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## **National Poll: The Candidates and the Campaign 2004**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday September 24, 2004**

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This Marist College Institute for Public Opinion poll reports:

- **Bush edges Kerry:** Although neither President George Bush nor Senator John Kerry has a clear advantage among registered voters, Bush holds an edge over Kerry among those likely to vote on Election Day. Bush has the support of 47% of registered voters nationwide compared with 45% for Kerry. Ralph Nader receives 3%, and only 5% are undecided. Among likely voters, Bush receives 50% and Kerry receives 44%. Nader has 2% and 4% of likely voters are undecided.

**Question Wording:** If November's presidential election were held today, whom would you support if the candidates are:

| <b>Registered voters</b>         | <b>Bush/Cheney<br/>Republican</b> | <b>Kerry/Edwards<br/>Democrat</b> | <b>Nader/Camejo<br/>Independent</b> | <b>Undecided</b> |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| September 2004                   | 47%                               | 45%                               | 3%                                  | 5%               |
| With leaners                     | 48%                               | 45%                               | 3%                                  | 4%               |
| Battleground states <sup>1</sup> | 48%                               | 45%                               | 1%                                  | 6%               |
| August 2004                      | 44%                               | 45%                               | 3%                                  | 8%               |
| July 2004                        | 44%                               | 45%                               | 2%                                  | 9%               |
| <b>Likely voters</b>             |                                   |                                   |                                     |                  |
| September 2004                   | 50%                               | 44%                               | 2%                                  | 4%               |
| August 2004                      | 47%                               | 47%                               | 1%                                  | 5%               |
| July 2004                        | 46%                               | 47%                               | 1%                                  | 6%               |

<sup>1</sup> The battleground states include 17 states. Nine of the battleground states were carried by less than seven points by Former Vice President Gore in 2000. The Gore states include Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Wisconsin. Eight of the battleground states were carried by less than seven points by President Bush in 2000. The Bush states include Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, and West Virginia. Gore's home state of Tennessee is not included.

| <b>Voting Groups<br/>September 2004</b> | <b>Bush/Cheney<br/>Republican</b> | <b>Kerry/Edwards<br/>Democrat</b> | <b>Nader/Camejo<br/>Independent</b> | <b>Undecided</b> |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Democrats                               | 10%                               | 86%                               | 2%                                  | 2%               |
| Republicans                             | 91%                               | 5%                                | 1%                                  | 3%               |
| Independents                            | 44%                               | 39%                               | 6%                                  | 11%              |
| East                                    | 40%                               | 49%                               | 4%                                  | 7%               |
| Central                                 | 47%                               | 45%                               | 2%                                  | 6%               |
| South                                   | 53%                               | 42%                               | 2%                                  | 3%               |
| West                                    | 44%                               | 45%                               | 4%                                  | 7%               |
| Big city                                | 39%                               | 56%                               | 3%                                  | 2%               |
| Small city                              | 44%                               | 46%                               | 4%                                  | 6%               |
| Suburban                                | 49%                               | 44%                               | 3%                                  | 4%               |
| Small town                              | 48%                               | 43%                               | 3%                                  | 6%               |
| Rural                                   | 55%                               | 34%                               | 2%                                  | 9%               |
| Liberal                                 | 17%                               | 80%                               | 2%                                  | 1%               |
| Moderate                                | 37%                               | 50%                               | 5%                                  | 8%               |
| Conservative                            | 73%                               | 21%                               | 1%                                  | 5%               |
| Not college graduate                    | 46%                               | 45%                               | 3%                                  | 6%               |
| College graduate                        | 48%                               | 46%                               | 2%                                  | 4%               |
| Less than \$50,000                      | 42%                               | 49%                               | 4%                                  | 5%               |
| \$50,000 or more                        | 53%                               | 40%                               | 1%                                  | 6%               |
| Men                                     | 47%                               | 42%                               | 5%                                  | 6%               |
| Women                                   | 46%                               | 48%                               | 1%                                  | 5%               |
| Union                                   | 35%                               | 56%                               | 3%                                  | 6%               |
| Veteran HH                              | 48%                               | 44%                               | 3%                                  | 5%               |
| Access to Internet                      | 50%                               | 41%                               | 4%                                  | 5%               |
| Gun owners                              | 59%                               | 34%                               | 1%                                  | 6%               |
| Evangelical Christian                   | 65%                               | 29%                               | 2%                                  | 4%               |
| Att. religious serv. often              | 56%                               | 38%                               | 2%                                  | 4%               |
| Does not attend often                   | 37%                               | 52%                               | 4%                                  | 7%               |
| Money worries - always                  | 36%                               | 55%                               | 4%                                  | 5%               |
| No money worries                        | 57%                               | 35%                               | 1%                                  | 7%               |

- **Most voters strongly back their choice:** Overall, 72% of registered voters strongly support their choice for president, and 20% say they somewhat support their candidate. Just 7% say they might vote differently on Election Day.

