

The 13th Biannual Youth Survey on Politics and Public Service
by Harvard University's Institute of Politics



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Introduction

With about a month before the first votes are cast in Iowa and New Hampshire for the 2008 race for the White House, candidates for President would be wise to reach out to the youngest members of the electorate and ask for both their vote and their help.

The thirteenth edition of the Harvard University Institute of Politics' Survey on Politics and Public Service highlights in detail that America's 18 to 24 year olds are following politics, considering important issues and ready to engage in campaign 2008 in significant ways.

The level of political and community engagement that we have identified and quantified over the last several years stands in contrast to our first IOP survey released in the spring of 2000. At that time, we were in a cycle of record low turnout among college-aged youth and we found a major disconnect between young Americans and the political process.

From 9/11, to Iraq, to Katrina, to threats of global warming and concern for our health care system, much has changed over the course of thirteen surveys, including the level of engagement of young Americans in politics. Since our first survey in 2000, we have witnessed:

- voter turnout among 18 to 24 year-olds in the United States grow approximately 31 percent -- from 36 percent in the 2000

presidential election to 47 percent in the 2004 election;¹

- young voters propel Jim Webb (VA) and Jon Tester (MT) to the U.S. Senate in 2006 giving Democrats control of both houses of Congress for the first time in 12 years;²
- hundreds, if not thousands, of organic social groups of young Americans flourish online and offline in support of favored candidates or pressing policy issues.

The interviewing period for this survey of n=2,526 18 to 24 year-olds was October 28 to November 9, 2007. For most of the time the survey was in the field, the major news from Washington, D.C. centered around the confirmation hearings of Attorney General Mukasey. Other political news of note during this time period includes the emergence of Mike Huckabee's campaign in Iowa and Ron Paul's record breaking fundraising success.

The IOP poll was conducted online by our research partner Harris Interactive. IOP Polling Director John Della Volpe supervised the survey group. Matthew Valji ('08) and Marina Fisher ('09) co-chaired the student working group.

As always, the IOP survey group would like to thank IOP Director, James A. Leach and Executive Director Catherine McLaughlin for their insights and support over the course of this and all IOP projects.

¹ CIRCLE: The Youth Vote 2004; Author's Tabulations from the CPS Nov. Voting and Registration Supplements

² JFK School Prof. David C. King's Analysis of Election 2006; Webb won by 9,329 votes which can be accounted for by increased turnout and registration in University of Virginia, Charlottesville community and Naval Base, Norfolk community alone; Tester topped Burns by 3,562 votes which can be accounted for by a surge in registration and turnout around the University of Montana campus in Missoula.

Demographic and Political Profile

For this survey we completed n=1,289 online interviews with current undergraduates and n=1,237 online interviews with 18 to 24 year-olds who are not currently enrolled in a four-year college and then weighted these segments and target populations so that the final results and totals are representative of the overall 18 to 24 year-old population sampled.

Demographic profile:

- 51 percent male, 49 percent female;
- 42 percent between 18 and 20 years olds, 58 percent between 21 and 24 years old;
- 62 percent White, 17 percent Hispanic, 13 percent Black/ African-American;
- 23 percent are Catholic, 16 percent Protestant, 9 percent Fundamental/ Evangelical, 2 percent Jewish, 2 percent Mormon, one percent Muslim, 23 percent no religious preference;
- 39 percent say that religion is a very important part of their life;
- 10 percent are married, 8 percent are a parent or legal guardian; and
- 4 percent are a member of the Armed Services or National Guard;
- 12 percent are members of a labor union, 8 percent a public employee union;
- 89 percent own a cell phone, 45 percent have a landline and 3 percent have VOIP telephone service.

Current educational status:

- 12 percent of the sample are in high school, 3 percent in trade/ vocational school, 8 percent in a 2-year junior or community college, 27 percent are currently enrolled in a four-year college or university, 7 percent are enrolled in graduate school, business school or professional school, and 42 percent are not enrolled in any school;
- 72 percent of college students attend a public institution, 28 percent at private one;
- 33 percent of those in college live at home with parents, 29 percent in a college dormitory, 28 percent in an apartment.

