

THE PUBLIC AGENDA

Fall 2002

www.publicagenda.org

THE INSIDE SOURCE FOR PUBLIC OPINION AND POLICY ANALYSIS

Americans Proud of U.S. and Constitution, but Want Children Taught the Bad with the Good

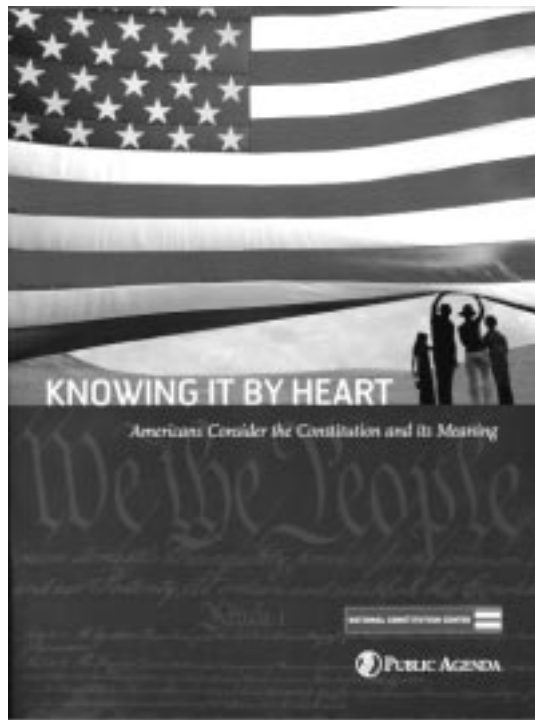
Knight Foundation Supports Major New Study in Partnership with National Constitution Center

T rue or False? The Electoral College is not a degree-granting institution. Supreme Court justices are usually appointed. However on special occasions, they can also be elected.

It's no longer news that the answers to these and other questions on the finer points of U.S. democracy may stump many Americans. Public Agenda's new survey plumbs greater depths and shows that even though the public is often short on the specifics, their respect for the nation and Constitution runs deep. Yet this does not mean they are prepared to overlook America's shortcomings.

Over 80 percent of citizens we surveyed say they believe the U.S. will be recorded in history as one of the most democratic and free nations in the world. But 57% say that "as long as so many Americans are poor or homeless, our nation has failed to live up to its ideals." What's more, nine in 10 also say they want middle and high school children taught the truth about American history—the bad with the good, warts and all.

Knowing It by Heart is rich with eye-opening results and was prepared in



partnership with the Philadelphia-based National Constitution Center and funded by The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The study was written by Steve Farkas, Jean Johnson and Ann Duffett and explores what 1,520 typical U.S. adults know and

believe about the Constitution, probes what they understand their rights and civic responsibilities to be, and reports their views on the document's importance and relevance in their lives today.

Survey's Release Prompts Media's Closer Look

"These findings suggest that while Americans are willing to criticize the country and its leaders around the water cooler and at the kitchen table," says Senior Vice President Steve Farkas, "at heart, most take great pride in America and its principles—a pride that's laced with realism and tempered by modesty."

The comprehensive study was released on September 17th, the 215th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution, as President Bush announced several initiatives

continued on page 5

The Constitution: Intent vs. Reality

Ideally, do you think that the fundamental purpose of the Constitution is to protect and serve the interests of all people, regardless of their wealth or power or to protect and serve the interests of people who are powerful or rich?

% of respondents who say:	General Public	White	African Americans	Hispanic
Protect and serve all people	91%	93%	77%	84%
Protect and serve those who are powerful or rich	8%	6%	21%	16%

And in reality, would you say that all citizens actually have the same rights and freedoms offered in the Constitution, or that citizens who are rich or powerful have more of them?

% of respondents who say:	General Public	White	African Americans	Hispanic
All citizens have the same	34%	36%	22%	39%
Citizens who are rich or powerful have more	65%	62%	76%	58%

Source: Public Agenda, *Knowing It by Heart* 2002

Surprising Views from Parents about Special Education

Groundbreaking Study Supported by Annie E. Casey Foundation, Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and 21st Century Schools Project at the Progressive Policy Institute

As Congress prepares to reauthorize the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) that governs America's special education system, a national Public Agenda survey reveals some surprising views about special ed services in local public schools. Almost seven in 10 of the special needs parents we surveyed say the stigma once attached to children in special education is disappearing, but many feel the problem of getting information about services is not.

continued on page 4

Lumina Foundation for Education Funds New Online Guide to Policy Debates in Higher Education



