



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 30, 2015

Contact: Margaret Justus

281-250-8253

2015 Texas Lyceum Poll – Day One

Annual Independent Poll Reveals Texans Remain Concerned about Immigration, Maintain an Intense Love of Football, and Support Decriminalization of Marijuana

The 2015 Texas Lyceum Poll Finds:

- **Immigration** remains the most important issue facing the state and Texans support lawmakers' increased spending on **border security**.
- Texans' views on **gay marriage** are changing. Forty nine percent of Texans support gay marriage - up from 29 percent in 2009.
- Experience with **race-based discrimination** shifts greatly depending on the racial or ethnic background of the person polled.
- **Football** rules in Texas. Despite national poll numbers revealing 40 percent of Americans would discourage their children from playing youth football, 72 percent of Texans would encourage children to play football.
- A growing number of Texans, 46 percent, support **legalizing the use of marijuana** (up by 13 percent since 2011) and among those who oppose legalization, 57 percent **support decriminalization**.
- Texans are not overly concerned about **climate change**, but a majority (67 percent) would support new regulations on private companies.

AUSTIN — An independent statewide poll conducted earlier this month (Sept. 8-21) by the Texas Lyceum, the state's premier non-partisan, nonprofit statewide leadership group, suggests that Texans believe immigration is the state's number one issue, continue to love their football, have moderated their opinion on the legalization of marijuana and gay marriage over the years, and support some regulation to reduce global warming.

"As the Texas Lyceum celebrates its 35th anniversary, we are proud to conduct this public service offering the media, policymakers, scholars and the general public an annual snapshot of Texans' views on key issues," said 2015 Texas Lyceum President Jane Cummins. "This year the Texas Lyceum held meetings focused on the Texas economy and the war on drugs, among other topics, and next year we will address the big business of football in Texas, showing our programs are on point with what Texans are talking about."

Border Security / Immigration

Border security and/or immigration has remained one of the top three issues for Texans since the inception of the [Lyceum Poll](#). This year the Lyceum Poll gauged Texans' thoughts on two related policies - one state and the other federal. At the state level, a majority of Texans (62 percent) favor state lawmakers' approval to spend \$800 million on border security operations over the next two years.

Turning to federal policy, 65 percent of Texans approve of the federal government's decision to halt deportations of undocumented immigrant youth who attend college or serve in the military while providing them with a work permit. Only 20 percent queried believe this policy did "a lot" to encourage illegal immigration.

Gay Marriage

Following the U.S. Supreme Court decision over the summer that legalized marriage for gay and lesbian couples in all 50 states, more Texans favor allowing same sex marriage than say they oppose it. Our survey shows 49 percent of Texans favor gay marriage, up from 33 percent when asked a similar question in [2011](#). However, 40 percent are opposed to allowing gay and lesbian couples the right to marry legally.

Racial Discrimination

In light of recent national and Texas race-related controversies, the Lyceum Poll asked respondents two related questions: First, was there ever "*a specific instance in which you felt discriminated against by the police because of your racial or ethnic background?*" Second, was there ever, "*a specific instance in which you felt discriminated against by an employer or a potential employer because of your racial or ethnic background?*" Reviewing the total sample with regard to police discrimination, only 17 percent of Texans believed they were discriminated against by police because of their racial or ethnic background. However, on closer inspection, these numbers shift significantly according to the race or ethnicity of the respondent. Four percent of whites, 24 percent of Hispanics and 45 percent of black respondents said they had felt discriminated against by the police. This pattern held with regard to Texans' attitudes about employer discrimination as well. Only 11 percent of whites indicated they had been discriminated against by an employer, while 27 percent of Hispanics and 42 percent of black Texans felt they had experienced a form of workplace discrimination.

Football Reigns

Despite growing national concern that children who suffer repeated head injuries from tackle football can sustain long-term brain damage, Texans would not discourage their children from playing the contact sport. In fact, 72 percent of those polled said they would *encourage* children to play football while only 21 percent would discourage it. These numbers contrast with a national [NBC/Wall Street Journal poll](#) taken last year showing that 40 percent of Americans would steer their children away from playing football due to concerns over concussions.

Legalizing / Decriminalizing Marijuana

As more states either decriminalize or legalize marijuana - with Texas lawmakers passing limited medical marijuana use this past legislative session - a majority of Texans don't support legalization outright. The survey shows 50 percent of Texans are opposed to legalization, while 46 percent of Texas adults said that they would support legalizing the use of marijuana. However, the numbers are breaking in favor of legalization as support has gone up by 13 points when compared with a question asked in the [2011 Lyceum Poll](#). Meanwhile, among those who oppose legalization, 57 percent said they would support decriminalization. Specifically, this group agrees on "reducing the maximum punishment for possessing small amounts of marijuana to a citation and a fine."

Climate Change

Global warming is not a top concern for Texans. When asked if they personally worry about climate change, 50 percent say “only a little” or “not at all.” But when asked “would you support or oppose Congress passing new legislation that would regulate energy output from private companies in an attempt to reduce global warming,” 67 percent of Texans said they would support such regulation.

Daron Shaw, Ph.D., Professor at The University of Texas at Austin and a Texas Lyceum alumnus, oversaw the poll, which was conducted September 8-21, 2015, and queried 1,000 adult Texans. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points. Dr. Shaw and Texas Lyceum Research Director Joshua Blank, used the latest statistically-advisable polling techniques: live interviewers contacted respondents both by landline as well as cell phones (40 percent) and administered the survey in the respondent’s language of choice (English or Spanish).

“Throughout its history, the Texas Lyceum Poll has demonstrated that the demographic and cultural diversity of Texas produces a wide range of attitudes and opinions on economics, society, and politics,” said Shaw. “We continue to be disabused of the notion that Texans are all one thing or the other; there certainly is a conservative reservoir of opinion, but that plays out in complex ways depending upon the particular issue.”

“The Texas Lyceum is a pipeline for Texas leaders, and an important part of our mission is to provide current and future leaders with data to drive substantive, informed debate and discussion,” said Jenifer Sarver, Vice President of Media & Poll for the Texas Lyceum. “As the premier non-partisan statewide leadership organization, we have provided a transparent, independent survey for nine years running, and we look forward to the conversations this poll will spark.”

The poll covered a number of additional topics from the economy to the Affordable Care Act. Please view the summary of the poll and additional information on our [website](#), where we have provided all results for the past nine years.

About The Texas Lyceum

The Texas Lyceum, a non-profit, non-partisan group, is the premier statewide leadership organization focused on identifying the next generation of top Texas leaders. 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. For more information, please visit www.texaslyceum.org. Texas Lyceum is on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/texaslyceum> and on Twitter @TexasLyceum <http://twitter.com/texaslyceum>