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To: Interested Parties

ALYSIA R. SNELL
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From: Lake Research Partners

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Date: April 4, 2007

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Re: Anger, Anxiety, and Restoring the American Dream

**DR. ROBERT G.
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Partner

A recent survey of non-supervisory¹ workers nationwide by Lake Research Partners² **shows a deep level of anxiety, insecurity, and anger among Americans who are working harder and harder to make ends meet and achieve the American Dream.**

DANIEL R. GOTOFF
Partner

Despite reports of continued economic growth, workers feel the American Dream is slipping away from them. In addition, workers are very negative about the direction of the economy, and they strongly believe it is getting harder to achieve the American Dream. Few believe that with the way things are going now their children will be better off in the future.

JOSHUA ULIBARRI
Vice President

RICK A. JOHNSON
Vice President

This anxiety is matched by a growing anger towards corporate and wealthy interests that working Americans believe have too much power in Washington. However, working Americans see that by working together in unions, and with community groups, responsible employers, and responsive political leaders, they can make the American Dream attainable again through corporate accountability, retirement security, and affordable health care.

KEY FINDINGS—THE PROBLEMS

- **Workers are deeply negative on the direction of the economy.** By over a 2 to 1 margin, they believe the economy is headed in the wrong direction (64% “wrong track” and 26% “right direction”). This negativity is strong across all demographic groups, and mirrors findings from our August survey.
- **Workers are feeling left behind in any supposed economic growth.** Over four out of five workers (82%) agree (56% strongly) that “No matter what you hear about the economy, working families are falling behind.”

¹ ‘Non-supervisory workers’ are comprised of workers who are not: full-time students, nor retired persons, nor business owners or CEO’s, company executives, managers, or professionals such as doctors or lawyers, but who are: either employed or looking for work, work at least 20 hours per week if employed, and earn \$100,000 per year or less.

² The telephone survey of 800 non-supervisory workers nationwide was conducted March 11-19, 2007 by Lake Research Partners. The margin of sampling error is +/-3.5%. This survey was conducted for Change To Win.

- **These economic woes underpin workers’ pessimism towards reaching the American Dream both today and for their children in the future.** Seventy-four percent believe it is becoming harder today to achieve the American Dream, with 16% saying it is about the same and only 7% saying it is becoming easier. This concern extends to the next generation, as 69% believe it will be harder for their children to reach the American Dream.
- **Working Americans are angry about the disproportionate power wealthy and corporate interests have over them, and see this as a major barrier to the American Dream.** When asked to rate³ reasons for why the American Dream is becoming more difficult to reach, workers believe that:
 - “Corporations have gained too much power in the political system and that has hurt working people” (71% rate 10-8, 53% rate 10),
 - “Corporations are too focused on short-term profits rather than investing in their workers and the future” (71% rate 10-8, 47% rate 10),
 - “The government gives tax breaks and special favors to the rich while neglecting working and middle class families” (69% rate 10-8, 54% rate 10).

KEY FINDINGS—THE SOLUTIONS

- **A majority believe the American Dream can be reached.** Fifty percent feel the American Dream is obtainable, and nearly one in five believe they have already obtained it (18%).
- **Workers do not believe the American Dream is about “getting rich,” but instead view it as getting the basics of economic security and providing a better future for their children.** The most important elements⁴ of the American Dream include: “Having a job that pays enough to support a family” (94% rate 10-8, 80% rate 10), “Having affordable quality health care that you can depend on” (91% rate 10-8, 75% rate 10), and “Being able to ensure your children have the opportunity to succeed” (89% rate 10-8, 74% rate 10).
- **Unions and workers’ associations are seen as important allies in helping working Americans achieve these vital aspects of the American Dream.** A significant majority of working Americans feel joining unions or workers’ associations will help working people achieve many of the important elements of the American Dream, such as: “Having a job that pays enough to support a family” (92% helpful, 64% definitely helpful), “Having affordable quality health care that you can depend on” (89% helpful, 60% definitely helpful), and “Being

³ Rated on a scale of 10 to 0 with 10 meaning “it is an extremely convincing reason” and 0 means “it is not a convincing reason at all.”

⁴ Elements rated a scale of 10 to 0 with 10 meaning “it is an extremely important part of the American Dream for you” and 0 means “it is not important at all.”

able to ensure your children have the opportunity to succeed” (82% helpful, 53% definitely helpful).

- **Despite the economic pessimism, a strong majority of workers believe restoring the American Dream is possible if business would work with unions and other organizations.**
- A significant majority of workers (58%) agree (45% strongly) with the more optimistic “Real change”⁵ statement about this partnership, while only 31% (23% strongly) agree with the more cynical “Talking about” statement.
- **Protecting retirement security, creating a fair tax system, increasing access to health care, and raising the minimum wage are critical to restoring the American Dream.** When asked to rate⁶ steps that could be taken to make the American Dream more obtainable, roughly 4 out of 5 workers rate the following steps as highly effective measures:
 - “Protect and preserve Social Security and make sure all workers have retirement benefits they can count on” (83% rate 10-8, 66% rate 10).
 - “Create a more progressive tax system that is fair to workers and makes billionaires pay their fair share in taxes” (83% rate 10-8, 65% rate 10).
 - “Government guarantees that every American has access to quality, affordable health care” (81% rate 10-8, 65% rate 10).
 - “Raise the national minimum wage and adjust it upward when the cost of living increases” (78% rate 10-8, 63% rate 10).
- **Workers strongly believe holding corporations accountable is also key to restoring the American Dream.** In the same set of questions about making the American Dream more obtainable, over 4 out of 5 workers rate the following steps as highly effective measures:
 - “Government makes sure employers keep their promises to employees, including protecting their pensions and health care” (82% rate 10-8, 63% rate 10),
 - “Hold large global multinational corporations accountable to pay their fair share for the problems they create in the world, such as

⁵ Text of statements: “Real change is possible if we join together businesses, families, working people, and community groups. We have done it before and we can restore the American Dream together.” OR “Talking about restoring the American Dream sounds good but nothing will change. The wealthy and powerful make the rules in this country, and there’s not much working people can do about it.”

⁶ Rated on a scale of 10 to 0 with 10 meaning “this step would be very effective” and 0 means “the step would not be effective at all.”

environmental pollution and low wages” (78% rate 10-8, 60% rate 10),

- “Make it less profitable for companies to outsource jobs by removing tax breaks for sending jobs overseas” (75% rate 10-8, 60% rate 10).
- “Provide information about companies so Americans can use their power as consumers to support responsible companies that respect workers and families” (76% rate 10-8, 53% rate 10).

For information regarding the Lake Research Partners survey, contact Celinda Lake or Rick Johnson in our Washington DC office (202.776.9066), or David Mermin in our Oakland, CA office (510.286.2097), or visit our website at www.lakeresearch.com.