



**FAMILY MATTERS TO MOST IN U.S.**  
*The Washington Times*  
By Cheryl Wetzstein

Americans think it's more important to strengthen families than create more jobs or fight pollution, says a poll released yesterday by a new nonprofit group dedicated to strengthening marriage.

Nearly 60 percent of Americans believe the state of the family in America is weak, said Matt Daniels, president of the Alliance for Marriage, based in Alexandria.

The group released the results of a poll of 1,030 adults taken recently by Wirthlin Worldwide.

The poll found that, when broken down by party affiliation, 65 percent of independent voters said the American family was either "not very strong" or "weak and losing ground."

Almost the same portion of Republicans - 62 percent - said the same, followed by 55 percent of Democrats.

This across-the-board concern shows that "the American people understand that the most important things in the life of this nation are bigger than partisan politics," said Mr. Daniels.

The Wirthlin poll also showed Americans viewed "strengthening families" as a more urgent issue than "increasing more job opportunities" or "creating a cleaner environment."

When asked to choose between families or jobs, 64 percent of adults said strengthening families was more important.

An even larger majority - 77 percent - chose families over cleaning up the environment.

The Wirthlin poll further showed that 70 percent or more of adults, again regardless of the party, supported some of Alliance for Marriage's proposals.

These included:

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- Encouraging family friendly business practices, such as flex-time hours, job-sharing and home-based work options.
- Acknowledging the media for accurate portrayals of the benefits of marriage in the lives of adults and children.
- Requiring married parents considering divorce to seek counseling.
- Decreasing taxes for married couples with children.

Mr. Daniels said yesterday that the nonprofit alliance's mission is to promote marriage and "restore a culture of married fatherhood."

Another one of the alliance's mottos is that marriage is the "most multicultural social institution in the world," said Mr. Daniels, who previously led the Massachusetts Family Institute.

As such, the alliance has sought advisers from a wide range of religious, cultural, academic and civic policy groups. These include the Rev. William Teng of the Chinese Community Church of Washington, Mary Ellen Bork of the Catholic Campaign for America, Sayyid M. Sayeed of the Islamic Society of North America, and Patricia DeVeaux of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

