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As consumers lose faith in government to lead environmental change, industry gains ground

Santa Barbara, CA, March 5, 2010 – New research introduced today at the Wall Street Journal’s ECO:nomics conference suggests that as Americans have lost faith in the government to lead environmental change, they’ve gained significant confidence in private industry’s ability to take the reins.

The findings reveal that only 20% of Americans think the government will ultimately lead environmental change, a 5% drop from 2009. And respondents have also lost confidence in both major political parties’ ability to seriously address environmental issues. Only 35% of respondents believe that Democrats are the party that best addresses the environment, down from 42% last year; and 12% chose the Republicans, which also represents a 7% drop since 2009.

Where government and political parties are losing ground, private industry is gaining. Whereas in 2009 only 7% of Americans believed that companies would lead us into a more eco-conscious future, 14% believe so now. Said increased confidence appears to be translating directly into consumers’ product choices: 47% of Americans now say they believe claims about products’ environmental friendliness, up from 39% last year. 60% report that “energy efficient” is the “green” product description that most effectively drives their purchases.

“Consumers are beginning to grasp just how much green innovation today’s private sector has to offer, and they’re starting to factor it in to their purchase decisions” said PSB Chairman Donald A. Baer. “At the same time, consumers’ growing faith in companies’ environmental intentions will make it more difficult for firms to set themselves apart in the green space, making insightful communications a more important differentiator.”

Other key findings of the survey include:

- Most respondents (63%) have a very favorable view of Solar energy, and 21% believe it’s our cheapest alternative energy source.
- A plurality of respondents (48%) say an electric car would need a single-charge range of 200 miles or more for them to drive it, while 24% wouldn’t do so under any circumstances.

- 49% of respondents think companies that adopt green energy and building practices save money in the long run; 29% disagree.

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About the ECO:nomics 2010 Poll:

For the *Wall Street Journal*, Penn Schoen Berland (PSB) conducted 1000 internet interviews with US general population aged 18 and over from February 11-14, 2010. Overall, the margin of error is +/- 3.1% and larger for sub-audiences.

About Penn Schoen Berland

Penn Schoen Berland is a global research-based consultancy that specializes in messaging and communications strategy for blue-chip political, corporate and entertainment clients. PSB has over 30 years of experience leveraging unique insights about public opinion to provide clients with a competitive advantage. PSB executes polling and message testing services for Fortune 100 corporations and have helped elect more than 30 presidents and prime ministers around the world. Penn Schoen Berland is a part of Young & Rubicam Brands, a subsidiary of WPP, one of the world's leading communications services networks. More information is available at www.psbresearch.com