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New NCCD Poll Shows Public Strongly Favors Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment

New federal budget deeply cuts funding for youth delinquency prevention programs

[Oakland, CA] –A new poll from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, conducted by Zogby International shows that the public overwhelmingly supports rehabilitation and treatment for young people in trouble, *not* prosecution in the adult court or incarceration in adult jails or prisons. US voters are concerned about youth crime and clearly express their willingness to fund programs to reduce crime. NCCD is the oldest criminal justice research organization in the U.S. Major findings from the survey of likely voters include:

- 9 out of 10 people polled believe that rehabilitation and treatment for incarcerated youth can help prevent future crime, and 8 out of 10 thought spending money on rehabilitative services and treatment for youth will save money in the long run.
- 7 out of 10 of those polled felt that putting young people (under age 18) in an adult correctional facility will make them more likely to commit future crime. More than two-thirds (68 percent) disagreed that incarcerating youth in adult facilities “teaches them a lesson and deters them from committing future crimes.”
- By more than a 15 to 1 margin (92 percent to 6 percent), those polled believe that the decision to transfer youth to adult court should be made on a case-by-case basis. Thousands of young people end up automatically transferred to the adult system, either by a prosecutor, because of the crime, or because in their state, young people are automatically considered adults by courts.

Just as the Bush Administration is announcing its drastic budget cuts to federal juvenile justice efforts, including eliminating funding for the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the US voting public, across all demographic categories, is expressing overwhelming support of prevention and rehabilitation for youth. Voters are also overwhelmingly against blanket policies for trying youth in adult criminal courts and sentencing them to time in adult jails and

prisons. Their interest is in a more effective juvenile system, one that holds kids accountable and gives them the help they need.

While young people tried and sentenced in the adult court will receive an adult record, and can lose access to student financial aid, and their right to vote because of an adult conviction, the poll showed that 66 percent of those polled said it was “unacceptable” that a criminal conviction should negatively affect a youth’s future opportunities for jobs and education.

The survey was conducted in January, 2007, using a national sample of likely voters and utilizing methodology approved by the American Association for Public Opinion Research. Likely voters were polled on their views on whether prosecuting youth in adult court and placing youth in adult jails and prisons were effective ways to deter crime, and on their views on other public safety approaches. The poll comes as a number of states, including Illinois, Connecticut, North Carolina, and Wisconsin are considering proposals to reduce the number of youth automatically tried as adults.

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency, founded in 1907, is a nonprofit organization which promotes effective, humane, fair, and economically sound solutions to family, community, and justice problems. NCCD conducts research, promotes reform initiatives, and seeks to work with individuals, public and private organizations, and the media to prevent and reduce crime and delinquency.

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