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Unmarried Women to Presidential Candidates: Talk to Me *New Survey Concludes Kerry, Bush Not Reaching Crucial Voting Bloc*

(Washington, DC) What do unmarried women want? What they are not getting – presidential candidates who speak to their concerns. According to survey research just released by the non-partisan project Women’s Voices, Women Vote (WVWV), politicians, most particularly presidential candidates George W. Bush and John Kerry, are not discussing the issues that reach and move single, divorced, separated and widowed women: health care, equal pay between men and women, secure pensions and a higher minimum wage.

And in spite of recent reports that women are consumed with security issues, the 12-state survey conducted by Greenberg, Quinlan, Rosner Research finds that 40 percent of unmarried women want to hear less about the war on terrorism.

According to pollster Anna Greenberg, “Unmarried women see this campaign as currently dominated by a discussion of the war on terrorism and security, when they want to hear more about changes that would most improve their lives.” Almost two-thirds of the women polled (61 percent) want to hear more about affordable healthcare, and nearly three-quarters want to hear candidates talk more about equal pay between men and women (73 percent), and about a higher minimum wage (75 percent). Two out of three women polled also want to hear more from presidential candidates about retirement security (64 percent) and more educational opportunities (63 percent).

Page Gardner, co-director of WVWV says, “The security issues these women want to hear about are economic security, health care security and retirement security. The candidates are missing an important opportunity to engage and mobilize this huge cohort of 22 million non-voting women who overwhelmingly say they are certain to vote this year. Unmarried women are a most important voting bloc and candidates cannot afford to ignore them.”

In 2000, 22 million unmarried women – women on their own – stayed home and did not vote in the last presidential election. “These women are cynical and need to be persuaded that their voice matters and change can happen, WVWV co-director Chris Desser explained. “They don’t believe politicians understand or will address their concerns. In fact, nearly one-third of unmarried women polled said their main reason for not voting is that they believe their lives will not improve, no matter who is elected.”

(more)

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But the research also shows that unmarried women are very engaged with this year's election. Pollster Greenberg says they are paying close attention, but are not hearing what they want from candidates: "They think John Kerry is more interested in talking about domestic and economic issues and George W. Bush is more interested in talking about security and "moral" issues. But more importantly, sizable numbers of unmarried women *simply do not know if the candidates are interested in their issues at all*. And that's because the candidates are not talking about equal pay, minimum wage, health care or childcare," Greenberg noted. "The research is very clear, talking about terrorism and the war in Iraq, the security issues that some argue motivate moms, does not resonate with these women – even though almost one third of the women we interviewed for this survey were moms too."

Gardner added, "More than half of women on their own make \$30,000 or less a year. The candidates need to address the concerns of these women who are working hard to support themselves and their families but need a growing and healthy economy and adequate and affordable healthcare."

Women's Voices. Women Vote is a nonpartisan project of a nonprofit organization, The Tides Center, and is working to increase the number of women on their own registering and voting in this election. To that end, they conducted the most extensive research ever done on single women in America – looking at 50 years of public opinion research, census data, exit polling and conducting their own polling and focus groups. WWVW has also compiled and distributed lists of women on their own in 12 states, formed partnerships with organizations that have established voter registration and get-out-the-vote programs, and devised research-driven messages and advertising designed to encourage single woman to vote on November 2nd

For a copy and complete analysis of this survey of 1250 unmarried women, 18-64 years old, go to: www.WWVW.org.

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