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New study finds corporations have a responsibility to lead on issues of the day, right behind the President and US Congress

In Trump era, a new and heightened issue environment brings opportunity for companies to drive change

NEW YORK—Global Strategy Group (GSG) today released its fourth annual *Business & Politics: Do They Mix?* study, finding that Americans' desire for corporate engagement in political and social issues is not just an expressed preference, but an expectation. In fact, 84% of Americans believe that businesses have a responsibility to bring social change on important issues, just behind the President (89%) and Congress (92%). The study also found that 81 percent of Americans believe corporations should take action to address important issues facing society; and 88 percent believe corporations have the power to influence. The full report can be downloaded at www.globalstrategygroup.com.

With many issues likely to be debated and become more polarized in the new political landscape—choice, LGBT equality, religious exemptions, immigration, to name a few—there is an opportunity for companies, if carefully navigated, to demonstrate leadership. “Even as we see disenchantment with Washington and big business at all-time highs, individual companies have an opportunity to challenge the existing narrative and distinguish themselves,” said Julie Hootkin, Executive Vice President and Co-Lead of GSG’s Corporate Impact Practice. “In this heightened issue environment, Americans are not only increasingly supportive of corporate positions on a range of issues, but believe companies can drive change and have a real impact on key issues of the day.”

The study found that 8 in 10 Americans support corporate positions on pay equity; nearly 8 in 10 on race relations (77%); 63% on immigration reform; 59% on LGBT equality; and 54% on transgender issues. Likewise, the public is looking for real time engagement on issues in the public eye. 51%--and 62% of Millennials—believe companies should respond by taking action/a stand within 72 hours of a current event.

The public also acknowledges that, for corporations, taking a public political stance can have a social—and financial—impact: 79% of Americans agreed that corporations can succeed at business while also taking a stance on an important issue, and 72% believe taking a stance on important issues can help a company’s bottom line. “There is no longer a disconnect – at least in the public mindset - between driving profit and doing “good,” said Tanya Meck, Partner, MD,

and Co-Lead, GSG Corporate Impact. “This has incredible implications for companies’ CSR programs.”

The report also explored the values that Americans—and Millennials specifically—place on working for companies that are politically and socially engaged. 8 in 10 Americans (83%) and nearly 9 in 10 Millennials (88%) believe that working for a company whose corporate values reflect their own is on par with other corporate benefits such as flexible work policies—and ahead of perks such as snack carts, meditation centers and game rooms. Millennials are also more likely to seek out information on corporate stances. Nearly one-third of Millennials (31%) actively seek knowledge of what companies are doing.

“This year’s report highlights the opportunities for companies to engage their employees and other stakeholders in ways that will reap benefits across a wide range of areas, including talent recruitment and retention, work satisfaction and corporate reputation,” said Hootkin. “When integrated across business units, CSR can be a powerful tool for corporations in 2017.”

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About the Study:

GSG’s Annual Business & Politics Study has become the authoritative voice on the role that businesses play in the political and social discourse and how this impacts brand perception. The study has been cited by leading media outlets such as the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Money, Business Insider, Politico, BuzzFeed, and others.

Global Strategy Group (GSG) conducted a public opinion survey among 801 adults 18 years and older between September 30 and October 5, 2016, plus an oversample of 255 millennials. The survey was conducted online recruiting respondents from a leading opt-in online panel vendor. Special care was taken by GSG to ensure that the demographic composition of our sample matched that of the adult population on a series of demographic variables including age, gender, region, ethnicity, income, educational attainment, partisan affiliation, and political ideology. More information on and further analysis of this study may be downloaded at globalstrategygroup.com.

About GSG’s Corporate Impact Practice

GSG’s Corporate Impact Practice helps corporations build and protect their brands, reframe their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, and manage business implications in the new political environment. Visit globalstrategygroup.com for more information.