Political and ideological profile:

- 69 percent say they are registered to vote (77% of college students);
- 45 percent of college students have seen voter registration materials around their school;
- 41 percent say they will definitely vote in a 2008 primary or caucus and 61 percent say they will vote in the 2008 general election;
- 35 percent consider themselves to be politically engaged or active;
- 35 percent consider themselves Democrats, 25 percent Republicans and 40 percent are Independent;
- 32 percent are liberal, 14 percent lean liberal, 21 percent are moderate, 21 percent are conservative and 12 percent lean conservative.

Interest, Engagement and Preference for 2008 Primaries

Interest and Engagement Taking Hold

Our snapshot, taken less than two months before the first votes of the 2008 presidential campaign are cast, shows that 18 to 24 year olds are once again poised to make a significant impact in both the primary and general election campaigns.

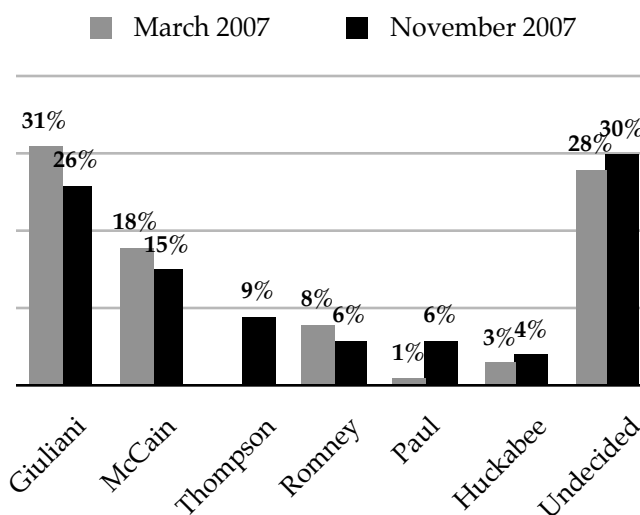
Forty-one percent (41%) of young adults surveyed indicate that they would “definitely be voting” in a primary or caucus and 61 percent said they would “definitely be voting” in the general election for President. This high level of interest at this stage in the campaign is noteworthy: according to U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey, 46.7 percent of 18 to 24 year olds voted in the general election in 2004.

Other indicators of an informed and engaged electorate are that 60 percent of all 18 to 24 year olds say that they are following national political news at least somewhat closely with a little more than half that number (35%) considering themselves to be politically engaged or active.

“Undecided” Looming in GOP Primary

While Rudy Giuliani maintains a sizable advantage over John McCain and Mitt Romney among 18-24 year old Republican voters, all three of the candidates have lost ground to “Undecided” in the seven months since the last IOP poll was taken. The candidate with the most growth is Ron Paul. Though still solidly in the second or third tier, Paul has increased his vote total from one percent (1%) to six percent (6%) which puts him in a tie with Mitt Romney.

REPUBLICAN PRIMARY HORSE RACE
IOP YOUTH POLL³



Compared to national polling of U.S. registered voters⁴ conducted in the same timeframe as the IOP youth survey, Giuliani is underperforming among 18 to 24 year olds by 2 percentage points, McCain by 1, Romney by 5, Huckabee by 6, and Thompson by 10.

Asked how satisfied they are with the current choices within the Republican field, more than one-in-three (36%) of the young Republicans say that they are dissatisfied with the current crop of candidates. In comparison, only 18 percent of the young Democrats are dissatisfied with the current slate.

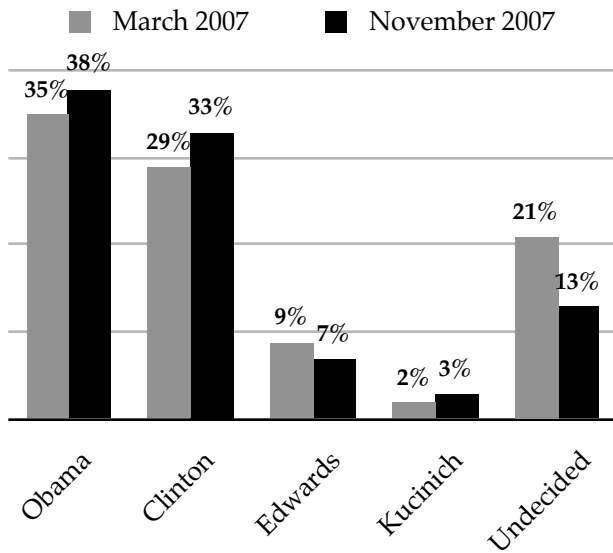
³ Candidates at 2% or less not shown.

