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Renowned American Leaders Inaugurate “NewTalk” Online Forum Meets Pressing Need For Candid Discussion of Crucial Public Policy Topics

NEW YORK, NY – June 17, 2008 – Renowned American leaders, including New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, inaugurated today an online forum called NewTalk, designed to tackle tough issues that are inadequately addressed in the national political debate. NewTalk (www.newtalk.org) offers a new kind of conversation: acknowledging reality, uncovering common ground, and finding a responsible way forward. It takes advantage of the Internet to let each discussion unfold over several days, with notable participants contributing from across the country.

On NewTalk, these leaders will bring their knowledge and experience to bear on the most pressing domestic issues in education, the economy, the environment, health care, and justice. NewTalk will be a virtual meetinghouse, with experts and thought-leaders from different points of view confronting America’s hard choices. Members of the public are invited to comment online as each discussion unfolds.

NewTalk was inaugurated this morning with the topic “Is it possible to fix government?” This online conversation, running through Thursday, June 19, includes:

- **The Honorable Michael Bloomberg**, Mayor of the City of New York
- **Senator Bill Bradley**, former Presidential Candidate and former U.S. Senator
- **The Honorable Jim Cooper**, Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Tennessee
- **The Honorable Shirley Franklin**, Mayor of Atlanta
- **Philip K. Howard**, author of *The Death of Common Sense* and founder of NewTalk (moderator)
- **Thomas Mann**, author of *The Broken Branch: How Congress Is Failing America and How to Get It Back on Track*
- **Patricia McGinnis**, President & CEO, Council for Excellence in Government
- **David Walker**, former U.S. Comptroller General and former head of the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

“I don’t think we can solve problems without bringing together people from both sides of the political aisle and keeping an open mind to all their ideas,” said Mayor Bloomberg. “It’s very encouraging that the American people have nominated two candidates who have shown a willingness to buck the party line – maybe not as much as some of us would like, but it’s a start. I hope that NewTalk will continue to encourage that process by engaging the public in a

substantive discourse that moves beyond the party line platitudes and sound bites that so often define traditional news coverage. Where the people lead, politicians follow.”

“Our political system today seems incapable of taking on hard issues,” said Philip K. Howard, Chair of Common Good, the nonpartisan organization that created NewTalk. “To paraphrase FDR, the main obstacle to change is fear of change. The goal of NewTalk is to bring together experts and citizen leaders to point the way towards real reform.”

The next conversation, scheduled for June 24-26, will focus on “Chronic care: Do we need an entirely new model of delivery?” Panelists will be announced next week.

Upcoming NewTalk forums will feature current and former political leaders, media and think tank experts, labor and business leaders, and top consumer and environmental advocates. Among those who have agreed to participate are:

- **Derek Bok**, former President of Harvard University;
- **William Brody**, President of Johns Hopkins University;
- **Troy Brennan**, Chief Medical Officer, Aetna, Inc.;
- **Iris Chen**, President and CEO, I Have A Dream Foundation;
- **Gregg Easterbrook**, Author and Senior Editor of *The New Republic*;
- **Chester Finn**, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education;
- **Newt Gingrich**, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives;
- **Eric Holder**, former U.S. Deputy Attorney General;
- **Sally Katzen**, former Deputy Director, U.S. Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs;
- **Peter Lehner**, Executive Director, Natural Resources Defense Council;
- **Ken Mehlman**, former Chairman of the Republican National Committee;
- **Dick Meserve**, President of the Carnegie Institution;
- **Herbert Pardes**, President of New York-Presbyterian Hospital;
- **Diane Ravitch**, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education;
- **Alan Simpson**, former U.S. Senator;
- **Terrie Williams**, author of “Stay Strong” and founder of the Stay Strong Foundation; and
- **Ruth Wooden**, President, Public Agenda.

Future forum topics under development include:

- “What is the role of the courts in setting social policy?”
- “Over-spending on entitlements: How close is the cliff?”
- “Do we need a basic rewrite of No Child Left Behind?”
- “Is nuclear power essential to addressing climate change and energy independence?”
- “Is American infrastructure crumbling?”

NewTalk has been created by Common Good (www.commongood.org), recognizing the need to improve the quality of public discourse across a broad range of fields. Two “preview” discussions, currently archived on the site, focus on “Should higher test scores be the main goal of school reform?” and “How can we restore Americans’ sense of optimism?”

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