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**OBAMA MAINTAINS STRONG LEAD IN PRESIDENTIAL RACE
AMONG ENERGIZED YOUTH VOTE, HARVARD POLL FINDS**

***Youth Stand Ready to Heed New Call for Public Service; Concerns over
the Economy Skyrocket***

Washington, DC – A new national poll by Harvard University’s Institute of Politics (IOP), located at Harvard Kennedy School, finds 18-24 year-old likely voters continue to strongly prefer U.S. Senator Barack Obama (56%) over U.S. Senator John McCain (30%) in the race for President. Economic issues are far and away the number one national issue of concern for young people – over ten times more important today (53%) than they were just one year ago (5%).

“The remarkable youth voter turnout in the primary process underscored the historic role young people are playing in the political process this year,” said IOP Director Bill Purcell. “Our new poll results show young Americans are looking forward to improving their country through public service, and to their participation making the difference on Election Day.”

The online survey of 2,406 18-24 year-old U.S. citizens conducted by Harris Interactive® for the IOP between September 12 and October 6, 2008 finds –

- ***U.S. Senator Barack Obama is favored among 18-24 year-old likely voters by nearly a 2-1 margin over U.S. Senator John McCain in the race for President.*** Just weeks before Election Day, Senator Obama holds a twenty-six point lead (56%-30%; 15% undecided) over Senator McCain in the 2008 presidential race, a lead that has remained virtually unchanged since July (55%-32%) and March (53%-32%) 2008 IOP polling. Obama’s lead grows slightly among young people saying they will “definitely” be voting (59%-31%). As IOP polling also showed in July, young people continue to say they “trust” Obama more than McCain on eight out of ten major domestic and foreign policy issues facing the country.
- ***Youth are ready to answer a new call for public service, including working in government.*** Almost six in ten (59%) 18-24 year-olds say that they are personally interested in engaging in some form of public service to help the country. Nearly one-half (47%) of this group said engagement could include working for the federal, state or local government; almost a third (32%) said they would think about getting involved in a political

campaign; and nearly two in ten (17%) said they would consider running for office. Importantly, this is one issue where strong support is seen regardless of party (Democrats 68%, Republicans 63%, Independents 57%), presidential candidate supported (67% Obama supporters, 63% McCain supporters), or gender (63% women, 55% men) of young people today.

- ***Economy is ten times more important to young people today than one year ago.*** More than half of young people (53%) say economic issues are their top concern. IOP polling showed 30% of young people expressing the same opinion in March and only 5% in the fall of 2007. During the same time period, the percentage of young people who said Iraq and the War in general was their top concern fell from 37% (fall 2007) to 20% (March 2008) to 9% today. No other issue in this year's poll garnered more than 9%.
- ***Sen. Biden Vice-Presidential pick shows little effect, while Gov. Palin pick has hurt among Independents and women.*** When 18-24 year-old likely voters were asked whether each candidate's vice-presidential selection made them more or less likely to support that ticket in November, six in ten (60%) said that Senator Obama's pick of U.S. Senator Joe Biden made no difference with just 21% saying the pick made them more likely and 19% saying less likely to support the ticket (Net effect: 2% points positive). However, while only 35% of young people said Senator McCain's selection of Alaska Governor Sarah Palin made no difference, 40% of young voters said the pick made them "less likely" to support the ticket with 25% saying "more likely." (Net effect: 15% points negative). Among young people self-identifying as Independents, the Biden VP pick had a net 8% point negative effect, while the Palin VP pick had a net 22% point negative effect.
- ***More than half of young people currently supporting a presidential candidate are interested in volunteering for their candidate's campaign.*** Among 18-24 year-olds currently supporting Senator Obama, nearly six in ten (57%) say they would be interested in volunteering for the presidential campaign if asked (17% very interested; 40% somewhat interested). Slightly less than half (47%) of Senator McCain supporters said they would volunteer on their candidate's campaign if asked to do so (16% very interested, 31% somewhat interested).

- ***Clinton Presidency is preferred model for this generation.*** When young people were asked in an open-ended question which previous or current president they would prefer our next president to be most like, Bill Clinton was the top choice (26%) with Ronald Reagan second (11%). President Clinton received more votes by likely voters of all parties (32% Democrats, 18% Republicans, and 24% Independents) than any other choice. Among young people supporting Senator McCain, more said they would like the next president to be like President Clinton (21%) than President Reagan (14%).
- ***More young people see the effectiveness of political engagement than one year ago.*** Nearly seven in ten 18-24 year-olds today (69%) say they see political engagement as an effective way of solving our nation's problems, up six percentage points from fall 2007 (63%) and fall 2006 (60%) IOP polling. Fewer young people today agree that politics is not relevant to their lives (28%) than did one year ago (32%) and fewer believe that elected officials don't share their priorities (69%) than did one year ago (71%) or two years ago (75%). In addition, over six in ten young people (68%) say running for office is an honorable thing to do, up from one year ago (67%) and two years ago (66%).
- ***College students who plan on voting are more likely to vote early or by absentee ballot.*** Among college students who said they will "definitely vote," 45% said that they plan to vote at their local polling place. However, a bigger percentage (49%) said they won't be voting in person at a polling place – 41% of students reported they will be voting by absentee ballot and another 8% reported they plan on "early voting."

Harvard students designed the poll, in consultation with IOP Polling Director John Della Volpe, whose firm *Social Sphere Strategies* commissioned Harris Interactive® to conduct the survey. Complete results and past surveys are available online at www.iop.harvard.edu.

Harvard's Institute of Politics' 15th Biannual Youth Survey on Politics and Public Service was conducted online by Harris Interactive among 1,214 U.S. citizens ages 18 to 24 years old enrolled in 4-year colleges and universities, and 1,192 U.S. citizens ages 18-24 not enrolled in 4-year colleges and universities. The study was fielded between September 12 and October 6, 2008. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, household income and region for these populations were weighted where necessary to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents'

propensity to be online. Harris Interactive was responsible for the data collection for this study; Harvard's Institute of Politics completed the analysis and reporting of the data.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the U.S. 18-24 year old adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to be invited to participate in the Harris Interactive online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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Harvard University's Institute of Politics (IOP), located at Harvard Kennedy School, 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 policymakers 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. More information is available online at www.iop.harvard.edu/.

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