⁴ CNN, 397 RV, 11/2 - 4/07

Obama Maintains Narrow Lead Over Clinton

Unlike the Republicans, who are less content overall with their choices for President at this point, the percentage of young Democrats who claim to be undecided has decreased by eight percentage points since the Spring survey with Clinton gaining 4, Obama 3, and Kucinich 1.

DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY HORSE RACE
IOP YOUTH POLL⁵



Also in stark contrast to the GOP race, young Democrats have a very different view of the candidates when compared with registered voters⁶ as a whole. At about the time the IOP poll was taken, Hillary Clinton maintained a very solid 19-point lead over Barack Obama (44%-25%) in national polling of all registered voters, while among only young Democrats aged 18 to 24, Obama led by 5 -- a 30 percentage point swing.

⁵ Candidates at 1% or less not shown.

⁶ CNN, 467 RV, 11/2 - 4/07

Interestingly, the race for the Democratic nomination can look quite different based on which subgroup of voters are sampled. For example:

- Obama leads Clinton, 44%-23%, on college campuses, but Clinton leads Obama, 38%-31% among those who never attended college;
- Obama leads Clinton, 37%-28%, among Whites, 62%-25% among African Americans, but trails 54%-20% among Hispanics;
- Obama leads Clinton, 40%-28%, among men; Clinton leads Obama by only one, 37%-36% among women;
- Obama leads Clinton, 51%-26% in the Midwest and 42%-29% in the East, but Obama trails Clinton by 9 in the South and by 6 in the West.

Perhaps most importantly to any consumer of public opinion data on the Millennial Generation, the Democratic nomination looks significantly different based on the kind of sampling that is employed (Random Digit Dialing via landline or web-based). By a statistically significant margin, Hillary Clinton does better among young voters with landline telephone access (leads by 5) than she does with voters who do not have landlines (trails by 13) and maintain only cell or VOIP service (a significant and growing segment of the electorate).

DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY HORSE RACE
LANDLINE ACCESS VS. CELL/VOIP ONLY

	HAVE ACCESS TO A LANDLINE	DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO LANDLINE
BARACK OBAMA	35%	41%
HILLARY CLINTON	40%	28%
JOHN EDWARDS	5%	13%
UNDECIDED	14%	12%

There is no such bias at this time within the Republican primary electorate.

Both Democrats and Republicans Seek Greater Engagement

All committed voters were asked how likely they would be to volunteer on behalf of the campaign that they currently support if given the opportunity -- and 35 percent indicated that they would. Eleven percent (11%) said that they would be very likely to volunteer and 24 percent indicated that they would be somewhat likely to volunteer. Overall, younger people (46% of 18-19 vs. 30% of 22-24 year olds) are more likely to volunteer than older members of this cohort, and those who come from families with above average household income (44%) are more likely to volunteer than those with below average household incomes (28%).

On the Democratic side, Obama (35%) and Clinton voters (35%) are more likely to volunteer than Edwards voters (26%). Among Republicans, Mitt Romney's relatively small group of supporters (6% overall) are most committed, as 53 percent say that they would volunteer for him if asked by the campaign. Forty-four percent (44%) of McCain voters

would volunteer and about one-in-four (27%) of Giuliani voters would do the same.

Registered Democrats outpaced Republicans on most engagement measures.

LIKELIHOOD OF ENGAGING IN ACTIVITIES
COMMITTED DEMOCRATS VS.
COMMITTED REPUBLICANS

	DEMOCRATS WHO SAY "LIKELY"	REPUBLICANS WHO SAY "LIKELY"
SPREAD THE MESSAGE	63%	54%
JOIN AN ON-LINE GROUP	62%	51%
DISPLAY A STICKER/SIGN	50%	46%
ATTEND A RALLY/ EVENT	51%	44%
WEAR A BRACELET	53%	37%
DONATE MONEY	20%	18%
DOWNLOAD A RINGTONE	13%	14%
DONATE VIA CELL PHONE	12%	10%
START CAMPUS GROUP	8%	8%

Political Party Affiliation and Affinity

Major Third Party Bid Could Take Hold

With about one-in-three (31%) young Americans surveyed agreeing that the Democratic and Republican parties are doing an adequate job representing the American people -- the potential for a major third party bid exists. In comparison, Gallup released a poll (we used the same wording for comparison) in September that indicated that 39 percent of American adults believed the two major parties are doing an adequate job.

