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# EMBARGO

**FOR RELEASE ON:**

THURSDAY, August 10, 2000

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## WISCONSIN RESIDENTS APPROVE OF SCHOOL CHOICE

### *Approval Rates Show Increase From 1998 Levels*

When Wisconsin residents were asked if they agreed with the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling which allows low income parents in Milwaukee to choose whether their children attend public, private or parochial schools, a large majority, 68%, give their approval while 25% say they disagree with this ruling, and 6% are not sure. These results represent a change from 1998 levels, the last year this question was asked, when 62% approved, 34% did not approve, and 4% were not sure. This movement shows that support for choice has a positive ratio of 43% in 2000, up from a positive of 28% in 1998.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court has ruled that it is constitutional to allow low income parents in Milwaukee to effectively choose whether their children attend public, private or parochial schools. Do you agree with this ruling?			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Favor</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>Net Support</b>
<b>2000</b>	68%	25%	+43%
<b>1998</b>	62%	34%	+28%

Across the state there are differences in how residents view this ruling:

- The Milwaukee area (70%), Madison (70%), Waukesha (70%), City of Milwaukee (68%) and the Milwaukee Suburbs (68%) show the greatest level of support. While La Crosse/Eau Claire (60%) and the South-East area of the state (64%) are less enthusiastic toward school choice.

Comparing this year's results to 1998, the greatest increase in approval ratings for this ruling occur in the Milwaukee suburbs, where approval ratings increased 15 points from 53% to 68%, and in Waukesha County where approval ratings increased to 70% from 58%.

- Blacks favor school choice by 78%, compared to 68% of Whites. Two years ago 75% of Blacks favored the ruling while only 60% of Whites supported school choice.
- Residents who report a family member who is in the education field disagree with this ruling substantially more than those without a family member in education by 32% to 24%.

SCHOOL CHOICE IN MILWAUKEE APPROVAL RATINGS, 1998 AND 2000									
Year	Total	Milwaukee Area	Green Bay	La Crosse/ Eau Claire	Madison Area	Milwaukee City	Milwaukee Suburbs	Waukesha County	South East
2000	68%	70%	69%	60%	70%	68%	68%	70%	64%
1998	62%	61%	66%	63%	60%	72%	53%	58%	61%

- Non-union residents (71%) have much higher approval rates compared to all union members (58%), however when 'private' and 'public' union members are analyzed independently, the differences between them are similarly disparate with 74% of private union members agreeing with the ruling while only 54% of public union member agree.
- Although approval ratings have increased since 1998 across all political ideologies, Democrats show the largest shift in approval (8 points), from 58% to 66%. Republicans have increased their approval rating 7 points from 67% to 74%, while Independents have moved 2 points from 64% to 66% approval.
- In 1998 there was a substantial difference between Liberals and Middle-of-the-Road residents (both at 59%) and Conservatives (72%). However, by 2000, this difference has all but disappeared with Liberals registering 67% approval, Middle-of-the-Road residents at 68% and Conservatives at 70% approval.

SCHOOL CHOICE IN MILWAUKEE APPROVAL RATINGS, 1998 AND 2000							
Year	Total	Democrat	Independent	Republican	Liberal	Middle of the Road	Conservative
2000	68%	66%	66%	74%	67%	68%	70%
1998	62%	58%	64%	67%	59%	59%	72%

## Summary

After two years, from 1998 to 2000, the approval rating for the Wisconsin Supreme Court's ruling granting school choice for low-income Milwaukee residents shows almost across the board increases, with very few exceptions.

### ABOUT THE STUDY

This study of 1,001 Wisconsin residents vote was conducted by telephone between June 26 and 29, 2000. A survey of 1,001 randomly selected residents has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent for percentages of the whole sample. For a percentage near 50 percent, for example, this means that repeated samples would produce results between 47 percent and 53 percent 95 times out of 100. All interviewing was conducted from the telephone centers of Harris Interactive, Inc.

This study was commissioned by the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, Inc. The Institute was founded in 1987 and its mandate is to examine issues of public policy facing Wisconsin, using a nonpartisan approach.

Harris Interactive, Inc. is a firm specializing in market research and public opinion polling, headquartered in Rochester, New York.