



We write with pleasure today to express our strong support for the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. CSES is a wonderfully successful collaborative program of research being conducted by teams of voting and election scholars from around the world. It capitalizes on the separate projects of these teams to yield a whole that is much more than the sum of its parts. We hope very much that CSES will continue to thrive in the years to come, because it is an ideal example of international partnership among nations all invested in nurturing and understanding the workings of democratic governance around the world at a time when such endeavors are vitally important.

CSES is playing an increasingly vital role in scholarly attempts to understand why people vote as they do. The project provides researchers with a view of the political world through the eyes of ordinary citizens. Such data are critical, because, in the end, these people's actions determine electoral outcomes. One candidate's victory and others' defeats are the cumulative results of people pulling levers, coloring in empty ovals, or deciding to stay at home instead. To understand election results, we must explain what happened in the minds of these actors, describing what propelled them down the behavioral paths they chose. The impact of all forces at work, forces that range from images in advertisements to country-specific cultural and institutional differences, ultimately passed through the hands that voted or abstained.

The CSES is unique among election studies because of the extent of cross-national collaboration at all stages of the project: the research agenda and the questionnaire are the result of this unique partnership among leading scholars of electoral politics from around the world. And the substantial investment of time and energy devoted by these visionary scholars is paying off. Interest in, and analysis of, CSES data collections is exploding. What we are learning not only clarifies important differences between countries, but also teaches us about the important experiences that citizens in every democracy share. While being of interest to internationally-oriented scholars, CSES also provides more "local" benefit: scholars in one country can learn from studying voters in another country, thereby improving the quality of subsequent studies of their own country. Thus, CSES energizes the comparative and international perspective on the study of elections.

ANES will continue to support CSES by reserving space in its presidential election survey questionnaires for the CSES questions. We also look forward, to sharing with, and learning from, CSES lessons learned from our respective experiences. We feel that CSES not only complements nation-specific studies such as ours, but also adds value to our studies by increasing the relevance of the data we produce to scholars, journalists, students, and others around the world – all of whom seek credible data for the purpose of understanding the democracies in which they live.

For all these reasons, we heartily endorse the continuation of CSES. There is nothing else like CSES anywhere in the world. If it were to be lost due to lack of funding, it could not be replaced easily or inexpensively, if it could be replaced at all. CSES has the potential to transform what societies around the world understand about voters, in particular, and the democratic experience, in general. Its value to participating countries is just beginning to be realized and will only grow with time. We hope it will be maintained.

Sincerely,

Jon A. Krosnick (Stanford University, USA) and Arthur Lupia (University of Michigan, USA)
Principal Investigators, American National Election Studies

June 6, 2006