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The Center for Information & Research
on Civic Learning & Engagement

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African-American Youth Trust in Government Plummet Big Shifts in Attitudes About Government Among All Races from 2002-2006

More Than Half of Young African-Americans Feel Government is Wasteful, Inefficient Still Most Politically Engaged Racial/Ethnic Group

College Park, MD – Confidence in government among young African-Americans nationwide has fallen dramatically since 2002, according to new research released by the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE) at the University of Maryland.

While the research found that the majority of young African-Americans between ages 15-25 believe government should do more to solve problems, there has been a nearly 20-point increase since 2002 in the percentage of young African-Americans who say that “government is almost always wasteful and inefficient.” This shift in attitudes was also found for young people of all racial groups, though not as drastic as among African-Americans. A fact sheet on youth confidence in government and civic engagement broken down by racial/ethnic groups can be found at www.civicyouth.org.

Despite this loss in confidence in government, African-American youth are the most politically engaged racial/ethnic group. Compared to other groups, African-Americans are the most likely to vote regularly, belong to groups involved with politics, donate money to candidates and parties, display buttons or signs, and contact the media.

“As Black History Month celebrates a tradition of African-American organizing and activism that stretches from colonial times through the Civil Rights Movement, our research shows that today’s African-American youth continue to be the most politically and civically engaged of all racial and ethnic groups,” said Peter Levine, director of CIRCLE.,” said Peter Levine, executive director of CIRCLE. “However, we also found a substantial decrease in trust in government among young African-Americans since 2002, which could possibly be attributed to the highly publicized inept government response to Hurricane Katrina, and the growing public opposition to the war in Iraq.”

Among the other major findings on trust in government for young African-Americans:

- **54 percent feel government is almost always wasteful and inefficient:** This is a more than 20 percent increase since 2002. In addition, the number of young African-Americans who think government often does a better job than people give it credit for dropped from 62 percent to 43 percent.

Page 2/African-American Youth Trust in Government Plummet

- **52 percent believe government is not responsive to the genuine needs of the public:** This represents a nearly 17 percent increase since 2002.
- **43 percent feel government regulation of business does more harm than good:** This is a nearly 15 percent increase from 2002.

The research is based on *The 2006 National Civic and Political Health Survey*, which was conducted from April 27 to June 11, 2006. The survey sampled 1,700 young people ages 15 to 25, and 550 adults ages 26 and older. The survey also over-sampled young Latinos, African-Americans and Asian-Americans. The Pew Charitable Trusts funded this survey.

CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. Since 2001, CIRCLE has conducted, collected and funded research on the civic and political participation of young Americans. CIRCLE is based in the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy and is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Carnegie Corporation of New York and other organizations.