Student at Yale University

As colleges and universities face shrinking budgets, more competition and a changing student body, Public Agenda is creating a new online guide to higher education policy. The forthcoming guide, supported by the Lumina Foundation for Education, is intended for journalists, researchers, educators, and policymakers and will offer a concise overview of important issues in higher education. It will include: key facts and trends in college

attendance and funding; profiles of current thinking on race-based admissions policies and other issues; an up-to-date digest of significant news stories, legislation, court cases, and studies; an extensive catalog of key researchers and organizations in the field; and newsworthy story angles for journalists covering concerns ranging from grade inflation to free speech on campus. Watch for an announcement of the guide's launch on www.publicagenda.org.

Subscription Change: Have It Your Way

Attention All Public Agenda Online (PAOL) Registrants

You already get our weekly email alerts and now—if you prefer—you'll be able to get *The Public Agenda* newsletter with the same speed. Beginning in November 2002, you'll receive an email alert with a link to download a PDF version of the newsletter—your “inside source for public opinion and policy analysis.” You can expect to receive the alert about three times per year. But if you'd prefer to receive your issues by postal mail, simply email us when you receive your newsletter alert (see your alert for the link offering you this option).

Not a PAOL Registrant?

If you haven't registered with PAOL, you'll still get *The Public Agenda* by postal mail. However, if you'd rather get the newsletter electronically, you can register at www.publicagenda.org—it's free.

New Faces at Public Agenda



Jackie Vine, our new senior research associate, previously worked with the Public Policy Team at Harris Interactive, best known for *The Harris Poll*.®



Leslie Wilson, who joins us as a research administrator, most recently was associate managing editor for *Nickelodeon Magazine* in New York.



Nancy Cunningham, new assistant editor for Public Agenda Online, was a newspaper reporter in Poughkeepsie and Albany, N.Y., and Middletown, Conn.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to **Jill Stamp** and her husband Trent on the birth of their daughter, Hope. Jill had been on maternity leave and we warmly welcome her back in her new role as consultant for corporate and foundation relations.

Jennifer Tennant, assistant editor, Public Agenda Online, has left us to pursue a Ph.D. in economics from The Graduate Center, The City University of New York. She currently has two degrees in economics—a master's from Columbia University and a bachelor's from the University of California, Berkeley—and we wish her all the best in her newest endeavor.

New Studies

OCTOBER

■ Do parents believe they've succeeded in teaching their children to do their very best in school—or that they've still got work to do? What's more worrisome—providing for their child's health? Or raising a child who is well behaved and has good values? In September, President Deborah Wadsworth previewed some surprising answers to these questions and more in Washington, D.C., during a talk at the Journalism Fellowship in Child and Family Policy conference, a professional development event of the Fellowship Program, which is based at the University of Maryland. A report on our national survey of **parents' views about raising kids today** will appear in our next issue.

Sponsored by State Farm Insurance Companies and, on behalf of the Association of National Advertisers, Inc., the Family Friendly Programming Forum.

DECEMBER

■ How do those who come to the United States from other countries view American democracy and citizenship? Public Agenda will probe the views of over 1,000 **people who have immigrated to the U.S.** in a new study.

Sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York

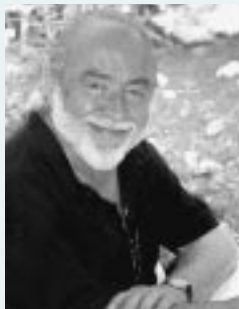
■ Hispanic-American parents endorse the importance of higher education at a much higher level than the population as a whole (65 percent to 35 percent), according to Public Agenda's 2000 survey *Great Expectations*. And recent data indicate that 96 percent of Hispanic-American parents expect their children to go to college. But only 34 percent actually do. How knowledgeable are **Hispanic-American youngsters** about the steps necessary to gain admission to college and receive financial aid? What are their views about **educational opportunities beyond high school**? We explore these important questions in a new study.

Prepared jointly with and sponsored by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education



Public Agenda Newsmakers

IN MEMORIAM



As a member of Public Agenda's Executive Committee and Policy Review Board, **Ted Ashley** brought a singular wisdom and insight to our work. Chairman and CEO of Warner Brothers from 1969 to 1980, he oversaw the development of landmark films including *All the President's Men*, *Chariots of Fire*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *Dog Day Afternoon*, along with the ground-breaking TV series *Roots*. A hard-working, low-key leader, Ted Ashley thrived on nurturing talent, and he mentored a new crop of studio executives who have led Hollywood for decades. At Public Agenda, Ted Ashley inspired and guided the staff in some of our most innovative and successful citizen education efforts. These included citizen education campaigns on health care (*HealthVote*) and public schools (*SchoolVote*), along with a highly acclaimed and influential project on U.S.-Soviet relations, *Public Summit '88*. Ted will be remembered here with great admiration and affection. He was a gracious and remarkable individual.