**Question Wording:** Would you say that you strongly support (candidate), somewhat support him, or do you think that you might vote differently on Election Day?

| <b>Registered voters</b> | <b>Strongly Support</b> | <b>Somewhat Support</b> | <b>Might Vote Differently</b> | <b>Unsure</b> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| September 2004           | 72%                     | 20%                     | 7%                            | 1%            |
| Bush supporters          |                         |                         |                               |               |
| September 2004           | 77%                     | 18%                     | 4%                            | 1%            |
| August 2004              | 78%                     | 14%                     | 7%                            | 1%            |
| July 2004                | 73%                     | 20%                     | 5%                            | 2%            |

| <b>Registered voters</b> | <b>Strongly Support</b> | <b>Somewhat Support</b> | <b>Might Vote Differently</b> | <b>Unsure</b> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Kerry supporters         |                         |                         |                               |               |
| September 2004           | 70%                     | 21%                     | 8%                            | 1%            |
| August 2004              | 70%                     | 22%                     | 6%                            | 2%            |
| July 2004                | 67%                     | 23%                     | 8%                            | 2%            |
| August 2004              | 72%                     | 19%                     | 7%                            | 2%            |
| July 2004                | 69%                     | 22%                     | 7%                            | 2%            |

- Much of Kerry's support is still anti-Bush:** 45% of registered voters who support John Kerry say they back him because he is not Bush. In contrast, 78% of Bush supporters say they are voting for him because they are for the president rather than against John Kerry.

**Question Wording:** Did you choose (George Bush/John Kerry) because you are for him or because you are against (George Bush/John Kerry)?

| <b>Registered Voters</b> | <b>For Candidate</b> | <b>Against Candidate</b> | <b>Unsure</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| September 2004           | 63%                  | 32%                      | 5%            |
| Bush supporters          | 78%                  | 18%                      | 4%            |
| Kerry supporters         | 48%                  | 45%                      | 7%            |

- How the candidates stack up with voters:** More voters see President Bush as someone who stands up for what he believes in, as a strong leader, as more likely to prevent future terror attacks, as respected by leaders throughout the world, and as the best choice for commander and chief. He is also seen as the candidate of the past compared with Senator Kerry who is viewed as a candidate for change. Kerry is also seen by voters as caring about the needs of people like themselves, and as more likely to improve the economy. Voters divide over which candidate shares their values, can unify the country, is closer to them on the issues, is honest and trustworthy, and has a vision for the future.

**Question Wording:** Please tell me whether each of the following statements applies more to George Bush or John Kerry:

| <b>Registered Voters</b>             | <b>Bush</b> | <b>Kerry</b> | <b>Unsure</b> |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| He stands up for what he believes in | 58%         | 37%          | 5%            |
| He is a strong leader                | 56%         | 36%          | 8%            |
| He is the candidate of the past      | 56%         | 26%          | 18%           |

| <b>Registered Voters</b>   | <b>Bush</b> | <b>Kerry</b> | <b>Unsure</b> |
|--|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| He will be more likely to prevent future terrorist attacks on the U.S. | 54%         | 36%          | 10%           |
| He is respected by leaders throughout the world                        | 52%         | 36%          | 12%           |
| He is the best choice for commander-in-chief of the armed forces       | 50%         | 44%          | 6%            |
| He shares your values  | 49%         | 45%          | 6%            |
| He can unify the country   | 47%         | 43%          | 10%           |
| He is closer to you on the issues                                      | 46%         | 48%          | 6%            |
| He is honest and trustworthy   | 46%         | 44%          | 10%           |
| He has a vision for the future   | 46%         | 47%          | 7%            |
| He will be more likely to improve the economy                          | 44%         | 51%          | 5%            |
| He cares about the needs of people like you                            | 43%         | 50%          | 7%            |
| He is the candidate for change   | 29%         | 65%          | 6%            |

- **Presidential campaign too negative:** Most registered voters, 76%, think the candidates are spending more time attacking each other rather than talking about the issues. Voters see little difference between how each campaign is being waged.

