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MT-PEC/Zogby Poll Reflects Strong Support for Public Schools Among Montana Voters

September 2, 2014, Helena: The Montana Public Education Center released results of a recent poll of Montana Voters' opinions on K-12 Public Education Issues today. The poll was conducted by respected international polling and research company Zogby Analytics, using industry-standard methodologies with a margin of error of +/-4.5%. The poll results reveal a strong sentiment of support among Montana Voters for K-12 public education on a wide range of issues. Key results include:

1. **Montanans Give Top Ratings to their Community Schools.** When asked to grade their local community public schools, 66.5% of Montana Voters would give their local schools an A or a B.
2. **Montana Voters Overwhelmingly Support Delivery of a Well Rounded Public Education.** When asked whether K-12 Public Education should be well rounded or focus on the basics, 88.8% identified a preference for a well-rounded public education (including gifted and talented, music, art and physical education, technology, advanced placement courses) for Montana students.
3. **Montana Voters Want To See K-12 Public Education Funding Prioritized First In State Budget Discussions.** When asked to identify the highest priority among state budget priorities, K-12 public education was mentioned more frequently (54.2%) than any other spending priority.
4. **Montana Voters Trust Educators Most to do right by Students in Montana's Public Schools.** When asked to identify whom they trust *most* to decide what is best academically for students in Montana public schools, voters ranked teachers (39.6%) and locally elected school boards (27.1%) and school superintendents (9.4%) highest and the U.S. Department of Education (1.6%), and the Legislature and Governor (both at 0.4%) the lowest.
5. **Montanans Oppose Tax Benefits for Private School Tuition.** Voters oppose giving tax benefits for tuition at parochial schools by a 54%-41.2% margin. The margin of opposition to tax benefits for tuition at private schools is even *more* pronounced when queried for private schools without community-elected school boards (opposed, 66.6%-30%) and private schools not subject to open meeting, public document and public participation laws (opposed, 73.6%-21.1%).
6. **Montana Voters Care About Their K-12 Public Education-Related Constitutional Guarantees.** An extraordinarily high percentage of Montana Voters identified constitutional guarantees under Article X of the Montana Constitution as either "very" or "somewhat" important to them. Highest marks were given by voters to the guarantees of adequate and equitable funding by the Legislature (93.5%), supervision and control by elected school boards (90.9%) and general supervision and development of educational standards by the Board of Public Education (85.3%).
7. **Montana Voters Believe State and Federal Mandates are Too Burdensome and Detract from Educators' Needed Focus on Instruction, Interaction with Parents and Keeping the Public Informed.** When asked whether mandates imposed by Congress and the State Legislature are too burdensome, too lenient or about right, 57.4% chose "too burdensome." The results on this question were reinforced by Voters' answers on related questions, where Voters identified a strong preference for allocating teachers' and administrators' time on instruction of students, keeping the public informed and interacting with parents over complying with state and federal mandates.

For full polling results, including related charts and graphs, please go to www.mt-pec.org. The Montana Public Education Center is a joint initiative of the Montana Association of School Business Officials, MEA-MFT, Montana Rural Education Association, Montana School Boards Association, Montana Quality Education Coalition and School Administrators of Montana. Our Vision is for Montana's public schools to lead as centers of excellence, life-readiness and opportunity. We believe that Montanans everywhere must stand up and advocate for great public schools and the students our public schools educate.

The Montana Public Education Center is a joint initiative of the following groups