Board Member News

Alice Rivlin received one of the first Elliot R. Richardson Prizes for Excellence in Public Service. A scholar, professor and former congressional and White House budget director, Ms. Rivlin won the honor from The Council for Excellence in Government for her "life-long fascination with the application of rigorous analysis to public policy decision-making."



President Bush congratulates Richardson Prize honorees Ms. Rivlin, Colin Powell and George Shultz

White House photo Tina Hager

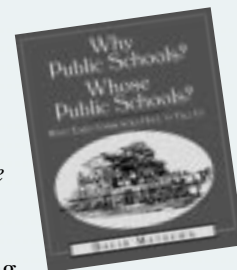
Former Secretary of the Navy **Richard Danzig** told *The New York Times* in May that the 11 inhalational anthrax cases that led to five deaths last fall could be described as "5/11"—an even greater security risk than "9/11" because biological attacks could be more easily replicated and lead to casualties numbering in the "tens of thousands."

Judith Davidson Moyers, president of Public Affairs Television (PAT), has along with her production team won a coveted Emmy® Award for "Outstanding Investigative Journalism—Long Form" for *Trade Secrets: A Moyers Report*. The PAT documentary, which aired on PBS, reveals how chemical manufacturers sometimes hid from the public the truth about potential health hazards of their products. Mrs. Moyers is currently producing the dramatic PAT documentary *Becoming American: The Chinese Experience*, which features her husband, journalist Bill Moyers, and is scheduled to air on local PBS stations nationwide in January 2003.



CREDIT: © NATAS/ATAS

David Mathews president, Charles F. Kettering Foundation, has written *Why Public Schools? Whose Public Schools?: What Early Communities Have to Tell Us*. Published by NewSouth Books in November, it finds that long before state governments began funding education, the public once "owned" its schools, which were created in, by and for their communities.



Grant News

As communities nationwide struggle with teacher shortages and contract disputes, Public Agenda has received initial funding from **The Broad, Thomas B. Fordham and Sydney J. Weinberg Foundations** to survey a national random sample of public school teachers about their concerns and wishes for the improvement of their profession.



Teacher chats with his students

The Boston Globe via www.MedIn-net.com

Survey News

Buzz over "Rudeness" Survey Grows

Our survey of Americans' views about civility, respect and courtesy in the nation was a cover feature in the summer issue of *Trusts* (pictured), the quarterly magazine of the study's funder, **The Pew Charitable**



Artwork by Arnold Roth

Trusts. It was also mentioned in the August issue of *Reader's Digest*, which reaches nearly 13 million readers nationwide. And President Deborah Wadsworth's article about the study will appear in a forthcoming issue of *The Responsive Community*, a quarterly journal of George Washington University's Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies.

Follow-up News

Brainstorm Yields Bumper Crop of Approaches

Public perceptions about a growing lack of civility are comprehensively catalogued in *Aggravating Circumstances*, our national opinion survey sponsored by **The Pew Charitable Trusts**. As a follow-up, we convened a cadre of creative and thoughtful individuals to imagine different ways to respond to this apparent epidemic. Former Public Agenda Senior Vice President **Keith Melville** and **Dr. Eileen Morgan**, a business consultant on corporate change initiatives, moderated our session. Vigorous exchanges were jump-started by **Dr. Amitai Etzioni**, George Washington University; **Peggy Post**, The Emily Post Institute; **Ruth Wooden**, formerly of The Advertising Council; **Alan Andreasen**, McDonough School of Business, Georgetown University; **Joseph Plummer**, McCann-Erickson, **Dan Yankelovich**, Public Agenda's cofounder; and several others. Public Agenda will report back to Pew on possible initiatives.

Special Education...

continued from page 1

When It's Your Own Child: A Report on Special Education from the Families Who Use It was prepared by Jean Johnson and Ann Duffett, with Steve Farkas and Leslie Wilson. It was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, and the 21st Century Schools Project at the Progressive Policy Institute. Public Agenda believes it is the first study of its kind to be based on a randomly selected, nationally representative sample of parents of public school children with special needs. The research was propelled into the spotlight by news stories in national and local media and through dialogue by advocacy groups (see "Special Ed" sidebar).



