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CONTACT:

Frederick Boehmke, faculty advisor for the Hawkeye Poll, 319-335-2342 (office), 716-866-9277 (cell), frederick-boehmke@uiowa.edu; Cassandra Tai, Hawkeye Poll, yuehong-tai@uiowa.edu.

Hawkeye Poll: Iowans split on education transparency bills

According to a recent Hawkeye Poll — conducted by University of Iowa faculty and students between March 31 and April 13 — a slight majority of Iowans (53.5%) expressed concern about politicians who are not educators making decisions about education. Similarly, a majority of Iowans (55.7%) support or strongly support requiring schools to make classroom materials available for parents to review, but Iowans are split on whether a series of bills regarding education transparency for parents should be passed into law.

Education has been a big topic during the 2022 Iowa legislative session and various bills about education have been proposed. Though a majority (53.5%) expressed concern about politicians' involvement in making decisions about education, a smaller 40.2% of respondents said they are concerned about parents who are not educators making educational decisions.

When asked whether they support or oppose requiring schools to post library catalogs online, a plurality of respondents, 39.1%, indicated support for this proposal, while 27.8% of respondents oppose it. Another 27.2% were neutral on the issue. Exactly 33.0% of respondents support requiring schools to respond to parental requests to review and remove library books within specific timelines, with 30.6% of respondents opposed, and 28.3% being neutral. 39.6% of respondents support the proposal that requires students to pass a U.S. citizenship test as a requirement for high school graduation, compared to 36.8% opposing it. In terms of book bans, a plurality of respondents, 41.0%, indicated support prohibiting schools from requiring any lessons involving a list of specified sexually explicit material without parental consent, while 38.6% of respondents oppose it. Another 23.8% are neutral on the issue.

Two bills that require making materials available for review were passed in Iowa Senate and House, respectively. The last two of these policies, as part of the Parent or Guardian Bill of Rights, has been passed in Iowa Senate.

Notable differences were found when comparing responses based on the respondents' political party identification. A majority of Republicans (71.1%) supported the requirement for schools to post curriculum online, along with 45.4% of Democrats. Republicans were more likely to support education transparency policies, whereas Democrats were more likely to oppose them. 55.2% of Republicans supported requiring high school students to take the U.S. citizenship test to graduate compared to 29.7% of Democrats; 52.6% of Republicans supported requiring schools to post library books compared to 28.4% of Democrats; 48.9% of Republicans supported the requirement for schools to respond to parents' request within specific timelines compared to 24.9% of Democrats; and 58.2% of Republicans supported banning specifically sexually explicit materials compared to 28.5% of Democrats. On the other hand, 52.3%, 37.6%, 39.6%, and 41.5% of Democrats oppose these policies, respectively.

Of those who are from a household that has at least one child younger than 18, a majority of respondents (60.4%) support the requirement for schools to post curriculum online compared to 11.9% who oppose it. For the rest of policies, a plurality of respondents indicated their support. Specifically, 42.8% and 41.5% of respondents support requiring schools to post library catalogs online and to respond to parents' request within specific time frames; 42.7% support making the U.S. citizenship test a high school graduation requirement; and 42.9% support banning specified sexually explicit materials without parental consent.

The UI Department of Political Science has conducted the Hawkeye Poll since 2007. A series of national and state public opinion polls, this experience serves as an important learning opportunity for students. More than 1,000 students have had the opportunity to directly participate in the research and survey process and to acquire valuable career-related knowledge about survey research and public polling in general. This year, 28 students collaborated to design and implement a poll of Iowans. Learn more about the course at <https://now.uiowa.edu/2019/11/taking-iowas-pulse-hawkeye-poll>.

Respondent identification: The Iowa Social Science Research Center (ISRC) assisted with data collection. Responses were gathered by phone (116) and online (947). For the phone portion, the ISRC obtained a random sample of Iowans consisting of 40% household landline numbers and 60% mobile phone numbers. All respondents who stated they were older than 18 and willing to participate in the survey were included. After training, students in the class used the ISRC's computer-assisted interviewing resources to complete the calling and interviews. No quotas were set for the phone component. For the online portion, the ISRC contracted with a respected web panel vendor to field the survey to a demographically representative sample of 947 online respondents. Respondents invited to complete the online survey were Iowa adults, aged 18 to 120 years, recruited for participation via web panel. To obtain a census-representative sample, quotas were set on the following demographics: sex, age, and urbanicity.

Sample: 1,063 voting-age residents in Iowa (online and by phone), margin of error +/-3.1%. Among these, 947 respondents took the online version of the survey, with a margin of error of 3.2%.

Results for this release use only responses to the web survey since the questions about education reforms were not asked on the phone version to reduce interview length.

Weighting: Reported results are weighted by age, sex, and party identification.

About the Hawkeye Poll

The poll was conducted by the Hawkeye Poll Cooperative, comprised of UI faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students in the Department of Political Science. The poll is a teaching, research, and service project, which uses the facilities of the Iowa Social Science Research Center directed by Frederick J. Boehmke, professor of political science and faculty advisor for the poll. The Department of Political Science, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the UI Public Policy Center support the poll; financial support was provided through a Student Technology Fee award (#1290-91).

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