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National School Boards Action Center Releases its First National Educational Poll of Voter Priorities for Public Schools

Support for Public Schools is Strong, and Nearly Two Thirds of Voters Want Funding Increased, While Opposition to Public School Funding Being Taken Away for Private Education is High

Alexandria, Va. (February 3, 2020) — The National School Boards Action Center (NSBAC) today released the results of its national poll of voter opinions and attitudes about public education, federal policymaking and key issues impacting public schools and student achievement. The poll, **“America Speaks on Public Schools: Results from the 2020 NSBAC Public Education Poll”** shows that voters strongly support public schools and are opposed to taking away funds from public schools to fund for-profit charters or private schools.

The results were presented at the annual National School Boards Association’s (NSBA) Advocacy Institute in Washington, D.C., to an audience of more than 800 school board members from across the country.

Voters across the board are oriented toward public education and are looking to elected officials of both parties and at all levels of government to prioritize public education and do a better job addressing it. Funding, school safety, real world learning and teacher shortages were identified as both big problems and extremely important issues to address. While views of charter schools are mixed, the public is adamant that charter schools should be under the oversight of local school boards like other public schools.

Other major findings include:

- Voters expressed strong commitment to public schools and support for increased funding, even if it means they would pay more in taxes. Moreover, 73% of voters indicate that inadequate funding and resources for public education is a problem, 64% think funding for public schools should be increased and, for those who do think funding should be increased, 83% of them support public funding, even if means they would pay more in taxes. In fact, more than six in ten voters say they would be less likely to vote for an elected official who supported taking funds away from public schools to give to private schools.
- Teacher shortages and school safety are top concerns for voters across the political spectrum. 67% of voters say the lack of quality teachers is a problem and 81% say this as an important issue to address. On school safety, voters want to ensure that public schools are safe – 92% say it is an important issue to address. Additionally, voters support the instruction of real-world skills, with 77% saying it is an important issue to address.



- Local school boards enjoy high favorable ratings from voters nationwide, with a strong majority (58%) saying they are favorable toward their local school board. Conversely, voters overall do not think the President or Congress, regardless of party affiliation, are paying enough attention to the state of public schools today—59% think Republicans in Congress are not paying enough attention, 54% think Democrats in Congress are not paying enough attention and 58% think the President is not paying enough attention.

The findings in the poll are based on the results of a nationally representative survey of 1,000 likely 2020 voters. There was an oversampling of 100 African Americans, 100 Latinx, 100 parents of school-age children and 100 battleground state voters, which allowed for a more in-depth look and examination of attitudes and the importance of public schools

“Going into an election cycle, it’s imperative that we understand what is on voters’ minds with regards to the challenges facing public schools today,” said Frank Henderson, NSBAC President. “Voters made it clear that public school funding, teacher shortages, school safety and the need to teach real-world skills are issues that they recognize as critical for elevating public schools, and they are willing to pay to achieve this important goal.”

NSBA Executive Director and CEO Thomas J. Gentzel added, “Strong public schools are the best way for the nation to prosper. Students need support to thrive in our highly competitive world and to live a fulfilling life. As a cornerstone of our society, we need to make enhancing public education and serving the 50 million public school students our number one priority.”

Henderson adds, “Prioritizing school safety must be at the top of our list of priorities, but to adequately meet that goal, local public schools need help from our federal elected officials to get us the resources and tools we need. At a time where the number of deadly school violence incidents has increased, more work must be done.”

Republican pollster, Bob Carpenter part of the bipartisan team who conducted the poll said, “Throughout the survey we see strong support for public schools including greater funding, even if it means tax increases,” “This support extends across gender, region and partisanship. And, voters are ready and willing to punish those elected officials who take the opposite approach and move to cut funding.”

Celinda Lake, a Democratic pollster who also conducted the poll added, “With the vast majority of school-age children in this nation attending a local public school, public education continues to be an important part of communities across this nation. Our recent survey of likely 2020 voters shows voters nationwide were committed to public education, favourable toward their local schools, teachers and school boards and very supportive of increased funding for their local public schools.”



About NSBAC: The National School Boards Action Center (NSBAC) is a champion for public schools and the more than 50 million students who attend them. It gives people in every community in the country who support their neighborhood school a voice in our nation's capital. Dedicated to its vision to strengthen public schools and provide students with the support they need to get a high-quality education, NSBAC educates, organizes, and mobilizes advocates to secure federal policies that advance public education so students can realize their dreams. NSBAC has successfully helped secure key federal policies including the landmark Every Student Succeeds Act, reinforcing the organization's commitment to students who need extra support and educational equity. NSBAC also campaigns for federal policies that enhance educational equity, expands access to educational technology, and improves student well-being. NSBAC provides national grassroots advocacy on issues important to school board members and public education. www.nsbac.org.

Lake Research Partners (LRP) is a nationally recognized qualitative and quantitative research firm with offices in Washington, DC, New York, and California. LRP has conducted surveys and focus groups for progressive candidates, elected officials, government entities, non-profits, and foundations.

Chesapeake Beach Consulting is a nationally recognized research firm that has conducted surveys and focus groups for Republican candidates at the local, state and federal level as well as numerous associations and corporations.

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