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National Survey Explores Race and Gender in 21st -Century Politics

A team of political scientists at the University of California, Santa Barbara, the University of New Mexico, the University of Massachusetts, and the University of Notre Dame has completed a groundbreaking survey that explores how race and gender is changing the political landscape of the United States. The scholars presented their findings today at a press conference at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C.

The Gender and Multicultural Leadership Project is, to date, the most comprehensive multiracial, multi-office national survey of Black, Latino, Asian, and Native American elected officials holding position at state and local levels.

Principal investigators include Pei-te Lien, a professor of political science at UC Santa Barbara; Christine Marie Sierra, a professor of political science at the University of New Mexico; Carol Hardy-Fanta, director of the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts, Boston; and Dianne M.

Pinderhughes, a professor of political science at the University of Notre Dame. They constructed a national database of over 10,000 public officials in federal and selected state and local office. Survey respondents were drawn from this database and included 1,354 officials, slightly more than half of whom are African American, over one-third are Latino/a, seven percent are Asian American, and two percent are Native American. Among other topics, respondents discussed their positions on issues such as the war in Iraq, the No Child Left Behind education policy,

immigration, and the Voting Rights Act.

A news release issued by The Gender and Multi-Cultural Leadership Project explains the survey's findings in detail. The text follows:

Gender and Multicultural Leadership Survey: The Future of Governance Description of Study and Selected Findings

A team of political scientists recently completed the Gender and Multicultural Leadership Project, an exploration into how race and gender affect 21st century politics. They will present their findings on Wednesday, Nov. 7, from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C.

The face of leadership is changing the political landscape of the United States. However, the nation knows little about elected officials of color. This groundbreaking study redefines leaders in the 21st century. The survey shows that people of color - especially those serving at the grassroots level - represent the future of governance. The survey examines the personal backgrounds, paths to public office, representational roles, and policy stands on key issues of pressing importance to state and local elected officials.

The principal investigators are Christine Marie Sierra, University of New Mexico; Carol Hardy-Fanta, University of Massachusetts Boston; Dianne M. Pinderhughes, University of Notre Dame; and Pei-te Lien, University of California-Santa Barbara.

The survey is, to date, the nation's most comprehensive multiracial, multi-office national survey of Black, Latino, Asian and American Indian elected officials holding positions at state and local levels. It is also an in-depth look at minorities in public office—who they are, their distribution nationally, and their policy positions on topics such as the Iraq War, No Child Left Behind, Immigrant-Friendly Policies, and the Voting Rights Act.

Findings include the following:

- The average age of the elected officials of color was 56 and there were no significant gender differences, however, women of color are older when seeking office for the first time: 45 years of age compared to 42 for male elected officials.
- Elected officials are highly educated, with 58 percent having completed college, and 30 percent of the college educated going on to earn master's, law, medical or

other graduate degrees. Racial differences are large and significant: 87 percent of Asian elected officials have at least a college degree or higher compared to 63 percent of Black, and 46 percent of Latino/a and American Indian officials.

- Women elected officials of color follow a national trend - 61 percent have college degrees compared to 56 percent of men.
- One of the largest gender differences is in marital status of the elected officials: 80 percent of male elected officials of color are married, compared to 53 percent of women.
- Black officials do not support drivers' licenses for illegal immigrants but do support government services in multiple languages for non-English speaking clients.
- Only one out of two Asian officials support public school instruction in languages other than English, while clear majorities of all other racial groups agree with it.
- One in three officials strongly disagreed with the statement, "The US made the right decision in using military force against Iraq."
- Eight in ten agreed with the statement, "The US should bring its troops home from Iraq as soon as possible."
- More than four times as many teachers who are elected officials strongly oppose the No Child Left Behind Act than those who strongly favor it. The survey also revealed strong opposition to NCLB among school board members (59 percent).
- The strongest opposition to the No Child Left Behind Act is among state legislators of color. More than 70 percent are opposed or strongly opposed to the Act.
- The vast majority, 79 percent, of elected officials of color support Roe v. Wade.
- Asian women officials at 93 percent had the strongest support for the right to an abortion, followed by Black women officials at 86 percent.
- Significantly more women, 63 percent, than men, 54 percent, agreed with the statement, "By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a private decision to be made with her physician."

- Both male and female elected officials of color showed strong support for renewal of the 2007 Extension of the Voting Rights Act.
- Strong support across racial and gender groups was expressed for the Voting Rights Act provision to send federal observers to polling places where electoral discrimination based on race or color is suspected.

The research team led by Sierra, Hardy-Fanta, Pinderhughes and Lien, constructed a national database of over 10,000 public officials in federal and selected state and local office. They verified and expanded on the directory listings from the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in D.C. (for Black elected officials); the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials; and the Asian-American Studies Center at UCLA. For data on American Indians in state legislatures, the researchers drew from scholarly sources and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The sample for the national survey was drawn from this database. The survey conducted telephone interviews with 1,354 officials, with slightly more than half the respondents being Black/African American, over one-third Latino/a, seven percent Asian and two percent American Indian. Seventy-two percent of those public officials who were successfully contacted agreed to participate in the survey, which was conducted by the Institute for Public Policy at the University of New Mexico.

Further details of the findings will be available on the Gender and Multi-Cultural Leadership Project website, www.gmcl.org.

Related Links [Gender and Multi-Cultural Leadership Project](#)

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.