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N E W S R E L E A S E

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Students want limited international involvement

In a recent national survey, Nebraska high school students agreed that the guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy should be to protect homeland security by limiting our international involvement.

More than 380 students completed ballots as part of the ninth Nebraska Capitol Forum on America's Future, co-sponsored by the Nebraska Humanities Council and Secretary of State John Gale's office. Students in Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Washington, and West Virginia also participated in the 2007 Capitol Forum. Nationwide, 1,508 students submitted ballots expressing their concerns, priorities and vision for our nation's future.

Choosing from four distinct proposals for the future of U.S. foreign policy, more than 60 percent of Nebraska respondents and 56 percent of national respondents identified as their first or second choice a future in which the United States would protect U.S. global interests by being selective in our international involvement, cultivating key trade relationships to ensure access to crucial materials, and stopping the spread of nuclear weapons.

Among the four proposals, the most popular first choice in Nebraska (33 percent) and nationally (37 percent) was to protect the homeland by sharply scaling back foreign involvement. Students favored this policy even if it might "upset the worldwide balance of power and cause insecure countries to seek nuclear, biological and chemical weapons." This proposal ranked first in Nebraska and third nationally in both 2005 and 2006.

For the fourth consecutive year, a future in which the U.S. would spread democracy around the world was the least popular policy in both Nebraska and the nation.

When Nebraska students were asked what foreign policy actions should be taken, for the second consecutive year they ranked as their first priority a crack-down on illegal immigration and a policy to accept fewer immigrants (71 percent). Nationally, new immigration policies ranked sixth (61 percent) while setting environmental standards ranked first. Between 2006 and 2007, environmental standards fell from second priority to fourth in Nebraska. Placing trade sanctions on countries that threaten their neighbors ranked second for students in Nebraska and nationally.

As part of Capitol Forum, 100 students and 24 teachers from high schools in Lincoln, Omaha, Bellevue, Ashland, Cambridge, Chadron, Curtis, Dodge, Genoa, Hampton, Hastings, Hemingford, Holdrege, Howells, Lynch, North Platte, Springfield, Stella, Sterling, Sumner, and Wilcox will gather on March 31 at the State Capitol to debate the four options for the future of

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U.S. foreign policy. Afterwards, they will return to their schools to broaden the discussion with classmates and complete the survey. Among the topics to be discussed are immigration, terrorism, the environment, international trade, and proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The Capitol Forum curriculum is provided by Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies. In Nebraska, Capitol Forum is funded in part by the Cooper Foundation, Anne Stuart Batchelder, Merrill Lynch, Duncan Family Trust, Mrs. J. Allan Mactier, A to Z Printing, Nebraska Council of School Administrators, and the "We the People" initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

For details on Capitol Forum, visit the Nebraska Humanities Council website at www.nebraskahumanities.org.

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***Editors: Complete national and Nebraska survey results are available at:
<http://www.choices.edu/cf/ballot.php>***