



"What in the world people are really thinking"

## For Immediate Release

Contact Fritz Wenzel: 315-624-0200 ext. 229 or 419-205-0287 or fritz@zogby.com  
Johanna Blakley: 213-821-1344 or blakley@usc.edu

Polling/Market Research  
Public Relations Services  
Marketing Strategies

Date: Nov. 12, 2007

### Zogby/Lear Center Poll

# Extensive National Survey on Politics and Entertainment Reveals:

- The Real Reason Rush Limbaugh is Much More Popular than Air America
- Why Oprah May Be Obama's Secret Campaign Weapon
- Why a Comprehensive Fix to Illegal Immigration May Never Happen
- And Much More . . .

UTICA, New York – Rush Limbaugh touts himself – mostly in jest – as having “talent on loan from God” and credits that talent for his huge listenership and dominant perch atop the world of talk radio in America, but an extensive five-month polling and research project by Zogby International and the Norman Lear Center at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School shows his popularity may have more to do with pre-set beliefs in the minds of his listeners than with his presentation skills.

Actually, Limbaugh was ahead of the curve in recognizing the source of his ratings success. He often says it is because he is merely confirming what listeners already believed, not because of his powers of persuasion.

He also says he suspects there is a sizable chunk of his audience who are not conservative like him, but rather are from the other end of the political spectrum. On this point the Zogby/Lear Center Poll shows he is right, er, correct. The extensive interactive survey of deeply held beliefs and behavior patterns – conducted June 26–29, 2007, including 3,939 adults nationwide and carrying a margin of error of +/- 1.6 percentage points – shows that **liberals were much more likely than conservatives to listen to commentary and entertainment with which they disagreed philosophically**. This could be part of the reason Air America has faltered – there are simply fewer potential listeners.

While 22% of conservatives said they “never” enjoy entertainment that reflects values other than their own, just 7% of liberals felt the same way. At the other end of the scale, just 11% of conservatives said they “very often” enjoyed programming that ran counter to their personal philosophies, compared to 20% of liberals and 18% of moderates who said the same thing. In other words, Limbaugh's potential audience is larger than that of liberal competitors because more liberals say they will listen to conservatives than vice versa.

This is just one conclusion from this far-reaching survey and research project which was designed to probe the thinking of Americans about the subjects of politics and entertainment. The findings showed

that not only is the country sharply divided on the topic of politics, it is also deeply split in the types of entertainment and information that appeal to “Reds” (conservatives) and “Blues” (liberals).

Caught in the middle are moderates, dubbed “Purples” for the sake of this study, who find plenty of entertainment offerings available on the major broadcast television networks. They love “police procedurals” like *Law & Order* and *CSI: Miami*, as well as mass-market books like mysteries and thrillers. Basically, anything without a political theme appeals to the “Purples.”

### **So What Makes These “Reds,” “Blues,” and “Purples” Tick?**

At the end of this release is a detailed statistical summary of the research project’s findings, but here is a brief summary of the three typologies, which were created as part of a statistical clustering analysis based on respondent answers to a wide range of questions. Reds make up 37% of the nation, while liberals comprise 39% and moderates 24%, the Zogby/Lear Center research shows. Demographic data about the groups is available [here](#).

#### **THE “REDS”**

People with a “red” entertainment preference think a lot of programming is in bad taste and doesn’t reflect their values. They don’t like a lot of things on TV, but their two favorite channels are Fox and Fox News. They like sports, especially football and auto racing, and they watch news and business programming. They don’t like most contemporary music and they don’t watch VH1 or MTV. They don’t much like late-night TV. They like to go to sporting events, and when they do go to the movies – which is rarely – they seek out action-adventure films. They’re not big book readers, but when they do read, they prefer non-fiction. When they read fiction, they often select mysteries and thrillers. They are more likely to listen to country and gospel than other people, but their favorite music is classical. They don’t play a lot of video games, but when they do, *Madden NFL* and *Mario* are their favorites. They think that fictional TV shows and movies are politically biased, and they believe they can predict a person’s politics if they know the person’s entertainment preferences.

#### **THE “BLUES”**

People with a “blue” entertainment preference like many of different types of programming, even if it doesn’t reflect their taste or values. They shy away from a lot of primetime programming, especially game shows and reality TV, but they like comedies, drama, documentaries, news, and arts and educational programming. They love *60 Minutes*, PBS, HBO, Comedy Central and *The Daily Show*. They go to the movies, where they often see comedies, and they like to go to live theater and museums and galleries. They read books more often than most people – they prefer fiction to non-fiction, but their favorite genre is politics and current events. They enjoy entertainment with political themes, and they feel like they learn about politics from entertainment. Sports are less interesting to them, but football is their favorite, and they’re more likely to follow soccer than other people. They like lots of different kinds of music (except country) and they watch MTV and VH1. They play video games a lot more than other people – *Mario* and *The Sims* are favorites.

#### **THE “PURPLES”**

People with “purple” entertainment preferences like all the broadcast networks and a lot of primetime programming, including police procedurals, game shows and reality programming. They watch a lot of Fox News and they like daytime and children’s programming more than other people. Moderates like to read non-fiction, including self-help books and biographies, but they like mysteries and thrillers best. Rock music is their favorite – they don’t like classical or folk music as much as other people. Their favorite video games are *Mario*, *Donkey Kong* and *Madden NFL*. They don’t seek out entertainment with political themes and they are far less likely to read books about politics or current events than other people. They are

less likely than other people to think that they can predict a person's politics based on their entertainment preferences.