**Question Wording:** Overall, when thinking about the campaign for president, do you feel that the candidates have spent more time: talking about their positions on the issues or attacking each other?

| <b>Registered Voters</b> | <b>Talking Issues</b> | <b>Attacking Each Other</b> | <b>Neither</b> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| September 2004           | 22%                   | 76%                         | 2%             |

**Question Wording:** Do you think George Bush or John Kerry is talking more about the issues/doing more of the attacking?

| <b>Registered Voters</b>      | <b>Bush</b> | <b>Kerry</b> | <b>Both</b> |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| Talking more about the issues | 46%         | 48%          | 6%          |
| Doing more of the attacking   | 38%         | 44%          | 18%         |

- **Voters say enough is enough on candidates' military service:** Voters overwhelmingly feel that they have heard more than enough during the campaign about the military service of both President Bush and Senator Kerry. More voters are less likely to vote for George Bush based on what they know about his military service than are likely to vote for him. Voters divide in their reactions to John Kerry's military service.

**Question Wording:** Do you feel the presidential campaign has focused too much, too little, or about the right amount on the candidates' military service during the Vietnam War?

| Registered Voters | Too Much | Too Little | About the Right Amount |
|-------------------|----------|------------|------------------------|
| September 2004    | 80%      | 7%         | 13%                    |

**Question Wording:** Does what you know about (George Bush's/John Kerry's) military service in (the National Guard during the Vietnam War/Vietnam) make you more or less likely to vote for him for president?

| Registered Voters | More Likely | Less Likely | No Difference |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| George Bush       | 25%         | 46%         | 29%           |
| John Kerry        | 39%         | 37%         | 24%           |

- **What voters want to hear:** Domestic issues such as health care and education are what many voters want to hear about in the presidential campaign. The economy is next, followed by the war on terrorism, homeland security, and the situation in Iraq.

**Question Wording:** Which of the following issues are you most interested in hearing about during the presidential campaign:

| Registered voters | Domestic Issues | Economy | War on Terrorism | Homeland Security | Situation in Iraq | Unsure |
|-------------------|-----------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------|
| September 2004    | 35%             | 26%     | 14%              | 11%               | 11%               | 3%     |
| Bush supporters   | 26%             | 20%     | 24%              | 19%               | 8%                | 3%     |
| Kerry supporters  | 44%             | 32%     | 4%               | 4%                | 14%               | 2%     |
| Undecided         | 30%             | 25%     | 16%              | 10%               | 8%                | 11%    |
| August 2004       | 31%             | 25%     | 14%              | 14%               | 12%               | 4%     |
| July 2004         | 34%             | 26%     | 17%              | 11%               | 8%                | 4%     |

- Voters who cite domestic issues, the economy, or Iraq as their number one concern prefer John Kerry. George Bush is the choice among voters who are most concerned about the war on terrorism or homeland security.

| Registered voters<br>September 2004 | Bush/Cheney<br>Republican | Kerry/Edwards<br>Democrat | Nader/Camejo<br>Independent | Undecided |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Domestic issues                     | 35%                       | 56%                       | 4%                          | 5%        |
| Economy                             | 37%                       | 56%                       | 2%                          | 5%        |
| War on terrorism                    | 79%                       | 14%                       | <1%                         | 7%        |
| Homeland security                   | 77%                       | 16%                       | 2%                          | 5%        |
| Situation in Iraq                   | 33%                       | 56%                       | 7%                          | 4%        |

- **Direction of the country:** 53% of voters think the country is headed in the wrong direction and 38% think it is headed in the right direction.

**Question Wording:** In general, thinking about the way things are going in the country, do you feel things are going in the right direction or that things are going in the wrong direction?

| <b>Registered voters</b> | <b>Right Direction</b> | <b>Wrong Direction</b> | <b>Unsure</b> |
|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| September 2004           | 38%                    | 53%                    | 9%            |
| August 2004              | 41%                    | 48%                    | 11%           |
| July 2004                | 38%                    | 52%                    | 10%           |
| <b>Americans</b>         |                        |                        |               |
| September 2004           | 38%                    | 52%                    | 10%           |
| August 2004              | 40%                    | 48%                    | 12%           |
| July 2004                | 37%                    | 52%                    | 11%           |
| April 2004               | 43%                    | 51%                    | 6%            |
| March 2004               | 43%                    | 52%                    | 5%            |
| November 2003            | 45%                    | 48%                    | 7%            |
| April 2003               | 55%                    | 34%                    | 11%           |
| January 2003             | 42%                    | 48%                    | 10%           |
| October 2002             | 45%                    | 46%                    | 9%            |
| April 2002               | 60%                    | 32%                    | 8%            |
| January 2002             | 60%                    | 30%                    | 10%           |
| March 2001               | 41%                    | 44%                    | 15%           |
| January 2001             | 56%                    | 32%                    | 12%           |

- **Edwards is still a favorite:** Among the four major party candidates, John Edwards has the best favorable to unfavorable rating.

