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## **CIRCLE Unveils YouthTruth Campaign, Focused on Dispelling Myths about Young Voters in 2012 Election**

*Launched w/ Release of National Poll of 1,695 Young Voters Commissioned by the Youth Engagement Fund:*

- 1/2 Paying “Some” or “A Lot” of Attention to Pres. Campaign
- More Than Double Choose Obama over Romney as “Candidate Who Best Understands” Their Generation

Medford, MA – Earlier today, the preeminent youth research organization located at Tufts University – the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) – launched **YouthTruth**, a new 2012 campaign initiative focused on dispelling myths about young voters and shattering stereotypes of a potentially decisive voting bloc this November.

With the release of the findings of a 1,695-person, nationwide poll of young Americans commissioned by the Youth Engagement Fund (YEF) CIRCLE kicked off **YouthTruth** – a 2012 election-focused, public awareness campaign that is set to offer up-to-date research & analysis, promote dialogue, and fact-check information in the public domain regarding young people 29 and under. Joining CIRCLE’s director, [Peter Levine](#), for the release of the poll’s findings earlier today were [Alexandra Acker-Lyons](#), Director of the YEF, and [Biko Baker](#), Executive Director of the League of Young Voters.

The nationwide poll, commissioned by the Youth Engagement Fund and conducted between June 22 and July 2, 2012 by Knowledge Networks, surveyed 1,695 U.S. citizens between the ages of 18 and 29. African-Americans, Latinos, and individuals who have never attended college were all oversampled. The survey, conducted online in both English and Spanish, looked at young Americans’ views on the 2012 election, including their choice of presidential candidate on a range of factors, as well as issues influencing their votes and engagement this election cycle.

“Young voters are too often viewed as a homogenous group,” said CIRCLE’s Director, Peter Levine. “The goal of the YouthTruth initiative -- launched today with the release of a comprehensive, nationwide poll of young Americans -- is to dispel the mythology around this group of 46 million Americans who in reality are very diverse and, given their economic futures, have more at stake in 2012 than any older group.”

Alexandra Acker-Lyons, Director of YEF, expressed her enthusiasm about the YEF poll. “We’re excited to share more in-depth knowledge about the Millennial generation and dispel many persistent myths about the youth vote. Clearly, young people are concerned about many key issues and are paying attention to this important election.”

Biko Baker, Executive Director of the League of Young Voters shared, “This important poll gives us some much-needed information about how a large portion of the electorate perceives this election cycle. Any organization, funder, candidate, or activist concerned about the future should check out this report. Young voters are far too sophisticated and diverse to ignore.”

A background document accompanying this press release provides details and analysis regarding key findings of this representative, nationwide survey of over 1,600 young US citizens.

The survey questions range from young Americans’ presidential choice and the defining issues for their generation this election cycle, to how well they understand the new voter I.D. laws.

For a complete look at the poll's toplines and analysis provided by CIRCLE's team of youth experts, go to: <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=3951>.

Utilizing youth voter-focused research and analysis, YouthTruth will disseminate election-related data from CIRCLE and will allow the public and media to bring misinformation to CIRCLE's attention by using the Twitter hashtag #YouthTruth. In turn, CIRCLE's leading team of experts will help monitor media coverage of 18- to 29-year-old voters and disseminate accurate data with exclusive analysis.

Through the YouthTruth campaign, CIRCLE will continue to release exclusive publications and studies, provide analysis of new laws that may affect turnout this November, and facilitate discussions with other organizations on the frontlines of youth voter engagement and civic empowerment.

"We launched YouthTruth with the release of this year's most comprehensive, in-depth national poll taking a look at the attitudes and opinions of young voters 29 and under," concluded Levine. "Today's poll release is just the first in what we hope will be many more important, valuable insights into this important voting bloc."

Learn more about the **YouthTruth** campaign on CIRCLE's website at <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=4029>; follow @CivicYouth on Twitter; or sign-up to receive copies of CIRCLE's cutting-edge research on young Americans and next-day voter turnout estimates for the 2012 elections by emailing [brad@lunamedia.com](mailto:brad@lunamedia.com).