### **On Oprah and Immigration**

Once you know how people of different political philosophies approach entertainment, it is easier to understand why Oprah Winfrey may be just the ticket to help Democrat Barack Obama reach those key liberal voters that are so prized in a Democratic primary contest. Other Zogby polling shows Obama doing well among more liberal Democrats, but Oprah could also appeal to some self-described political moderates that Obama needs to break through the lead now set by Hillary Clinton of New York. That Oprah could offset some of the natural gender appeal Clinton carries among female voters is obvious. **Our survey analysis shows moderates tend not to seek out entertainment with a political edge, so when they take a dose of politics, it may go down better when administered by such a non-political bona fide star. It is also important to note that 62% of moderates are women, which could also help intensify the Oprah endorsement.**

The survey also shows that women who pay more attention to entertainment programming than news programming are more likely to support Democrats in the voting booth.

On the question of immigration, the survey shows the Reds and Blues are far apart on a core philosophical belief. **It is as if half the Reds are suspicious – they are split down the middle, as 53.5% believe foreigners immigrate to America for the chance to work for a better life, but 46.5% believe they come to get benefits from the U.S. government. However, almost all Blues (96%) said they think foreigners come for a chance to work for a better life.**

Such divergent core beliefs between Reds and Blues may make it impossible to find an acceptable solution to the current problem posed by undocumented immigrants.

### **Other Key Findings of the Zogby/Lear Center Politics and Entertainment Survey:**

The Zogby/Lear Center survey shows that the difference between conservatives and liberals goes much deeper than politics, involving much deeper patterns of thinking and behavior. It's almost like the Reds and the Blues are living in parallel universes. Liberals say they like entertainment with a political flavor, while conservatives eschew such programming out of suspicion that it is tainted with a liberal bias. Instead, they favor news or reality television. And conservatives love sports programming, in part because there's no way to inject liberalism into a football game:

#### **ON TV SHOWS:**

- More than twice as many liberals say they're very often attracted to programming with political themes, compared to the rest of respondents, and this plays out in their TV show preferences, with *60 Minutes* and *Brothers and Sisters* topping the list of shows most closely associated with liberal viewers. Moderates are more likely than liberals or conservatives to favor daytime programming and children's programming.
- Out of 20 top-rated TV programs, the one that conservatives are more likely than others to tune out is *60 Minutes* (almost 68% say they never watch it, compared to 27% of all other respondents).
- Late-night programming fares poorly with conservatives, with more than 32% saying they never watch nighttime talk shows. Offered a range of nighttime choices, 22% of conservatives picked Jay Leno, while over 54% of liberals selected Jon Stewart.

**ON BOOKS:**

- Conservatives and liberals are more likely than moderates to read books.
- Liberals are almost twice as likely as conservatives to read literary fiction (20% to 11%) and they're also more likely to read science fiction/fantasy than moderates (13% to 8%).
- Moderates and conservatives favor mysteries and thrillers while liberals (22%) and conservatives (20%) prefer books about politics and current events.
- Liberals like non-fiction and fiction equally. Moderates and conservatives prefer non-fiction.
- Moderates are more likely to read self-help books (7%) – liberals are the least likely to read them (3%).

**ON LEISURE ACTIVITIES:**

- You're more likely to find conservatives at sporting events than at movie theaters, live theater or museums and galleries.
- Twenty-one percent of conservatives say they never go the movies, compared to less than 9% of liberals. When conservatives do go to the cinema, the biggest draw is action-adventure movies (35%) while liberals rank comedies (26%) and drama (25%) highest.
- Liberals are much more likely to visit museums and galleries and go to the movies and live theater.

**ON MIXING ENTERTAINMENT & POLITICS:**

- Conservatives overwhelmingly (76%) believe that TV shows and movies “very often” contain political messages, but they are the least likely to learn anything about political issues from them. Just 4% say they learn lessons from movies.
- While 68% of liberals seek out entertainment that contains political themes and commentary, just 33% of moderates are the least likely to do so.
- Not only are moderates much less likely than other groups to seek out entertainment with political themes. Compared to conservatives and liberals, they are three times less likely to read a book on politics or current events.
- Nearly two in three conservatives think it is possible to predict a person's politics when they know the person's entertainment preferences, while 55% of liberals and 50% of moderates agree.
- Over 80% of liberals admit that they are entertained by material that's in bad taste. Almost 40% of conservatives say they are never entertained by it.

-Z-

Based at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California, the **Norman Lear Center** is a multidisciplinary research and public policy center exploring implications of the convergence of entertainment, commerce, and society. On campus, the Lear Center builds bridges between eleven schools whose faculty study aspects of entertainment, media, and culture. Beyond campus, it bridges the gap between the entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public. For more information, please visit [www.learcenter.org](http://www.learcenter.org).

**Zogby International** is a public opinion, research, and business solutions firm with experience working in more than 70 countries. Founded and led by John Zogby since 1984, Zogby International ranks as one of the industry's leaders thanks to its reputation for superior accuracy, reliability, and creativity. Zogby specializes in telephone, Internet, and face-to-face survey research and analysis for political, corporate, non-profit, and governmental clients. The firm is headquartered in Utica, New York, with offices in Washington D.C., Miami, and Dubai, United Arab Emirates.