



NEWS RELEASE
November 19, 2008

Contact: Lisa Lederer
202/371-1999

Three in Four Voters Want Federal, State and Local Lawmakers to Increase Funding for Afterschool Programs

Poll Finds Afterschool Support Crosses All Demographic & Party Lines

Washington, DC – A new poll taken on Election eve and Election night shows that nearly nine in ten voters (89 percent) say that, given the dangers young people face today, afterschool programs are important. Four in five voters (83 percent) agree there should be some type of organized activity or safe place for children and teens to go after school every day that provides opportunities for them to learn – and 76 percent want the new Congress and their newly elected state and local officials to increase funding for afterschool programs. The poll was conducted by Lake Research Partners with bipartisan analysis by Lake and The Tarrance Group for the Afterschool Alliance.

“During these tough economic times, when so many parents are forced to extend their work day or take more than one job, voters recognize that the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families are absolutely essential,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Voters know a sound investment when they see one, and they know that quality afterschool programs are especially important right now because they give working families the support they urgently need, and make more options available to parents.”

Other key findings from the new survey:

- Three in four voters (76 percent) say that afterschool programs are “an absolute necessity” for their community, and 58 percent strongly agree.
- Majorities of both Obama and McCain voters *strongly* agree that “there should be some type of organized activity or safe place for children and teens to go after school every day that provides opportunities for them to learn.” Just 12 percent of voters disagree with that statement.
- Support for afterschool programs holds strong across all demographic, ideological and party lines. Ninety-four percent of Democrats, 83 percent of Independents and 71 percent of Republicans agree there’s a need for an organized activity or safe place for children/teens, as do

73 percent of conservatives. Majorities of voters of all races and ages, from all regions, and parents as well as non-parents, agree.

- Men's intensity of support for afterschool programs is increasing. Today, 63 percent of men strongly agree there should be some type of organized activity or safe place for children/teens to go after school every day that provides opportunities for them to learn. In 2006, just 53 percent of men strongly agreed.
- Three in four voters (76 percent) think that afterschool programs are important to helping youth stay in school and addressing the dropout crisis in America. Similarly, 76 percent see afterschool programs as important to helping prepare youth for the workforce. Only about one in five voters are neutral or see no link between afterschool programs and helping youth stay in school and prepare to enter the workforce.

“We're very encouraged by these results, and intend to ask federal lawmakers to significantly increase afterschool funding next year,” Grant added. “The federal government's underfunding of afterschool programs has forced many programs to cut back so that they serve fewer children for fewer hours. Other programs have closed, leaving children unsupervised and at risk for substance abuse, gang involvement, teen pregnancy, crime and other serious problems after the school day ends. We look forward to working with the new Congress and President-Elect Obama to reach the funding levels mapped out in the *No Child Left Behind Act* and help make quality, affordable afterschool programs available to all children across the nation.”

The *No Child Left Behind Act* called for a series of modest, annual increases in federal funding for afterschool. Despite that, funding for the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) afterschool initiative was subject to a series of small cuts until last year, when the 110th Congress provided a small increase, bringing funding just over the \$1 billion mark, for the first time. The *No Child Left Behind Act* authorized \$2.5 billion for 21st CCLC in FY 2007.

Some 14.3 million kindergarten through 12th graders take care of themselves after the school day ends, including almost four million middle school students in grades six to eight. The parents of 15.3 million children say their children would participate if an afterschool program were available.

The new national public opinion survey was conducted by Lake Research Partners with bipartisan analysis by Lake Research Partners and The Tarrance Group. It reached 1,200 likely registered voters, 1,000 via landline phones and 200 via cell phones, on November 2 - 4, 2008. Only respondents who told survey-takers that they were either almost certain to vote or had already voted were queried. The poll's margin of error is +/- 2.8%.

###

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.