**Question Wording:** Please tell me if you have a favorable or an unfavorable impression of each of the following:

| <b>Registered Voters</b> | <b>Favorable</b> | <b>Unfavorable</b> | <b>Unsure/<br/>Never Heard</b> |
|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>George Bush</b>       |                  |                    |                                |
| September 2004           | 50%              | 48%                | 2%                             |
| August 2004              | 51%              | 47%                | 2%                             |
| July 2004                | 51%              | 47%                | 2%                             |
| <b>Dick Cheney</b>       |                  |                    |                                |
| September 2004           | 45%              | 50%                | 5%                             |
| August 2004              | 43%              | 51%                | 6%                             |
| July 2004                | 46%              | 47%                | 7%                             |
| <b>John Kerry</b>        |                  |                    |                                |
| September 2004           | 51%              | 46%                | 3%                             |
| August 2004              | 56%              | 38%                | 6%                             |
| July 2004                | 52%              | 43%                | 5%                             |

| <b>Registered Voters</b> | Favorable | Unfavorable | Unsure/<br>Never Heard |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|------------------------|
| John Edwards             |           |             |                        |
| September 2004           | 52%       | 37%         | 11%                    |
| August 2004              | 58%       | 31%         | 11%                    |
| July 2004                | 56%       | 31%         | 13%                    |

- **Voters view President Bush as the frontrunner:** 63% of registered voters think President Bush is likely to be re-elected.

**Question Wording:** Regardless of whom you are planning to vote for, who do you think will win the election for president?

| <b>Registered voters</b> | Bush/Cheney<br>Republican | Kerry/Edwards<br>Democrat | Nader/Camejo<br>Independent | Unsure |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------|
| September 2004           | 63%                       | 28%                       | <1%                         | 9%     |
| Bush supporters          | 93%                       | 3%                        | <1%                         | 4%     |
| Kerry supporters         | 33%                       | 54%                       | <1%                         | 13%    |
| Undecided                | 54%                       | 22%                       | <1%                         | 24%    |
| August 2004              | 44%                       | 43%                       | 0%                          | 13%    |
| July 2004                | 45%                       | 40%                       | 1%                          | 14%    |

- **Voters divide over the job George Bush is doing as president:** 49% of registered voters nationwide approve of the job President Bush is doing in office, and 49% disapprove.

**Question Wording:** Do you approve or disapprove of the job George Bush is doing as president?

| <b>Registered voters</b> | Approve | Disapprove | Unsure |
|--------------------------|---------|------------|--------|
| September 2004           | 49%     | 49%        | 2%     |
| August 2004              | 49%     | 47%        | 4%     |
| July 2004                | 49%     | 48%        | 3%     |
| April 2004               | 51%     | 47%        | 2%     |
| March 2004               | 52%     | 45%        | 3%     |
| November 2003            | 53%     | 42%        | 5%     |
| April 2003               | 70%     | 23%        | 7%     |
| February 2003            | 56%     | 34%        | 10%    |
| January 2003             | 57%     | 34%        | 9%     |
| October 2002             | 65%     | 27%        | 8%     |
| April 2002               | 74%     | 17%        | 9%     |
| January 2002             | 81%     | 11%        | 8%     |
| November 2001            | 85%     | 8%         | 7%     |
| March 2001               | 50%     | 24%        | 26%    |
| January 2001             | 50%     | 20%        | 30%    |

- **Majority disapprove of the president's handling of Iraq:** 55% of registered voters disapprove of President Bush's handling of the situation in Iraq.

**Question Wording:** Do you approve or disapprove of how President George Bush is handling the situation in Iraq?

| Registered Voters | Approve | Disapprove | Unsure |
|-------------------|---------|------------|--------|
| September 2004    | 43%     | 55%        | 2%     |
| August 2004       | 41%     | 55%        | 4%     |
| July 2004         | 42%     | 55%        | 3%     |
| April 2004        | 47%     | 51%        | 2%     |
| March 2004        | 52%     | 45%        | 3%     |
| November 2003     | 48%     | 47%        | 5%     |
| April 2003        | 76%     | 20%        | 4%     |

- **National electorate concerned over the president's handling of the economy:** 56% of registered voters disapprove of President Bush's handling of the economy.