In the IOP survey, 37 percent of young Americans agree that "a third party is needed," the remaining 33 percent are not sure.

Opinion at this time indicates that the more successful third party bid could come from the left.

IS MAJOR THIRD PARTY NEEDED?
BY IDEOLOGY

	LIB-ERAL	MOD-ERATE	CON-SERVA-TIVE
D'S & R'S DO AN ADEQUATE JOB OF REPRESENTING THE AMERICAN PEOPLE	31%	22%	35%
D'S & R'S DO SUCH A POOR JOB THAT A THIRD MAJOR PARTY IS NEEDED	44%	29%	32%

A plurality (41%) of registered Democrats agree that a major third party candidate (29% say the two parties are doing an adequate job) is needed compared to 32 percent of registered Republicans (47% are satisfied with the two parties).

Not surprisingly, the supporters for the two Democratic front runners are much less interested in a third-party bid compared to the candidates in the second tier of our poll -- 31 percent of Clinton voters and 38 percent of Obama voters believe that a major third party candidate is needed, but 53 percent of Edwards voters, and solid majorities of Kucinich and Richardson voters believe that a third-party is needed.

On the Republican side, 70 percent of Ron Paul supporters and 64 percent of Fred Thompson supporters would be interested in a third-party candidate.

State of the Two Parties

While it has been well documented that independent, or unaffiliated voters represent a plurality (40%) of this segment of the electorate -- less has been reported on the state of the Democratic and Republican parties. Thirty-five percent (35%) of 18 to 24 year olds consider themselves to be Democrats and 25 percent consider themselves to be Republicans.

About the same number in each party consider themselves to be "strong" members of their party: 43 percent of Democrats are "strong Democrats" and 45 percent of Republicans are "strong Republicans."

When asked how likely they are to remain committed to their party, 7 in 10 (70%) responded that they plan to remain affiliated with their party in the future (71% of Democrats and 75% of Republicans). Among the Democrats, 79 percent of Clinton voters and 70 percent of Obama voters expect to remain committed Democrats -- but only 51 percent of Edwards voters are committed to their party. On the Republican side, at least three quarters of Giuliani, McCain and Romney voters are committed to their party.

The demographic group which shows the most party loyalty at present is Hispanics -- 83 percent of this cohort are likely to remain affiliated with their party (see table to the right regarding party affiliation by race).

Factors Influencing Affiliation Differ Slightly for Democrats and Republicans

Asked how important four factors (domestic, economic, foreign and social policy) were when considering party affiliation, our poll revealed that economic (57% consider this to be very important factor) and domestic policy (55% very important) ranked first and second, followed by foreign (47%) and social policy (47%). Both Democrats and Republicans agree on the relative importance of economic, domestic and foreign policy issues -- but young Democrats are significantly more likely to put emphasis on social policy compared to young Republicans. More than half (56%) of Democrats consider social policy to be very important while 37 percent of Republicans feel the same way.

Not surprisingly, the oldest members of the 18 to 24 year old group (21-22 year olds) put more emphasis on economic and domestic issues, than the younger members of the cohort.

Democrats Outnumber Republicans in Most Demographic Subgroups

Following is an analysis of the demographics associated with registered voters of the two major parties.

REGISTERED VOTERS' PARTY AFFILIATION BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP

	DEMO-CRAT	REPUBLICAN	INDEPENDENT
WHITE	29%	31%	40%
AFRICAN-AMERICAN	52%	4%	44%
HISPANIC	46%	22%	32%
ASIAN	47%	15%	39%
MEN	28%	28%	44%
WOMEN	43%	21%	36%
EAST	41%	19%	40%
MIDWEST	39%	23%	38%
SOUTH	31%	27%	42%
WEST	33%	28%	40%
CATHOLIC	43%	25%	32%
PROTESTANT	31%	34%	35%
EVANGELICAL	16%	52%	32%
JEWISH	43%	16%	41%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME: LO	34%	20%	47%
HHI: AVG	37%	28%	35%
HHI: HIGH	38%	29%	34%

