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**VOTING ON FAITH**

**-- Experts Discuss the Role and Significance of Religion in the 2008 Presidential Election --**

**October 10, 2007** - Three notable scholars and advocates discussed the role and impact of religion in the 2008 presidential race during an audio news conference today. **Rev. Welton Gaddy** of The Interfaith Alliance, **Diana Eck** of Harvard and **Amy Caiazza** of the Institute for Women's Policy Research discussed why candidates' religious affiliations are so important to Americans at this point in time, the political significance of traditional Christian religion, and the dangers of breaching the separation of church and state.

Diana Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies and Director of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University, discussed candidates' use of religious rhetoric in the current race. "It's not what bible verses candidates believe in . . . it is what kind of America the candidates believe in," she stated. "When the candidates were asked about their favorite bible passage [in a recent debate], they should have said 'Of course as a Christian I have many favorites but I am not running to be president of American Christians, I am running to be president of all Americans.'"

The Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy, President of The Interfaith Alliance, stated that if politicians are going to use their faith as a selling point, voters must ask tough questions about how that faith will guide their leadership. "Clearly, candidates believe it is good campaign strategy to show themselves as good Christians. These candidates are wearing religion on their sleeves like campaign pins. If candidates continue to talk about religion, voters should ask them how that faith will affect their governance."

Looking at female voters and the important role their faith and participation will play in the 2008 election, Program Director for the Institute for Women's Policy Research Amy Caiazza said that "women have the potential to shape the coming election" as they "tend to be more religious and say that their religion shapes their values."

Additional topics included how presidential candidates, like Mitt Romney, are speaking about their religious faith and how 'values' are being interpreted in this election. To access the audio file of this discussion, please visit [www.religionandpluralism.org](http://www.religionandpluralism.org). The transcript of the audio news conference will be made available on this site as soon as possible.

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