

Texas Lyceum Announces Statewide Poll Results

Tuesday, June 12, 2007

Contact: Margaret Justus
281-250-8253

Religion remains important, but doesn't always translate to public policy

(Austin, TX) The Texas Lyceum, the 27 year-old non-partisan leadership group focused on public policy issues, released initial results today of its inaugural public opinion poll taken April 26 – May 7th, 2007.

"That Texans, like most Americans, are religious is unsurprising. But the devil is in the details," said Daron Shaw, pollster and Professor at the University of Texas. "While close to a majority say they have personally had a born again experience, there is considerable diversity on a range of religious and values issues."

Shaw continued, "Texans, by and large, support stem cell research and a women's right to an abortion (at least under certain circumstances), but they also support the death penalty, school vouchers, faith-based initiatives, and public displays of the Ten Commandments. Moreover, few issues are dominated by people at the extremes. What this poll shows is that Texans are independent thinkers and context matters. The particulars of this context are something that public policy makers and political strategists should care about."

According to the poll results, Texans describe themselves as religious and somewhat faithful. Their responses suggest that the current Texas leadership generally presided over a lack of action during the 80th Legislature on most of the issues that intersect matters of religious belief and government in substantial ways. Sometimes this inaction hit the mark, but they also missed in significant areas.

"The Texas Lyceum Poll gives everyone the opportunity to step back and ask how the actions of the Texas legislature measure up to public opinion among the citizens the legislature is supposed to serve and represent," said Professor Jim Henson, Director of the Texas Politics Project at the University of Texas. "This poll is bound to generate debate over just what this says about the current state of politics in Texas."

Lyceum leaders plan to roll out the entire Texas Lyceum Poll information over the next three days, but started today with results that show how Texans view religion in general and how they view certain religious issues that intertwine with public policy, such as faith-

based initiatives, prayer in public schools, religious displays, and public funding for private schools.

"We are extremely proud to share the results of our inaugural Texas Lyceum Poll and plan to continue conducting these polls on an annual basis," said Lyceum President Maggie Radford. "We don't have a political or policy agenda, but included questions this year on issues surrounding religion and public policy because they were significant during the recent legislative session," Radford continued. "We also plan to use the Texas Lyceum Poll as a springboard for discussions at our annual public conferences." The topic for this year's conference, to be held July 13th in Austin, is separation of church and state.

Lyceum leaders say the purpose of the annual Texas Lyceum Poll is straightforward: a non-partisan, high quality, scientific survey designed to provide specific data points on issues of interest, and a time series of key demographics, attitudes, and opinions. Towards this end, Lyceum leaders hope the hallmark of the Texas Lyceum Poll will be transparency.

Radford concluded, "As a statewide group of business, civic and political leaders, who are also Republicans, Democrats and Independents, we believe a well conducted, independent poll, such as this one, can be a useful tool for leaders throughout Texas."

More about the Texas Lyceum

The 27 year-old Texas Lyceum is comprised of 96 Texas men and women who begin their tenure as Lyceum Directors before the age of 46. Each of them has demonstrated leadership in their community and profession, together with a deep commitment to Texas. The Texas Lyceum gained its name from the oak grove (lyceum) where Aristotle and his fellow Greek philosophers convened to debate issues more than 2500 years ago.

The association 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, The Texas Lyceum Poll, and conducts programs for the Directors to explore and discuss key economic and social issues of the state and nation. For more information about the Texas Lyceum, please visit: www.texaslyceum.org