Some of the Hot Button Issues

Health Care Emerging as Top Domestic Issue, Universal Coverage Favored

While the War in Iraq remains the dominant issue for young Americans, 6 percent fewer report this as their top concern compared to our last survey which was fielded in March 2007. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of 18 to 24 year olds cited the war as the issue that concerns them most. Health care (which jumped from 4% in the Spring to 10% in the Fall) is the second most pressing issue of concern. Following health care are a range of priorities that all net between three and five percent and include: the environment, economy, immigration and foreign policy.

Additional evidence about the growing impact of health care policy -- the issue ranks at the top of the list for "second most important issue" at 13 percent, which is a four percentage point increase since the spring.

Given a choice between keeping the current system and having one health insurance program administered by the government and paid by taxpayers, by a two to one margin (50% to 25%), 18 to 24 year olds in the poll prefer a universal system.

More than two-thirds (69%) of Democrats, 30 percent of Republicans and 49 percent of Independents favor universal coverage. Among the leading Republican candidates, John McCain voters are more in favor of universal health care (44%) than others.

Foreign Policy Attitudes Continues to Define this Generation

Similar to other findings over the last several years, members of the Millennial Generation continue to prefer a new kind of foreign policy, driven by open dialogue between the U.S. and other countries, whether they are friendly or not.

To probe one of the more contentious issues of the campaign to date (at least among the Democrats), young Americans were asked:

Recently some of the presidential candidates have debated regarding U.S. policy toward meeting with rogue nations like Iran, Syria, Venezuela, Cuba and North Korea during the next President's first year in office.

Some candidates believe that it would be "irresponsible and naïve" for the next President to meet with leaders from hostile or rogue nations before their intentions were known.

Other candidates believe that "we must have the strength and courage" to meet with leaders of rogue nations and would do so without conditions. Which of the following comes closest to your own view?

Nearly a majority (46%) believe that the President should meet with leaders of hostile or rogue nations without conditions, 24 percent say "not before their intentions are known," and 30 percent are unsure. A majority of Democrats (57%) and plurality of both Republicans (39%) and Independents (47%) believe the President should meet without conditions.

Community Service, Political Engagement and Trust

Community Service is An Important Part of Life for Half of All 18 to 24 Year Olds

Young people in this year’s survey report having less time to be involved in extracurricular activities compared to last year (2006 - 58% had enough time, 2007 - 50%); still participation in community service has increased on college campuses (57% in 2006 to 62% in 2007).

COMMUNITY SERVICE
BY EDUCATION TYPE

	VOLUNTEERED IN THE LAST YEAR
IN HIGH SCHOOL	58%
2 YEAR COLLEGE/ VOCATIONAL	46%
4 YEAR COLLEGE	62%
GRAD SCHOOL	65%
NEVER ATTENDED COLLEGE	30%

Of those who participate in community service, over half (55%) volunteer at least once a month -- 13 percent weekly, 19 percent a few times a month and 25 percent about once a month.

A Civic Life Shows Potential for this Generation

In addition to community service, 24 percent of college students participated in a government, political or issue-related organization in the last year. Other types of political activities that 18 to 24 year olds are engaged in include:

- Signing an online petition -- 50% of 18 - 24 year olds surveyed;

- Writing an email or letter advocating for a political position or opinion -- 28%;
- Contributing to an online discussion or blog advocating for a political position or opinion -- 23%;
- Attending a political rally or demonstration -- 21%;
- Donating money to a political campaign or cause -- 15%;
- Volunteering for a political campaign or an issue -- 12%.

Although slightly more than one-in-ten young people volunteered on a political campaign in the last year, 42 percent said that they would be “very likely” (9%) or “somewhat likely” to volunteer if asked by a friend or peer. Fifty-eight percent (58%) would be likely to attend a rally or demonstration and 76 percent would be likely to volunteer for community service.

With approximately 29.5 million 18 to 24 year olds in the United States, even if half of the 9 percent who said that would be very likely to volunteer on a campaign were asked and recruited, campaigns and issue organizations would net 1.32 million volunteers.