Right Kids, Right Services?

Our survey finds that special ed parents offer mixed views on the question of whether the right kids are getting the right services:

- 70 percent say too many children with special needs are losing out because their parents are unaware of what is available;
- But 65 percent feel some children with behavior problems, rather than learning or physical disabilities, get misdirected into special education;
- Nearly seven in 10 believe early intervention could have kept many students out of special education.

Next year, Congress is scheduled to review the reauthorizing legislation for

IDEA. Hearings on proposed reforms are well under way.

Families Who Believe They Need Help

"This research, however, contains one powerful message for those seeking to reform special education," says

Public Agenda Senior Vice President Jean Johnson. "The vast majority of the 510 parents we surveyed seem convinced that their own child needs special education, and, in many cases, they say they fought an uphill battle to get it."

Good Ratings... Once Their Kids Get In

The study shows that, once their children are placed in special education programs, most of the parents tend to give the programs good ratings. Two-thirds (67 percent) rate their schools as "good" or "excellent" in providing their children with the help they need.

Some Unhappy Parents

But there is a frustrated minority of parents who say they continually run up against an uncooperative school bureaucracy when they try to secure special services for their children:

- Almost four in 10 say their child's special education program is not a good source of information about learning problems and disabilities; and 33 percent rate their school as "fair" or "poor" in giving their children the help they need.
- For many parents, frustrations have reached a breaking point. One in six (16 percent) say they have considered taking their school to court.

Will They Feel Comfortable Talking to Us?

Assuring survey participants that their privacy would be protected was one of the many challenges Public Agenda researchers faced in conducting this study. "Special education is a personal, private matter," explains Public Agenda Vice President Ann Duffett. "We took great pains to prepare survey questions and interviewers," she says. "As a result, 95 percent of participants indicated we could call again if we had additional questions, an encouraging indication of their comfort level."

Copies of When It's Your Own Child can be ordered from Public Agenda for \$10, plus \$2 shipping and handling. Bulk-order discounts are available.

Special Ed Survey Ignites Dialogues, News Reports

A lively question-and-answer session and flurry of positive feedback followed Public Agenda President Deborah Wadsworth's presentation of the survey findings to a packed room of senior advisors from the U.S. Department of Education, congressional committee staff, advocates of special education reform and the media. The July briefing, held in Washington, D.C., was hosted by survey co-sponsors the Progressive Policy Institute and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.

The findings also sparked praise from Dr. John Brademas, chief author of the original congressional legislation that mandates special needs programs in the public schools, as well as a succession of prominent articles in the Associated Press, *USA Today*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and *Indianapolis Star*. News alerts were issued to 11,000 special needs parents who subscribe to SchwabLearning.org's electronic bulletin. *Phi Delta Kappan* published a piece by Jean Johnson in October. Education departments in Virginia, South Dakota, Oklahoma and other states have requested survey copies for their meetings with special ed parents, and the report has been selected to be included in the federally funded Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) database of disabilities and gifted education information.

Public Engagement

"Ensuring Teacher Quality" Video Forthcoming

Public Agenda and the National Education Association are working together to produce *Ensuring Teacher Quality*, a video designed to facilitate discussions in local school districts between educators and the public about strategies for ensuring teacher quality. The video (\$40 each) is scheduled for release this fall and will also be available in Spanish.

To learn more about Public Agenda's public engagement work, visit www.publicagenda.org, or contact Will Friedman at (212) 686-6610 or email wkf22@aol.com. To order materials, call (212) 686-6610 or e-mail gwilliams@publicagenda.org.

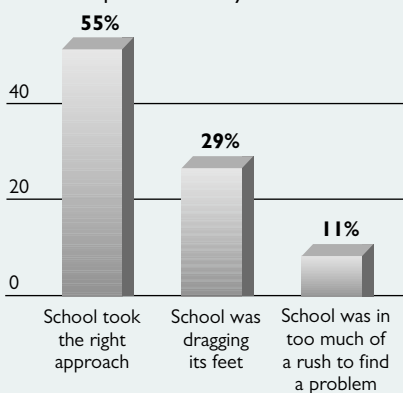
PA Helps "Community Conversation" Effort in New York State

Public Agenda's expertise will be put to use this fall to help the Campaign for Fiscal Equity and the League of Women Voters of New York prepare frameworks and train forum moderators for conversations in a cross-section of communities around the state. These dialogues will serve as a springboard to explore the skills, knowledge and values that adults believe students will need in order to become responsible voters, capable jurors and effective participants in civic life.

