



## News Release

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**New national survey of 18-24 year-olds on hot button political issues released:**

### **MIXED VIEWS ON ABORTION; STRONG SUPPORT FOR SEX EDUCATION AND GAY RIGHTS**

#### **Most 18-24 Year-Olds Support Parental Consent Requirements on Abortion**

MENLO PARK, CA – Young people have mixed opinions on abortion, but strong positions on comprehensive sex education, HIV/AIDS policies, and gay rights, all hot button issues that could be affected by the upcoming presidential campaign, according to a new national survey of 18-24 year-olds released today by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and MTV's "Choose or Lose" campaign. More than 600 18-24 year-olds were interviewed for the survey, titled *Sex Laws: Youth Opinion on Sexual Health Issues in the 2000 Election*.

Seventy percent of young people say that whatever their own opinion on abortion, they favor a woman having the choice to have an abortion with the advice of her doctor, and 60% favor federal funding so that poor women have the same access to abortions as other women have. On the other hand, about half (47%) say they favor policies that would make abortion illegal in all cases except rape, incest or to save the life of the mother. More than two-thirds (68%) say they support policies requiring girls under 18 to get a parent's consent for abortion (17 states currently require parental consent and 15 require parental notification, although "bypass" provisions allow the requirement to be waived, usually by a judge).

About half (47%) of 18-24 year-olds say a candidate's position on abortion wouldn't make much difference to their vote one way or the other (18% say they would be more likely to support a candidate who favored overturning or strongly restricting access to abortions, while 31% say they would be less likely to support such a candidate). More women than men say they would be less likely to support a candidate who favored overturning or strongly restricting a woman's right to choose (40% of women v. 23% of men).

The survey is being released in conjunction with a television special called *Choose or Lose 2000: Sex Laws*, to be broadcast on MTV on Wednesday, October 18 at 9:00 p.m. ET/PT. The special, co-presented by TIME Magazine, is part of an ongoing partnership with the Kaiser Family Foundation to bring sexual health information to MTV's viewers.

(more)

“This survey makes it clear that we can’t stereotype young people’s opinions on public policy,” said Vicky Rideout, a Vice President at the Kaiser Family Foundation. “They have complex, nuanced views on many of these hot button issues.”

“The outcome of the upcoming presidential election will undoubtedly have a dramatic influence on such crucial issues to young people as abortion, gay and lesbian rights, and sex education,” commented Dave Sirulnick, Executive Vice President of News & Production at MTV. “We hope *Choose or Lose 2000: Sex Laws* will help young voters to make informed decisions with regards to these issues on Election Day.”

About three out of four (73%) young adults oppose policies restricting federal funding to abstinence-only sex education courses in schools (25% favor such restrictions), and six in ten say they would be more likely to support a candidate who favors making federal funding available to comprehensive sex education courses that include information on contraceptive options (5% say they would be less likely to support such a candidate, and 32% say a candidate’s position on sex ed wouldn’t make much difference one way or another). Eighty-four percent believe that high school health centers should make condoms available to students who ask for them.

On issues concerning the rights of gays and lesbians, more than three out of four (77%) young adults say they favor increased penalties for people who commit hate crimes against gays, and 72% support providing the same legal rights for gay couples forming civil unions as those provided to heterosexual married couples. They are more closely divided on the specific question of whether gay couples should have adoption rights (56% support, 38% oppose) and on whether gays and lesbians should be allowed to serve openly in the military (53% support, 41% oppose). Half of 18-24 year-olds (51%) say a candidate’s position on expanding legal protections for gays wouldn’t make much difference to their vote one way or the other (28% would be more likely to support a candidate who favored expanding such protections, while 20% said they would be less likely to support such a candidate).

On HIV/AIDS, more than two-thirds say research to find an AIDS vaccine (78%) and to find better AIDS treatments (66%) should be a top priority for the government. Nearly three-quarters (71%) support proposals to require health officials to notify past sexual or needle-sharing partners of people who test positive for HIV.

#### **Methodology**

*Sex Laws: Youth Opinion on Sexual Health Issues in the 2000 Election* is a national random sample telephone survey of 603 adults ages 18-24. The questionnaire was designed and analyzed by staff at the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, MTV: Music Television and Princeton Survey Research Associates (PSRA), and was conducted by PSRA July 5-17, 2000. The margin of error is plus or minus 4%.

**A copy of the full questionnaire and topline data are available online at [www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org), at MTV’s [www.chooseorlose.com](http://www.chooseorlose.com), or by calling the Foundation’s publication request line at 1-800-656-4533 (ask for #3067).**

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, based in Menlo Park, California, is an independent national health care philanthropy and is not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries.

MTV’s “Choose or Lose 2000” is a multi-dimensional on-and-off air campaign designed to engage and inform young people about their stake in the future of this country by encouraging them to register and vote.

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