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85% of Americans Want a Presidential Debate on Science *Democrats, Republicans agree on need, disagree on issues; health care tops list*

WASHINGTON, DC—May 12, 2008 — A new poll shows that 85% of U.S. adults agree that the presidential candidates should participate in a debate on how science can be used to help tackle America's major challenges. The poll found no difference between Democrats and Republicans on this question. A majority (84%) also agree that scientific innovations are improving our standard of living.

The poll, commissioned by Research!America and ScienceDebate2008.com and conducted by Harris Interactive®, shows that 56% strongly agree and 29% somewhat agree that the presidential candidates should participate in a debate to discuss key problems facing the United States, such as health care, climate change and energy, and how science can help tackle them.

“This topic has been virtually ignored by the candidates, but this poll shows that Americans of all walks know how important science and technology are to our health and way of life,” said **Shawn Lawrence Otto, CEO of Science Debate 2008**. “We’ve heard a lot about lapel pins and preachers. But tackling the big science challenges is critical to our children’s future — to the future of the country and the future of the planet. Americans want to know that candidates take these issues seriously, and the candidates have a responsibility to let voters know what they think.”

A majority of U.S. adults say that past scientific research has contributed “a great deal” or “a lot” to their quality of life today (67%) and that today’s research will continue to do so in the future (72%). When asked in what areas of their life scientific research has played the biggest role, top responses were health care (44%) and communication (20%).

“Americans see the need to invest in science now and want to hear from presidential candidates where science would stand in their administration,” said **the Honorable John Edward Porter, former Congressman and chair of Research!America**. “Our federal health research and science agencies have had five years of reduced spending power or modest increases. It’s time that candidates for the White House step up to say how they will address this faltering investment in our future.” Research!America and more than 30 partners have created **Your Candidates—Your Health**, a voter education initiative to present presidential and congressional candidates’ views on health and research at www.yourcandidatesyourhealth.org.

Among the most serious long-term issues facing the country, 76% rate health care the most serious, followed by alternative energy sources (69%), education (67%) and national security (61%). Issues also considered serious by a majority of U.S. adults include global economic competition (55%), poverty (53%) and climate change (53%).

“This is not a niche debate,” said **Craig Barrett, Chairman of Intel and one of the supporters of the Science Debate initiative**. “Without the best education system and aggressive investments in basic research and development we will become a second rate economic power. We expect the candidates for president to take this very seriously.”

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Other findings highlight a desire for public policy to be based on scientific evidence:

- 67% say that public policies should be influenced more by scientific evidence than by elected officials' personal beliefs.
- 83% of U.S. adults — 88% of Democrats and 80% of Republicans — say it is important that the candidates talk about how science and scientific research will affect their policy-making decisions if they are elected.
- Only 19% say it is acceptable for elected officials to hold back or alter scientific reports if they conflict with their own views — 16% of Republicans and 21% of Democrats.

Climate change had the widest partisan split among questions answered, with 66% of Democrats ranking it among the most serious, while only 33% of Republicans gave it a top ranking. Global poverty was the next widest split, with 63% of Democrats ranking it as a top issue while only 41% of Republicans saw it that way. Third on the list of widest divisions was education, with 59% of Republicans seeing it as a top issue, compared to 72% of Democrats.

This survey was conducted by telephone within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of Research!America and ScienceDebate2008.com between May 2 and May 5, 2008, among 1,003 adults ages 18+. This survey has a theoretical sampling error of $\pm 3.1\%$. For complete methodology and to learn more about the poll, visit www.researchamerica.org or www.sciencedebate2008.com.

About Research!America: Research!America (www.researchamerica.org) is the nation's largest not-for-profit public education and advocacy alliance working to make research to improve health a higher national priority.

About Science Debate 2008: Science Debate 2008 (www.sciencedebate2008.com) is a grassroots initiative spearheaded by a growing number of scientists and other concerned citizens to issue a call for a presidential debate on science and technology.

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