**Question Wording:** Do you approve or disapprove of how President George Bush is handling the economy?

| Registered Voters | Approve | Disapprove | Unsure |
|-------------------|---------|------------|--------|
| September 2004    | 42%     | 56%        | 2%     |
| August 2004       | 46%     | 51%        | 3%     |
| July 2004         | 47%     | 50%        | 3%     |
| April 2004        | 47%     | 51%        | 2%     |
| March 2004        | 40%     | 57%        | 3%     |
| November 2003     | 46%     | 50%        | 4%     |
| April 2003        | 50%     | 44%        | 6%     |

- **Majority of voters approve of President Bush's handling of the war on terrorism:** 52% of registered voters approve of President Bush's handling of the war on terrorism, although the difference between the number of voters who approve and disapprove has been declining during the campaign.

**Question Wording:** Do you approve or disapprove of how President George Bush is handling the war on terrorism?

| Registered Voters | Approve | Disapprove | Unsure |
|-------------------|---------|------------|--------|
| September 2004    | 52%     | 46%        | 2%     |
| August 2004       | 52%     | 44%        | 4%     |
| July 2004         | 53%     | 43%        | 4%     |
| April 2004        | 55%     | 42%        | 3%     |



| Registered Voters | Approve | Disapprove | Unsure |
|-------------------|---------|------------|--------|
| March 2004        | 61%     | 36%        | 3%     |
| November 2003     | 59%     | 38%        | 3%     |
| April 2003        | 78%     | 18%        | 4%     |

- **Most voters think there's a lot at stake in this presidential election:** 72% of registered voters think this election matters a great deal.

**Question Wording:** Do you think it matters a great deal, somewhat, not too much, or not at all whether George Bush or John Kerry wins the presidential election this year?

| Registered voters | A Great Deal | Somewhat | Not Too Much | Not at all |
|-------------------|--------------|----------|--------------|------------|
| September 2004    | 72%          | 16%      | 7%           | 5%         |
| Bush supporters   | 80%          | 13%      | 5%           | 2%         |
| Kerry supporters  | 68%          | 19%      | 8%           | 5%         |
| Undecided         | 39%          | 26%      | 23%          | 12%        |
| August 2004       | 73%          | 15%      | 6%           | 6%         |
| July 2004         | 75%          | 15%      | 5%           | 5%         |

- **Voters are paying attention:** 78% of voters say they are following the Bush-Kerry match-up. 22% are not paying much attention to the campaign.

**Question Wording:** Would you say that you are following the presidential campaign very closely, closely, not very closely, or not at all?

| Registered voters | Very Closely | Closely | Not Very Closely | Not at All |
|-------------------|--------------|---------|------------------|------------|
| September 2004    | 32%          | 46%     | 20%              | 2%         |
| August 2004       | 29%          | 47%     | 20%              | 4%         |
| July 2004         | 28%          | 48%     | 22%              | 2%         |
| April 2004        | 20%          | 47%     | 26%              | 7%         |

- **Many voters plan to tune in for debates:** 78% of voters say they plan to watch at least some of the presidential debates.

**Question Wording:** Do you plan on watching the presidential debates a great deal, some, not too much, or not at all?

| Registered voters | A Great Deal | Some | Not Too Much | Not at All |
|-------------------|--------------|------|--------------|------------|
| September 2004    | 39%          | 39%  | 10%          | 12%        |

- **And what about the morning after?** A similar number of voters will be delighted and miserable regardless of who wins the election.

**Question Wording:** Imagine it is November 3rd, 2004, the day after the presidential election, and (George Bush/John Kerry) has won. How do you think you will feel:

| <b>Registered voters</b> | Delighted | Happy | Won't Care | Unhappy | Miserable |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------|------------|---------|-----------|
| Bush wins                | 22%       | 24%   | 12%        | 21%     | 21%       |
| Kerry wins               | 21%       | 27%   | 13%        | 22%     | 17%       |

### **Nature of the Sample: 1,216 Americans**

This survey was conducted from September 20<sup>th</sup> through September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2004. 1,216 adults 18 years of age or older within the continental United States were interviewed by telephone. Telephone numbers were selected based upon a list of telephone exchanges from throughout the nation. The exchanges were selected to ensure that each region was represented in proportion to its population. The results of the entire survey are statistically significant at  $\pm 3\%$ . There are 929 registered voters and 630 likely voters. The results for these sub-samples are statistically significant at  $\pm 3.5\%$  and  $\pm 4\%$ , respectively. The margin for error increases for cross-tabulations.