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*CIRCLE ([www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org)) is a nonpartisan, independent, academic research center that studies young people in politics and presents detailed data on young voters in all 50 states. CIRCLE was founded in 2001 with a generous gift from the Pew Charitable Trusts and is part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University. CIRCLE's reputation for reliable, independent, timely research has been hailed by experts in the field of civic partnership, such as Harvard University professor Robert Putnam who said CIRCLE has brought "the best and most serious research to one place."*

*The Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service (<http://activecitizen.tufts.edu>) is a national leader whose model and research are setting the standard for higher education's role in civic engagement education. Serving every school of Tufts University, Tisch College creates an enduring culture that prepares students to be lifelong active citizens.*

*Tufts University ([www.tufts.edu](http://www.tufts.edu)), located on three Massachusetts campuses in Boston, Medford/Somerville and Grafton, and in Talloires, France, is recognized as one of the premier research universities in the United States. Tufts enjoys a global reputation for academic excellence and for the preparation of students as leaders in a wide range of professions. A growing number of innovative teaching and research initiatives span all Tufts campuses, and collaboration among the faculty and students in the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs across the university's schools is widely encouraged.*

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## **BACKGROUND:**

### *Key Findings of National Poll of 1,695 Young Americans*

Below are some of the results of a CIRCLE poll commissioned by the Youth Engagement Fund and conducted by Knowledge Networks. Knowledge Networks administers nationally representative surveys built on a random sample of households. Recruited households are given Internet access if needed. Between June 22 and July 2, 2012, Knowledge Networks surveyed 1,695 U.S. citizens between the ages of 18 and 29. African Americans, Latinos, and individuals who have never attended college were

oversampled, but unless otherwise noted, this press release reports nationally representative statistics. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish. Toplines are available here: <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=3951>.

### **Obama Leads Romney**

**Young people hold mixed opinions of Barack Obama, but they prefer him by a 55%-42% over Mitt Romney, whom most see as a “typical politician.”**

Almost 34% of respondents said they would “definitely” vote for Barack Obama if the election were held today, versus 16.1% who would definitely vote for Mitt Romney. Note that when Rock the Vote surveyed a similar sample in May 2008, 52% of young people said they would vote for Barack Obama, and 39% said they would vote for John McCain, but Obama won 68% of the actual youth vote in 2008.

Barack Obama was seen as better understanding the problems of young people, by a 62.5%-27.4% margin. He also led on all other specific questions about favorability. The 2008 exit poll (of actual voters) asked: Which candidate do you think is in touch with people like you? 69% of young voters answered Obama and 36% McCain.

Almost half of young people were either admiring of (14.4%) or satisfied with (34.6%) President Obama, but the largest single group (39%) was disappointed. Just 9.5% described themselves as “angry” at him. Of those who were angry, 67.5% identified themselves as slightly to extremely conservative.

### **Economic Issues Dominate**

By a very wide margin, young people chose economic issues as the most important for politicians to address: “jobs and the economy” was the top choice of 33%, followed by the cost of college and student loans and the federal budget deficit, both at 11%. No other issue reached double digits.

**When asked about specific economic issues that might affect their presidential vote, the top choices were lack of jobs (21.1%), student debt (11.9%) and rising health care costs (8.8%).** More than one in four said that the cost of college had prevented them personally from getting the college education they wanted.

By a two-to-one margin, young people thought the country was moving in the wrong direction. Most thought the election could make at least a small positive difference in their own lives and communities. The Tea Party drew the support of 10.8% of youth; 14.9% said they supported Occupy Wall Street. Two thirds of young people said that the rich and large corporations had too much power, and 57.1% thought that the richest one percent have too much power.

Young people were split on the recent health care bill -- 30.9% were for and 27.9% were opposed, with the largest group (41.2%) uncertain. Of those who were opposed, many more thought it gave too much power to government rather than too little.

### **Young People Misinformed about Voting Laws**

Comparing what respondents thought were their state voting laws to the actual laws, we found that **68% of young people were either unable/unwilling to answer or were incorrect about whether their state required a photo ID to vote.** In addition, a total of 80% of the young voters were either unable to answer or incorrect about their state’s early registration rules. Specifically, 32% of the non-registered young people thought that their state allowed them to register less than 30 days before the election when it actually required them to do so at least 30 days prior. That means that if they become interested in voting during the final phase of the 2012 campaign, it will be too late for them to register.