

Public Opinion Pollsters to Discuss Katrina at Annual Conference in New Orleans

April 23, 2008 11:15 AM

Mike Strecker
mstreck@tulane.edu
504-865-5210

Key figures in the New Orleans rebuilding effort will come together at a May 15 panel to discuss the relationship between government actions in the post-Katrina environment and the attitudes and opinions of Katrina-affected residents as measured in public opinion polls. The panel is the plenary session of the American Association for Public Opinion Research's annual conference. The session is being sponsored jointly with Tulane University. The theme of the conference, which will be held at the Sheraton New Orleans May 15-18, is "Polls for the Public Good."

"The motivation behind the science of public opinion is our conviction that measuring and understanding peoples' attitudes can ultimately improve the direction of their lives and the societies in which they live," said Frank Newport, conference chair and editor in chief of the Gallup Poll. "The emphasis of the plenary will be on analyzing how elected leaders and other officials associated with the post-Katrina rebuilding efforts have and can utilize poll data reflecting what the people affected by Katrina say about what has been done, and should be done after Katrina."

Newport added that the conference organizers, who chose the city before Hurricane Katrina, see the theme as a way for survey research professionals to use their skills to make a contribution to New Orleans. The plenary runs from 4 to 5:45 p.m. on Thursday, May 15. The panel members are: Aspen Institute President and CEO Walter Isaacson, moderator; New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin; Louisiana Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu; Xavier University President and Chair of the Louisiana Recovery Authority Norman Francis and Donald Powell, former Federal Coordinator of Gulf Coast Rebuilding. The panel will be introduced by Tulane President Scott Cowen.

"By co-sponsoring this session we hope to apply our country's founding principle, that government should be responsive to the voice and will of the people, to the tragedy of Katrina," Cowen said. The American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) is the leading professional organization of public opinion and survey research professionals in the U.S., with members from academia, media, government, the non-profit sector and private industry. Its annual conference brings together hundreds of the country's leading public opinion research scientists to review, discuss and analyze the latest research on methodology, theory and results of the process of measuring public opinion.

Founded in 1834, Tulane is one of the most highly regarded and selective independent research universities in the United States. In August of 2005, Hurricane Katrina flooded 70 percent of Tulane's uptown campus and all the buildings of its downtown campus, dispersing its faculty, staff and students around the country for an entire semester. Under President Scott Cowen's leadership the campus was repaired and a remarkable 87 percent of its students returned for classes in January of 2006.

For more conference information: <http://www.aapor.org/2008annualaaporconference>