Are Schools Rushing to Find Problems?

How would you describe the school's process of evaluating whether your child had special needs?

Percent of parents who say:



Base: Child identified as special needs after age 3 (n=417)

SOURCE: Public Agenda, *When It's Your Own Child*, 2002

Senior Research Fellow **John Immerwahr**

In the Beginning

John Immerwahr joined Public Agenda in 1978, two years after the organization was established to prepare issues briefs for the 1976 presidential debates.

"I was, in a sense, the first employee of the 'new' Public Agenda," recalls Dr. Immerwahr. "I am delighted every time I come to the office and see how all of this has grown to become the Public Agenda of today."



Dr. John Immerwahr is Villanova University's associate vice president for academic affairs, was previously chairman of the Philosophy Department and has published widely in the field and won numerous awards for teaching.

Daniel Yankelovich, Dr. Immerwahr has written several studies of public opinion about foreign policy, such as the *Rules of Public Engagement*.

His work in 2002 includes a report on how legislators and college administrators view growing competition between traditional and nontraditional higher education institutions. The study was conducted

in partnership with Frank Newman of Brown University's Futures Project.

"A Wonderful Partner"

"John has a truly remarkable clarity and open-mindedness to his thinking, and those traits have enhanced Public Agenda's work for over two decades," says Jean Johnson, senior vice president. "I have worked closely with John on

topics ranging from health care to (most recently) prison and rehabilitation issues. He is a wonderful partner—quick-witted, enthusiastic, responsive to different points of view."

Dr. Immerwahr received his B.A. from Princeton University and M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan.

Summer Seminar for Kettering International Fellows

Kettering International Fellows Brett Davidson of South Africa, Daut Dauti of Kosovo, and Rosa Maria Cartaya of Cuba joined us in our New York City office this summer for a two-day seminar on public opinion research and public engagement. Kettering Foundation Program Officer Julie Fisher coordinated their stay. International Fellows typically spend a year at the Kettering headquarters in Dayton, Ohio, where they investigate topics on the public and democracy and explore strategies to help strengthen the role of citizens in governing themselves.

Senior Research Fellow

Currently Public Agenda's senior research fellow, Dr. Immerwahr has authored or co-authored numerous studies covering issues such as productivity and the country's work ethics, higher education, and prisoner reentry into society. In addition, with Public Agenda co-founder and Chairman

Constitution... continued from page 1

designed to "improve students knowledge of American history [and] increase their civic involvement." This, along with the survey results, prompted a legion of insightful reviews in the *Washington Post*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Newark Star-Ledger*, *Education Week* and other prominent newspapers across the nation.

Fertile Ground for 'Serious' Education on the Constitution

Like the survey itself, many news columns moved beyond results on "what Americans don't know" and tapped into, as a *Philadelphia Inquirer* editorial put it, the survey's "richer, deeper exploration of public attitudes." Observes the editorial, "Americans for all their gaps in knowledge still grasp [the Constitution's] delicate balance between rights and responsibility, between freedom and order, between the will of the majority and the rights of the minority."

Indeed, our survey finds an overwhelming number (87 percent of respondents) who agree that decisions made in the United States should follow the will of the majority, but also

protect the rights of the minority. And the respondents we surveyed were able to put aside their personal views on controversial issues such as homelessness and abortion to consider the constitutional rights of others.

"Our results indicate there is fertile ground for nurturing serious education on the Constitution," explains Public Agenda President Deborah Wadsworth. "The National Constitution Center can play a vital role in this endeavor."

The Center will open on July 4, 2003, on Philadelphia's historic Independence Mall as the only institution in the world dedicated to honoring and explaining

the bedrock document on which the United States was founded and the principles it represents.

Wide-Ranging Exploration

Among other findings of the survey are:

- 86 percent of Americans believe the United States will be remembered either as the most democratic and free nation in history or will rank "right up there with the best of them." Yet, only 19 percent believe our Constitution is so good that "we should do as much as we can to bring it to other countries."

- 67 percent say it is "absolutely essential" for ordinary Americans to have a detailed knowledge of their constitutional rights and freedoms. And, 90 percent of respondents agree that since the terrorist attacks of September 2001, "it's more important than ever to know what our Constitution stands for."

- 65 percent say that in effect, citizens who are rich or powerful have more rights and freedoms than others do. African Americans are more likely to hold that view (76 percent).

