

(AUSTIN) The Texas Lyceum, the statewide, non-profit leadership group, released a second set of results from its second annual public opinion poll taken June 12-20, 2008. When asked to name the most important issue facing the nation today, 33% of respondents said the economy while 20% said the rising price of gas and energy.

“The economy has clearly become the most important issue to Texans, whether it is \$4-plus dollars a gallon at the pump, the home mortgage crisis or perhaps the general uncertainty about the future,” said Daron Shaw, Lyceum pollster and Professor at the University of Texas.

“When we asked this same question of Texans last year, the top issue was the war in Iraq followed by immigration,” Shaw continued. “The economy was a top concern to only 4% of respondents, yet this year, the Iraq war was a top priority for only 14% of those polled. That is a fairly dramatic change in a year.”

Shaw said the survey of 1,000 Texans, selected randomly and interviewed via telephone, demonstrates that Texans continue to be uneasy about the direction of the country with 78% saying the country is worse off than it was a year ago. This is also a change from last year's survey when 35% of respondents said the country was worse off and 43% said things were about the same.

“Conducting an annual poll provides a unique perspective of public opinion from year to year to year,” Shaw said. “Another great example is the

question of whether the country is on the right track or the wrong track. In 2007, 62% of those polled felt the country was on the wrong track, and this year, 70% expressed that sentiment.”

When asked about their own personal economic situation, 42% said they're in about the same shape as they were a year ago, 35% said their situation is worse now, and 22% said their economic condition has improved over the last 12 months. They were more optimistic when asked whether they think their children will do better or worse economically: 39% said better off, 30% said worse off, and 21% think their children will do about the same as they have done.

The poll also tested how Texans feel about the upcoming November political contests. Among likely voters, 43% said they would support Arizona Senator John McCain for President if the election were held today and 38% would support Illinois Senator Barack Obama. One in six (17%) remain undecided.

Incumbent U.S. Senator John Cornyn leads Democratic challenger Rick Noriega by a slim margin of 38% to 36%, but 24% have not decided yet which candidate they will support.

“About an equal percentage of Republicans and Democrats qualified as ‘likely voters’. This outcome that suggests unusually high enthusiasm among Democrats, as, “Republicans typically have a party identification edge over the Democrats on Election Day,” according to Shaw. “The Democrats need to maintain this greater intensity to be competitive in 2008.”

“As we’ve seen throughout the 2008 campaign cycle, political polls are taking snapshots of a rapidly shifting electorate in an unstable economic and political environment,” said Professor Jim Henson, Director of the Texas Politics Project at the University of Texas, who assisted in the survey.

“The variation in these snapshots has been and will continue to be manifest in this unique election year,” Henson continued. “I’m confident the Texas Lyceum Poll gives us a statistically reliable snapshot of Texas public opinion at one moment in time, and that what we see here is an unpredictable, worried electorate. But one of the many recurring lessons of this political cycle should be to watch the trends, and to note that the only single poll that counts is the one administered in voting booths on Election Day.”

“We commissioned the annual Texas Lyceum Poll to get a better understanding of the issues that are most important to Texans,” said 2008 Lyceum President John Boettiger. “By measuring these opinions over time, we are providing a valuable tool that can help us all make more informed decisions on policy as we confront the important issues facing Texas.”

Lyceum leaders will rollout one last set of results tomorrow, which address how Texans feel about important issues facing the state and their view of the potential 2010 statewide political match-ups.

The objective of the Texas Lyceum Poll is straightforward – the poll is a non-partisan, high quality, scientific survey designed to provide specific data points on issues of interest, as well as a time series of key demographics, attitudes, and opinions.

About The Texas Lyceum

The Texas Lyceum, a non-profit, non-partisan group, is the premier statewide leadership organization. The Lyceum consists of 96 men and women from throughout the state, who begin their six-year term while under the age of 46, and have demonstrated leadership in their community and profession, together with a deep commitment to Texas.

In 2008, the Lyceum will conduct the second annual Texas Lyceum Poll, an independent survey of Texans’ attitudes about issues facing the state and the nation, and in October, the organization will hold its 23rd annual public conference in Houston on the topic of Transportation Infrastructure in Texas. The conference is open to the media.

The Lyceum has an impressive list of former members who are serving or have served in the public office including: President George W. Bush, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, Governor Rick Perry, former Texas Comptroller John Sharp, Texas State Senators Rodney Ellis and Kirk Watson, Houston Mayor Bill White, and Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings.

The Texas Lyceum acts as a catalyst to bring together diverse opinions and expertise to focus on national and state issues, and seeks to emphasize constructive private sector, public sector, and individual responses to the issues.

To accomplish these purposes, the Lyceum conducts periodic public forums, publishes the Lyceum Journal, produces The Texas Lyceum Poll, and convenes programs for the Directors to explore and discuss key economic and social issues of the state and nation. For more information visit: www.texaslyceum.org.

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