Political Engagement Seen as Effective Means of Solving Problems

Compared to 2006, slightly more young people believe that political engagement is an effective way of solving important issues facing the country. Overall, 63 percent of 18 to 24 year olds in the IOP poll reported that political engagement was effective, 37 percent said not effective. This constitutes a net 6-point swing

from last year. Generally, college students are more likely than others to believe that political engagement is an effective way to solve problems facing the country (68% compared to 54% for those not enrolled or graduated). Eighteen and 19 year olds (69%), Hispanics (72%) and women (68%) believe this to be true as well.

Asked how influential different groups and institutions have been in the development of their own level of political engagement, the survey found that family comes first (61% influential), followed by friends (51%), college (50%), the media (40%), high school (32%), and religious institutions last (31%).

Attitudes About Politics and Public Service Have Trended More Positive in Last Year

Another indication that the youngest members of the electorate are likely to engage in the upcoming campaign and take a greater role in civic life is their response to a series of questions that were designed to measure the health of U.S. politics. Although improvement is clearly necessary, many of the underlying barriers to political engagement have slowly begun to dissipate over the last year(s).

STATEMENTS ABOUT POLITICS
% WHO AGREE

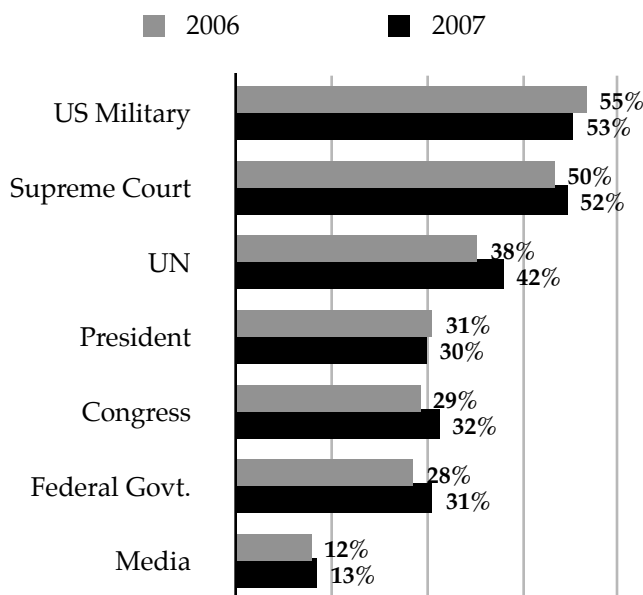
	2006	2007
RUNNING FOR OFFICE IS AN HONORABLE THING TO DO	67%	67%
GETTING INVOLVED IN POLITICS IN AN HONORABLE THING TO DO	60%	63%
IT IS DIFFICULT TO FIND WAYS TO BE INVOLVED IN POLITICS	44%	42%
ELECTED OFFICIALS DON'T HAVE THE SAME PRIORITIES I HAVE	75%	71%
POLITICS HAS BECOME TOO PARTISAN	74%	72%

Trust in Institutions

Holding on to the top spot as the most trusted institution tested in our survey, trust in the U.S. Military has slipped slightly over the last year, while trust in the United Nations, Congress, and Federal Government has increased three to four points in total. Trust in the President decreased one percentage point and trust in the media increased one.

- College students, grad students, Democrats and women are more likely to trust the United Nations;
- McCain voters are more likely to trust Congress;
- Republicans are more likely to trust the federal government and the President;
- High school students, Hispanics, Asians and Democrats are more likely to trust the media.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU TRUST ... TO DO THE
RIGHT THING?
ALL OF THE TIME / MOST OF THE TIME



When trust is correlated with party identification and other variables, the data indicate that:

- Whites, Southerners and Republicans are more likely to trust the Military;
- Whites, Hispanics, Asians are more likely than African-Americans to trust the Supreme Court;

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Harvard's Institute of Politics (IOP) was established in 1966 as a memorial to President Kennedy. The IOP's mission is to unite and engage students, particularly undergraduates, with academics, politicians, activists, and policy-makers on a non-partisan basis and to stimulate and nurture their interest in public service and leadership. The Institute strives to promote greater understanding and cooperation between the academic world and the world of politics and public affairs. The Institute has been conducting national political polls of America's college students for seven years. More information, including past results, is available online at www.iop.harvard.edu