- 50 percent feel it is just as important to protect the rights of the accused as it is to put the guilty in jail and another 18 percent say that it is important to protect the rights of the accused "even if this means some guilty people are let go."

- 65 percent of those polled feel the right to privacy has either been lost or is under serious threat, and most view banks and credit card companies as a bigger threat to their personal privacy than the federal government.

Find a special summary, charts, press release and mini-survey (compare your answers to the national sample) when you visit www.publicagenda.org. The site also includes 21 in-depth issue guides on topics from terrorism to medical research, education, gay rights and campaign finance reform. Copies of this handsome and engaging report can be ordered from Public Agenda for \$10, plus \$2 shipping and handling. Bulk-order discounts are available.

A fascinating document ... a deeper, richer exploration of public attitudes [about the Constitution].

Philadelphia Inquirer editorial about the report

Reflections from the President by Deborah Wadsworth

For a country founded upon principles of popular sovereignty, respect for the individual, and a capitalist market economy, a dismissive attitude toward the public has surfaced time and again throughout our history. From Alexander Hamilton in the 18th century to Walter Lippmann in the 20th, distinguished Americans have detailed the public's shortcomings ranging from its propensity for intemperate judgments to its gullibility and volatility. Recent commentators have added Americans' ignorance about their political leaders, complacency about their civic responsibilities and inadequacy in their understanding of history and our Constitution to the list.

Our latest study, *Knowing It by Heart* (cover article) offers a more complicated image of the public. Many acknowledged they have few historical facts or detailed specifics on the tip of the tongue; yet most appeared to have fully internalized the values our Constitution represents and believe they are relevant to modern life. Contrary to widely publicized poll findings since 9-11 suggesting Americans are ready to curtail the rights of the accused, *Knowing It by Heart* depicts individuals with a capacity for measured and balanced responses, and a willingness to struggle to define appropriate boundaries and limits. Not unlike the Constitution's 18th-century



Bill Lutew

authors, contemporary Americans seem more willing than one might have imagined to live with the kind of ambiguity that constitutional issues have raised from the very beginning.

Those we interviewed were sensitive to the need to balance the rights of the individual with the need to protect society. Our findings challenge prevailing assumptions about the public's willingness to abrogate fundamental protections in the name of fighting terrorism. Yet, with 9-11 barely one year in the past, our findings also suggest that Americans have not come to closure about how best to balance constitutional principles with the need to guarantee the nation's security. Interestingly, a striking number, 90%, say that since the terrorist attacks on America it is more important than ever to understand our Constitution.

Those who have despaired at the seemingly low level of public interest and knowledge about our history and the Constitution might well take heart from this study. I believe Americans are far more open to engaging the fundamentally important issues in the Constitution than they've been given credit for. Moreover, two-thirds maintain it is absolutely essential for ordinary Americans not only to have internalized an understanding of democratic values, but also to have mastered the particulars. There is fertile ground to seed serious education, and a strong belief in the importance of imparting America's traditions to coming generations.

Adapted from the "Afterword" of Public Agenda's study Knowing It by Heart (See p. 5 for information on how to order the study).

Public Agenda is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that seeks to raise the level of public discussion about critical policy choices facing the nation.

THE PUBLIC AGENDA

OFFICERS

Daniel Yankelovich, Chairman
Deborah Wadsworth, President
Sidney Harman, Chairman, Executive Committee

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Richard Danzig, Former Secretary of the Navy
Alice S. Huang, California Institute of Technology
Bobby R. Inman, Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)
David Mathews, Kettering Foundation
Ann McLaughlin Korologos, The Aspen Institute
Lloyd Morrisett, Former President, The Markle Foundation
Judith Davidson Moyers, Public Affairs Television
Peter G. Peterson, The Blackstone Group
Lois Dickson Rice, The Brookings Institution
Alice M. Rivlin, The Brookings Institution

CO-FOUNDER & CHAIRMAN (1976-1999)

Cyrus R. Vance

© 2002 Public Agenda

MEMBERS EMERITI

Maurice Lazarus, Former Chairman, Executive Committee
Frank Stanton, Former President, CBS Inc.

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENTS

Steve Farkas
Jean Johnson
Kathie Johnson

VICE PRESIDENT

Ann Duffett

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Michael A. Darden

PUBLIC AGENDA

6 East 39th Street
New York, New York 10016

Phone: (212) 686-6610

Fax: (212) 889-3461

E-mail: info@publicagenda.org

Web site: www.publicagenda.org



PUBLIC AGENDA
6 East 39th Street
New York, New York 10016

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Glenview, IL
Permit No. 94