FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 12, 2006

POLL: Opposition to Iraq war growing in Southern states

Region's attitudes marked by "sadness," reluctance to endure future war costs

DURHAM, N.C. – Despite strong early support for the Iraq war in the South, the region's opposition to the war now matches national levels — and by some measures frustration is higher in the South than elsewhere in the country. Those are the findings of a new public opinion poll run by the Institute for Southern Studies and the School of Public and International Affairs at North Carolina State University.

The national survey, which included a larger poll or "over-sample" in 13 Southern states, offers one of the first in-depth looks at Southern attitudes towards the Iraq war since the Bush Administration pressed for military action four years ago.

The survey reveals that Southerners, after showing disproportionate support for the war early on, now doubt U.S. policy in Iraq just as strongly as people in other regions of the country, and in some cases more so. Among the findings:

* **57% of Southerners believe the U.S. "should have stayed out of Iraq,"** compared to 44% who think the U.S. "did the right thing" by taking military action. Nationally, 58% of the public believes the U.S. should have stayed out and 43% now agree with military action.

* **Southerners are skeptical about the goals of the Iraq mission.** 29% of Southerners agree with the Bush Administration's position that "Iraq is the central front in the war on terrorism," compared to 25% nationally. But 30% in Southern states — the same as the national average — believe the main reason the U.S. is in Iraq is "to ensure access to oil."

* By at least one measure, **Southerners are more frustrated with the war than their counterparts in other regions.** Asked if they were "proud" or "sad" about Iraq, a surprising 62% of respondents in the South said they were "very sad" about the course of the war, compared to only 56% in other regions of the country. Only 10% of those surveyed in the South say they are "somewhat proud" or "very proud" of the Iraq mission — slightly less than those polled in other states.

* **30% of those polled in Southern states say the U.S. should "withdraw completely" from Iraq.** Those in non-Southern states were less likely to call for a total withdrawal of U.S. troops (26%), but more likely to think U.S. troop levels should be decreased "some" or "a lot" – 34% in non-Southern states, compared to 26% in the South. Put together, 56% of Southerners and 59% in other regions support a decrease or withdrawal of U.S. troops.

The results signal a shift in Southern attitudes towards Iraq. As recently as July 2005, a Pew Center poll found 53% of Southerners believed using military force against Iraq was "the right decision," the highest level of support in the country. Most polls since 2002 have shown support for the Iraq war in Southern states rating higher than, or even with, national attitudes.

"The depth and strength of anti-war sentiment in the South is eye-opening, given the region's high level of military pride and early embrace of U.S. policy in Iraq," says Chris Kromm, director

of the non-partisan Institute based in Durham, N.C. "The current Washington leadership has counted on Southern states as a bastion of support on Iraq, but clearly that support is deteriorating."

The poll also looked at the public's willingness to accept the future human and material costs of the ongoing counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq. When asked to provide "an acceptable number of U.S. military deaths" in Iraq, 63% of respondents in Southern states and 68% in other regions said "zero."

When asked later in the survey how much more money the U.S. should "spend in order to complete the mission in Iraq," 50% of Southerners and 47% of respondents elsewhere said no additional dollars should be spent.

"The evidence suggests a public consensus is developing, in the South and beyond: 'no more money and no more lives for Iraq,'" said Elena Everett, a program associate at the Institute. "With the mid-term elections approaching, the question is, how will Washington respond?"

The poll was designed by the Institute for Southern Studies in collaboration with Assistant Professor Michael D. Cobb and Associate Professor William A. Boettcher III, both from the Department of Political Science in the School of Public and International Affairs at North Carolina State University. The poll, administered by Knowledge Networks, Inc., included 1,342 respondents with an over-sample in 13 Southern states (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia).

The poll was in the field from September 19-26, 2006; the margin of sampling error for the national sample is plus or minus 2.7 percent.

The survey is part of the Peace and Security Program at the non-profit Institute for Southern Studies, which studies the connections between the South and U.S. foreign policy. In August 2005, the Institute published "Missiles and Magnolias: The South at War," a widely-circulated report documenting the South's unique ties to the Iraq war and U.S. military.