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**Fax Alert**

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**Election Day Message: Education Reform Counts;  
But so does having a clear message.  
*A fresh message for the media to explore***

Once again Americans are baffling. When it comes to education, there is no one specific agenda or voting pattern that is shared by all Americans. What is clear is that Americans want their elected officials to care about their schools. They want them to see any number of concrete, results-oriented reforms. More about what this election means for education and the victors in Tuesday's voting:

- 1) The obvious: Education matters in voters' minds.
- 2) Voters are, however, simplistic. They want to know that the candidate stands for something, and has a clear vision. They don't want vapid slogans, either.
- 3) Candidates with strong reform records or platforms won. Candidates with no vision, or mixed messages, lost. Candidates with easy education issues — the lottery, for example — drew more support than their opponents, who had no education issue. The lottery, however, was not the decisive factor in those races, just a compelling one.
- 4) All politics is local. Voters are unsure of the exact role of their state or federal legislator when it comes to education, but the message — and their record — matter nonetheless.
- 5) Candidates trying to be all things to all people will lose the education issue, particularly if they have no other issue commanding public attention.
- 6) Teacher unions and their allies are a paper tiger.

The conclusion? The public wants high standards, strong accountability systems in place for teachers, schools and students, more choices, and consequences for all of the above. As we know from such reputable research and survey firms as The Public Agenda Foundation, and from our own internal tracking, these issues are what drive most voters. Newly elected officials and aspiring candidates would do well to ensure that they A) understand the issues and B) don't underestimate the positive power of reform. Those who lost would do well to ask themselves whether or not their message was based only on polls, or related to important issues of concern to voters. The latter is cause for winning.

Look for more post-election analysis later on this month in the Center's November *Monthly Letter to Friends*.

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