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Americans Value Corporate Diversity in Hiring of Employees and Vendors

Findings Released by Witeck-Combs Communications and Harris Interactive for First National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce National Conference

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – June 11, 2004 – According to a new national online survey, 64% of gay, lesbian and bisexual (GLB) Americans and nearly half (48%) of heterosexuals surveyed said they somewhat or strongly disagree with the statement that companies which incorporate diversity into their hiring of employees and vendors are not as likely to be innovators as companies that do not emphasize diversity.

From an economic perspective, nearly four in ten (39%) heterosexuals and 56% of GLB Americans somewhat or strongly agreed that companies with a commitment to diversity in hiring vendors will be more competitive in the marketplace. However, 59% of non-gay Americans said the skill sets of a workforce are considered more important than diversity of a workforce, with 44% of GLB Americans concurring.

These are a few highlights of a nationwide survey of 2,415 adults, of whom approximately six percent self-identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual. The survey was conducted online between April 13 and 18, 2004 by Harris Interactive®, a worldwide market research and consulting firm, in conjunction with Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc., a strategic public relations and marketing communications firm with special expertise in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender market.

This survey was conducted to coincide with First National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC) National Conference and Dinner, which begins Friday June 11 in Washington, DC. The conference and dinner, which are set to attract over 400 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people, is the nation's only national not-for-profit advocacy organization dedicated to expanding access and opportunity for the GLBT business community and their allies.

"The goal of NGLCC is to level the playing field for GLBT owned businesses to have increased opportunities for supplier contracts with corporate America," said Justin Nelson, NGLCC co-founder. "Corporate diversity programs often include racial and ethnic minorities but do not include GLBT as a criterion. We are encouraged to see that Americans value diversity and see the important role diversity initiatives play in expanding the types of vendors they hire as well as the diversity of the workforce. The data show that diversity is a contributing factor to innovation and overall competitiveness," added Nelson.

The survey also investigated American attitudes about the impact on corporate benefits from the proposed Constitutional amendment or other legislation that would define marriage as only between a man and a woman. If passed, the Federal Marriage Amendment will amend the U.S. Constitution to define marriage in

the United States as consisting only of the union of a man and a woman. Some scholars suggest this proposal may block companies from offering health and other current employment benefits to the same-sex partners of their employees.

Approximately 6 out of 10 Americans, gay and non-gay (58% and 63% respectively) somewhat or strongly agreed that companies should be free to decide which benefits to offer their employees and their spouses or partners. The importance of such benefits is overwhelmingly clear -- with 86% of heterosexuals and 89% of GLB respondents agreeing that benefits like health, vacation leave and childcare support are an important part of the decision to choose one employer over another for a job.

Six out of ten (59%) of heterosexuals went further to agree that such a proposal, at the state level, would impact a company's ability to remain competitive in other states that do not restrict benefits, while 58% say it would harm retention of the most well qualified employees and 60% say it would impact the ability to recruit these employees. GLB Americans agreed even more strongly than heterosexuals: 85%, 81% and 79%.

"Employees place a very high value on the types of benefits companies offer their employees, including the benefits to employees with same-sex partners," said Jake Stafford, Senior Communications and Marketing Strategist for Witeck-Combs Communications. "Business has always been far ahead of legislation in terms of providing parity in the workplace for all employees. We feel that the Federal Marriage Amendment will be a step backwards and be bad for a company's ability to remain competitive."

Methodology

The survey was conducted online between April 13 and 18, 2004, among a nationwide cross section of 2,415 adults (ages 18+) of whom approximately 6% self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Figures for age, sex, race, education, region and income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. "Propensity score" weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

In theory, with probability samples of this size, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 2 percentage points (for the overall sample) of what they would be if the entire adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Statistical precision of the GLB overall sample is ± 9 percentage points. This online sample was not a probability sample.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

About Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc.

Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc. (www.witeckcombs.com) is the nation's premier strategic marketing communications firm, specializing in reaching the gay and lesbian consumer market with corporate clients including American Airlines, IBM, Sears, Ford Motor Company and its brands Jaguar, Volvo and Land Rover. With a decade's experience in this unique market, Witeck-Combs Communications has earned respected relationships throughout the community and serves as a bridge between corporate America and gay and lesbian consumers. In April 2003, *American Demographics* magazine identified Bob Witeck and Wes Combs as two of 25 experts over the last 25 years who have made significant contributions to the fields of demographics, market research, media and trendspotting for their pathbreaking work on the gay and lesbian market.

About Harris Interactive®

Harris Interactive (www.harrisinteractive.com) is a worldwide market research and consulting firm best known for *The Harris Poll*®, and for pioneering the Internet method to conduct scientifically accurate market research. Headquartered in Rochester, New York, Harris Interactive combines proprietary methodologies and technology with expertise in predictive, custom and strategic research. The Company conducts international research from its U.S. offices and through wholly owned subsidiaries—London-based **HI Europe** (www.hieurope.com), Paris-based **Novatris** and Tokyo-based **Harris Interactive Japan**—as well as through the Harris Interactive Global Network of independent market- and opinion-research firms. EOE M/F/D/V

To become a member of the Harris Poll OnlineSM and be invited to participate in future online surveys, visit <http://www.harrispollonline.com/>.

About National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce

The NGLCC is committed to forming a broad-based coalition, representative of the various interests of GLBT owned and friendly businesses, professionals, and students of business for the purpose of promoting economic growth and prosperity of its members. As a national umbrella organization, the NGLCC is a clearinghouse of ideas and information for and between businesses and organizations. The NGLCC works with state and local chambers and business groups on various issues. Most importantly, the NGLCC is the premier advocate on behalf of GLBT owned businesses, professionals, students of business, and corporations that share in our desire to expand the community's financial opportunities, economic growth, continued innovation, and equality.

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