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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **LATINOS VOTING FOR CHANGE IN KEY REPUBLICAN HELD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS, NON-PARTISAN SURVEY FINDS; WAR IN IRAQ LABELED "A MISTAKE"**

*War in Iraq, Anti-Incumbent Sentiment, Bush Lack of Popularity Driving Factors in Latino Decision-Making*

**SACRAMENTO, CA** – Latinos overwhelmingly support the Democratic candidate in three key Republican-held Congressional seats in Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado, and are very motivated for change, according to a non-partisan survey conducted by Lake Research Partners for the Latino Policy Coalition, in partnership with Telemundo Spanish-language television. Driven by concern over the economy, the war in Iraq, and a strong belief that the country is headed in the wrong direction, Latinos are poised for change and in a very strong anti-incumbent mood.

"Latinos are in a mood for change and the President and the war in Iraq are the chief catalysts for Latinos voting for Democrats in these Republican-held Districts," said Celinda Lake, president of Lake Research Partners, who conducted the non-partisan poll for the Latino Policy Coalition and Telemundo. "With such high Latino voter registration in the three Congressional Districts, teamed with strong negative voter sentiment about the war in Iraq and the economy, I would not be surprised to see these seats change to the democratic column."

The LPC's survey of four Congressional Districts found:

- Democrat Gabrielle Giffords leads Randy Graf by 63% to 25% in Arizona's 8<sup>th</sup> CD
- Latinos voters prefer Democrat Ed Perlmutter over Republican Rick O'Donnell by 69% to 15% in Colorado's 7<sup>th</sup> CD
- Democratic Attorney General Patsy Madrid leads Republican incumbent Heather Wilson by 60% to 26% in New Mexico's 1<sup>st</sup> CD
- Incumbent Richard Pombo leads Democratic challenger Jerry McNerney by 43% to 36%, with 21% of Latino voters undecided in California's 11<sup>th</sup> CD

"Latinos will play a major role in determining who will win in these four Congressional seats," said Jim Gonzalez, Chair of the non-partisan Latino Policy Coalition. "These four Districts are critical to whether Democrats take control of the House or Republicans stay in power. This survey clearly demonstrates that Latinos believe the country is off on the wrong track, are unhappy with their representatives and want change."

Overall, the national survey found that 61% of Latino voters intend to vote for a democratic candidate, with 19% saying they intend to vote for a republican candidate in a generic trial heat. In the overall national survey, every Latino demographic group except self-identified Republicans prefer Democrats and the advantage is never smaller than 17 points.

"Results from Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico, showing strong pro-Democratic sentiment among Latinos in Republican-held congressional districts, represent an ominous warning to Republicans and a long sought opportunity for Democrats," said Gary M. Segura, PhD, Director of the Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity, Race and Sexuality at the University of Washington. "Eroding the Republican majority requires Democrats to make inroads into Republican strong-holds. The Mountain West, with its rapidly growing Latino population, looks like the right location."

President Bush's overall job rating remains overwhelmingly negative among Latino voters. Polled in April, June and again for this poll, Latinos continue to believe President Bush is doing a poor job (73%). Of particular interest, in each of the key Congressional Districts, particularly Colorado's 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional, Latinos overwhelmingly believe President Bush is doing a poor job (80%) and represents a drag on Republicans among Latino voters.

"It is clear from this study that President Bush's effect on Latino voters is nonexistent," said Luis Ricardo Fraga, PhD., of Stanford University. "If President Bush's popularity among Latinos was to be the future of the Republican Party, it is clear that the GOP still has much work to do to improve its support from this community."

Concerning the war in Iraq, Latino voters by almost a two-to-one margin now believe it was a mistake (58% to 31%), more than 64% believe the war has not been worth it, and half of respondents in targeted districts and 57% overall believe the war has made America less safe. When asked whether they would prefer a plan to begin withdrawal immediately or hold out for victory, 60% of Latino voters prefer an immediate phased withdrawal. Fully 80% say the war in Iraq will play an important role in who respondents vote for in the November elections.

Added Karthick Ramakrishnan, PhD., Director of the Program in the Politics of Immigration, Ethnicity and Race at the University of California at Riverside, "This election will be determined not only by issues such as Iraq and the economy, but also by the turnout of key population groups. Turnout among Latinos will likely prove crucial in

the Mountain West, where Republican incumbents are facing stiff challenges and Latinos are large enough to provide the margin of victory. The fact that Latinos are trending strongly Democratic is helping to make many districts competitive this election year."

Finally, the survey found that Latinos believe Democrats would do a better job of handling every issue asked in the survey, including Economic issues (58% to 18%); Immigration (51% to 16%); Energy prices (49% to 17%); the war in Iraq (49% to 21%) and even Homeland security and terrorism (38% to 28%).

"President Bush's inaction regarding the economy has led to his demise with Latino voters in these critical congressional districts," said Dr. Frances Marquez, PhD, Assistant Professor at Gallaudet University. "These likely voters stated that health care, inflation, job loss, and secure retirement were key issues---issues that are negatively impacting the lives of all Americans."

## **METHODOLOGY**

Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached 600 Latino registered and likely voters in the 23 states with the highest Latino population density. These states include: California, TX, FL, NY, IL, Arizona, NJ, New Mexico, Colorado, GA, NV, NC, WA, MA, VA, PA, CT, MI, OR, MD, IN, OH, and WI. The survey was conducted September 16-27th, 2006. In addition, oversamples were conducted in California-11, New Mexico-1, Arizona-8 and Colorado-7 where 300 registered likely Latino voters were interviewed. In total, 1800 Latino voters took part in this survey. Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn from files of registered voters. The data were weighted slightly by age and education in order to ensure that it accurately reflects the demographic configuration of these populations. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.2 percentage points.

### **About the Latino Policy Coalition**

The Latino Policy Coalition is a national non-partisan non-profit consortium of the country's leading Latino research organizations and scholars. These organizations are dedicated to measuring through nationwide polls public policy issues affecting the Latino community. Chaired by former SF Supervisor Jim Gonzalez, the LPC's mission is to help define Latino community concerns on key contemporary issues in order to stimulate public policy debate among local, state and national elected officials. For more information please visit our website at [www.latinopolicycoalition.org](http://www.latinopolicycoalition.org)

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