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New Poll: Iowa Caucus-Goers Seek a President Who Will End Torture and Restore the Constitution - 10/20/2007

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Iowa Democrats Overwhelmingly Want Next Chief Executive to Protect Civil Liberties, and Seek More Assertive Congress; Republicans Join Democrats on Some Key Issues

DES MOINES, IA (Oct. 4, 2007) – Likely Iowa caucus-goers express a strong desire to elect a president who will do more to protect civil liberties and the Constitution, according to a recent survey of 804 Iowa likely caucus-goers conducted for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

The poll also found that the vast majority of likely Iowa Democratic caucus-goers are dissatisfied with Congress's effort to check presidential abuses of power, and that a majority of likely Republican caucus-goers support two key civil liberties issues. Iowa Democrats express an overwhelming preference for a presidential candidate who will uphold the Constitution, and Republicans oppose torture and support defining "enemy combatants."

Iowa caucus-goers want the next president to:

1. **End torture:** "make it clear that the policy of the United States is to oppose torture and follow the Geneva Conventions" (**94 percent of Democrats, 77 percent of Republicans**);
2. **Define "enemy combatant":** "work with Congress to establish a legal definition of 'enemy combatant' rather than leaving it up to each president to decide" (**88 percent of Democrats, 59 percent of Republicans**);
3. **Restore habeas corpus:** "restore habeas corpus rights for people held at Guantánamo" (**88 percent of Democrats, 42 percent of Republicans**);
4. **End warrantless wiretapping:** "require the government to get a court warrant to listen to the telephone calls of people in the U.S." (**84 percent of Democrats, 46 percent of Republicans**); and

5. **Close Guantánamo:** “close the prison at Guantánamo and schedule trials in the U.S. courts for the terrorist suspects currently held there” **(80 percent of Democrats, 33 percent of Republicans).**

“Candidates should not ignore the broad consensus across the partisan divide for change in our policies,” said ACLU Executive Director Anthony D. Romero. “Congress is preparing to vote on a bill that will modernize the domestic surveillance law, and they should use this opportunity to respond to the mandate for change expressed by voters in this poll. Members of Congress should take note: voters want the attacks on the Constitution to end.”

The survey also reports that Iowa Democrats are extremely disappointed with the unwillingness of Congress to check President Bush’s abuse of power, even more so than Democrats polled nationally. A full 83 percent of Iowa Democrats said that Congress has not done enough to protect the Constitution, compared with 74 percent of Democrats nationally.

“This survey shows that the overwhelming majority of Iowa Democrats, and a substantial number of Republicans, are outraged by the president’s blatant disregard for the civil liberties of Americans,” said Iowa ACLU Executive Director Ben Stone. “It also demonstrates that they are appalled with the lack of Congressional oversight of the Administration and furious that Congress has given the president a blank check when it comes to domestic spying, torture and other violations of the Constitution.”

The ACLU is a non-partisan organization that does not support or oppose candidates for elective office. The organization works with both Republicans and Democrats in advocating protections for civil liberties.

The random sample telephone interview survey was conducted for the ACLU by the Washington, D.C.-based polling firm of Belden Russonello & Stewart during the Aug. 21-Sept. 9, 2007 period, and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 4.9 percent.

[Results from the poll are available at www.aclu.org/poll Web users can answer all the poll questions online and compare their answers to the official poll and to other respondents in their state.]