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Drum Major Institute Poll: Candidates' Prior Voting Records On Middle-Class Policies May Play Pivotal Role In 2008 Election.

**MIDDLE-CLASS "FEARFUL FAMILIES" ARE LARGELY UNITED ON WHICH
PUBLIC POLICIES THEY WANT ENACTED BY THE PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS,
BUT REMAIN SHOCKINGLY UNFAMILIAR WITH WHAT IS GOING ON IN WASHINGTON.**

*Is Middle Class' Ignorance Bliss For Candidates Who Would Struggle
To Garner Middle Class Support If Their Voting Records Were Widely Known?*

New York, New York – August 19, 2008: Today, the Drum Major Institute for Public Policy (“DMI”) released a groundbreaking nationwide poll (“DMI Poll”) that examines the relationship between America’s middle class, the policies they support, and the voting records of their federal representatives. The DMI Poll, among other things, reveals two important new findings: (1) there is strong consensus amongst middle-class Americans – which DMI refers to as the nation’s “Fearful Families” because of their concern about the direction of the country, especially the economy – on what policies are needed to improve their lives, and (2) that the middle class knows very little about how their own representatives voted on key issues, and the same appears to apply to the presidential candidates. Jeffrey Pollock, President of Global Strategy Group who conducted the poll, summarized the poll’s key findings as such: “Middle-class households feel the crunch of tough economic times – they are pessimistic in their national outlook and troubled by the economy and gas prices. They don’t know what their leaders in Washington are up to on their behalf, but they have definite opinions about what they would like them to be doing.”

The DMI Poll captures data that appears to throw two of politics’ conventional wisdoms out the window. First, the DMI Poll indicates a fairly strong consensus exists among middle-class Americans when it comes to policies that would improve the quality of their lives. This runs contrary to the belief that their views reflect a strong red-blue policy divide. The second conventional wisdom that has been placed in doubt, at least with respect to the middle class, is that Americans typically have a negative view of Congress but a positive view of their own Congressional representative. Not surprisingly, the DMI Poll found that 77% of adults who identified themselves as middle class disapproved of the job Congress was doing in representing their interests. What was surprising, however, is that nearly half (46%) of those polled held a negative view of their own Congressional representative. This suggests middle-class Americans are becoming less willing to hold their own representatives blameless when it comes to Congress’ failure to pass more pro-middle class legislation.

The fact that Congressional voting records on middle-class issues are hard to come by (although sites like www.themiddleclass.org have emerged to bridge that gap) appears to be a blessing for many candidates in the 2008 election; perhaps none more so than the presumptive Republican presidential nominee John McCain. For example, 60% of those who say they are likely to vote for John McCain for president favor legislation making it easier for employees to join unions even though Senator McCain voted for the filibuster that killed precisely that piece of legislation. This reflects a similar disconnect on the Congressional level where 68% of middle-class adults nationwide would have liked their representative to vote in favor of the Employee Free Choice Act but only 40% were aware of how their representative actually voted. This raises a significant question not answered by the DMI Poll: what would be the impact on the 2008 election if journalists and candidates focused more heavily on issues of public policy and on holding elected officials accountable for their past – especially recent past – voting records?

According to DMI Executive Director Andrea Batista Schlesinger, “The DMI Poll indicates that the fate of the 2008 election may very well hinge on whether middle-class voters become informed enough to look beyond pro-middle class campaign rhetoric and judge candidates based on their actions when they mattered most; namely, when it was time to vote on actual legislation. With two Senators running for president – along with one-third of the Senate and the entire House of Representatives up for election – the stakes of misinformation or

ignorance are high.”

The full report on the DMI Poll, entitled “The Drum Major Institute for Public Policy’s First Annual Survey on the Middle Class and Public Policy Finds Broad Policy Agreement Among ‘Fearful Families’” is available online at www.drummajorinstitute.org/2008middleclasspoll.

A brief summary of the report’s findings is below.

Middle-Class Households Are Fearful Families

DMI’s first annual survey on the Middle Class and Public Policy reveals that America’s middle-class households are Fearful Families – overwhelmingly pessimistic about the direction of the country, especially the economy and high gas prices. Most have little flexibility in their own economic situations, have little if anything left over each month after meeting basic expenses, and see little coming out of Washington that would give them cause for optimism.

Middle-class Americans *do* know what policies they would like to see enacted. Despite media depictions of a sharp red and blue divide, the nation’s middle class displays broad consensus on a range of public policies aimed at easing their economic squeeze.

The Middle Class Says The Country Is Headed In The Wrong Direction

Middle-class households are pessimistic about the direction that the country is headed – only 12% say things are headed in the right direction, while an overwhelming majority of middle-class households (77%) say things are off on the wrong track.

The Middle Class Disapproves of Congressional Job Performance

While both Democratic and Republican middle-class Americans disapprove of the job Congress is doing representing their interests, in a stunning break from the conventional wisdom of politics, these individuals have only slightly better impressions of the job their own representative is doing. Middle-class adults give their member of Congress majority negative ratings for the job they are doing on every issue tested, including economic development, the home mortgage crisis, and gas and energy prices.

The Middle Class Is Unfamiliar With Congressional Votes, Despite Strong Opinions On Issues

Middle-class households know relatively little about what their Congressional representatives are doing in Washington. 72% cannot name a single piece of legislation passed by Congress over the last two years that benefited their family. However, when questioned about three specific pieces of legislation that came before Congress in the past year, most middle-class adults have a clear sense of how they would have wanted their representative to vote. For example, while 68% of respondents would have wanted their congressional representative to vote to tax hedge fund managers at the same rate as others in their income bracket, only 31% knew how their member actually voted.

This disconnect reveals itself in the Presidential campaign, in which supporters of Senator John McCain disagree with him on several policies critical to the middle class:

- 60% of those who say they are likely to vote for John McCain for president favor legislation making it easier for employees to join unions even though Senator McCain voted for the filibuster that killed this bill. 60% of middle-class Republicans, and an even higher proportion of middle-class Democrats and independents, support the legislation.
- 66% of middle-class Republicans and 67% of McCain supporters would like to see hedge fund managers get taxed at the same rate as others in their income bracket, even though McCain personally opposes it. Support for this measure was even stronger among middle-class Democrats, independents, and Obama supporters.
- 62% of middle-class Republicans and 60% of McCain supporters would like to see federally-funded health insurance expanded to cover more children from low- and middle-income families, even though McCain has

publicly praised President Bush's October 2007 veto of that legislation. The measure also has overwhelming support from middle-class Democrats (90%), independents (77%) and Obama supporters (92%).

Despite these strong opinions, most middle-class households did not know how their own elected officials or the presidential candidates voted on these measures. Consequently, they are at risk of supporting candidates in the 2008 election who voted against legislation they deemed vital to their well-being.

National Health Insurance Tops List Of Most Desired Policies Of The Middle Class

Three-quarters (75% excellent/good idea) of middle-class adults think a national health insurance plan is a good idea for the country, including 41% who think it is an excellent idea.

Requiring employers to provide paid family and medical leave was also a highly popular proposal (71% excellent/good idea) and was strongly favored by supporters of both Barack Obama (81%) and John McCain (63%).

A proposal to allow individuals who entered the U.S. illegally as children to apply for legal residency if they go to college or serve in the military and do not have a criminal record was supported by 61% of middle-class adults, including a majority of supporters of both presumptive presidential candidates.

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