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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Innovative Think Tank Centrists.Org Celebrates Its First Anniversary

Washington, DC – July 1, 2004 – Political bitterness, partisanship, and legislative gridlock remain the rule in Washington, but Centrists.Org, an organization devoted to bridging the partisan policy divide, celebrates its first birthday today.

“The good news is: We’re off to a great start,” said Centrists.Org Executive Director Jeff Lemieux. “The bad news is: It looks like we’re going to have a long life ahead of us. Legislators do not have enough practical centrist proposals to rally around.”

Centrists.Org began operations July 1, 2003 under the leadership of Lemieux, formerly Chief Economist of the Progressive Policy Institute, the think tank of the Democratic Leadership Council, and Maya MacGuineas of the New America Foundation. Rather than a “mushy middle,” Centrists.Org offers aggressive, credible and pragmatic solutions to the nation’s most pressing policy problems. In its first year, it has collaborated with Congressional leaders in both parties and think tanks on both the left and the right, like the Progressive Policy Institute and The Heritage Foundation.

Centrists.Org has gained attention on Capitol Hill through its weekly newsletter and extensive website, which receives 90,000 hits a month. The website features Issue Summaries that give readers a quick overview of different policy areas and are linked to more in-depth explorations of policy topics. To date, healthcare and budget policy are the best developed issue areas. Plans for Centrists.Org’s sophomore year include expansion into energy and environmental policy as well as employment and pension policy.

“Centrists.Org started with the goal of building policy for the people, not just for the outer wings of either political party. We have been really gratified by the response of Congressional staff. They seem to appreciate finally having an unbiased resource to call upon for formulating sound policy,” says Lemieux.

About Centrists.Org

Centrists.Org is a small think tank and communications center for **bipartisan** policymaking. American politics have become increasingly **polarized**, and scoring political points too often eclipses the objective of creating sound policy. Not only is the political debate often shrill, poorly informed, and unproductive, it **fails to represent** the largest portion of the public, which belongs to neither party.

Meanwhile, important **problems go unsolved**. Almost half of the soon-to-be-retiring baby boomers have insufficient savings, yet the costs of entitlement programs like **Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security** are poised to **squeeze the federal budget** and future taxpayers. Current economic policies are left over from a bygone era and **out of sync** with modern economic problems. **Deficits** have reemerged with no plan for how to reduce them. Roughly 40-45 million Americans have no **health coverage**.

To solve these problems the country needs bipartisan **cooperation** and new ideas. **Durable, long-range solutions** to the most important national problems cannot be rammed through legislatures on party-line votes. Instead, centrist policymakers need **bold, practical proposals** that can bridge the divide between the two parties and gain broad public support. Centrists.Org aims to further this mission by also laying out the sensible, coherent steps that Congress and the Administration can take to build confidence and make **progress**.

Organization and Staffing

Centrists.Org is a non-profit educational think tank, organized under section 501(c)(3) of the tax code; donations are tax-deductible. The two co-founders of the organization are **Jeff Lemieux**, previously with the Progressive Policy Institute, and **Maya MacGuineas** of the New America Foundation. Jeff is the executive director, effective July 1, 2003. **Kelly Buck** is General Manager. All can be reached at 202/546-4090 or via information@centrists.org.

Centrists.Org's offices are at 236 Massachusetts Ave, NE, Suite 205, Washington DC, 20002.

The day-to-day focus of our work is the Centrists.Org website. We are developing an extensive e-mail network to connect the centrist policy community. Our goal is for the website to be a regularly used "portal" for policymakers and the media. Visitors to the website and members of the media can sign up for frequent **email updates**.

Q&A with Centrists.Org General Manager Kelly Buck

Q: What are your goals at Centrists.Org?

A: *We strive to help America's policymakers develop creative, bipartisan solutions for the most pressing issues facing the nation. Centrists.Org is dedicated to improving America's health, fostering personal savings and wealth, preserving generational equity and opportunity, promoting a fiscally sound, empowering government.*

Q: How do you expect to survive among larger institutions like The Heritage Foundation and the Brookings Institute?

A: *While we adhere to a firm set of principles, we are not chiefly an ideological think tank. We focus on what can work for both sides of the discussion – developing sound policy based on centrist ideals. We compliment, rather than compete with those organizations – often working closely to bridge differences and to provide a practical, politically neutral evaluation of their ideas.*

Q: How is your organization funded? Do you have plans to expand?

A: *Centrists.Org is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, organization so we rely, at this point, solely on the generous support of contributors, who have given both financial and in-kind donations. Jeff's extensive work on health policy, in particular, has generated a lot of support from diverse sources such as private companies, professional associations, as well as the general public. As we become better established, we will apply for grants from public interest foundations. This fall we will expand our coverage of economic and globalization issues, as well as tax and pension issues, particularly on the "legacy" employment or retirement costs faced by companies. We are planning to add an energy and environmental policy project next year.*

Q: Who is reading your research and listening to you in Washington?

A: *We send out a weekly newsletter to over 2000 subscribers, most of whom are policy analysts and government staffers. (Sixty percent of the subscribers are government officials or employees, mostly on Capitol Hill.) The Centrists.Org website averages over 90,000 hits per month. We have had one event to date, on Social Security, where we brought together Senator Lindsey Graham and Rep. Harold Ford, Jr. to discuss the need for reform. The transcript of the event can be found on our website. We will continue to expand the Centrists.Org website, our email and fax services, and are planning additional bipartisan events and public discussions.*

Press Home Page

To register for press releases or for other questions, please call 202/546-4090 or email us at information@centrists.org.

Selected News Clips available on the web without fee (some may require registration):

June 28, 2004. Jeff Lemieux of Centrists.Org was quoted in a Washington Post article by Ceci Connolly and Jonathan Weisman, *The Choice for Voters: Health Care or Tax Cuts: Policy Costs Crowd Out Other Initiatives*, discussing the various campaign proposals in the 2004 Presidential race.

June 21, 2004. An article in *The Tampa Tribune*, *More Lack Health-Care Insurance* by Sherri Ackerman and Guy Boulton, quotes Centrists.Org's Jeff Lemieux on America's uninsured.

June 15, 2004. A United Press International article by Emily Berg quotes Centrists.Org's Jeff Lemieux on Social Security Reform.

June 7, 2004. The Commonwealth Fund's Washington Health Policy Week in Review quotes Centrists.Org's Jeff Lemieux on why Democrats Should Embrace the Drug Discount Cards (CentristPolicyNetwork.Org, June 2, 2004). This article originally appeared in the e-newsletter Washington HealthBeat.

May 22, 2004. An article in *National Journal* on Social Security reform quotes Centrists.Org's Jeff Lemieux on the Diamond-Orszag Social Security proposal.

May 14, 2004. An article on health coverage in the *Charlotte Observer* quotes Centrists.Org's Jeff Lemieux on the cost of expanding health coverage and reducing the number of Americans uninsured.

May 13, 2004. An article on "Cover The Uninsured Week" in the *Los Angeles Times* quotes Centrists.Org's Jeff Lemieux on the cost of expanding health coverage and reducing the number of Americans uninsured.

April 15, 2004. John Avlon's column in the *New York Sun* lists Centrists.Org as a resource for political independents.

April 7, 2004. An article about budget gimmicks published in *The Hill* quotes Jeff Lemieux, Executive Director of Centrists.Org, on the possible psychological effects to legislators that would be the result of linking spending and revenue decisions, creating a "use-it-or-lose-it" phenomena.

March 19, 2004. *USA Today* quotes Centrists.Org Executive Director Jeff Lemieux on early warnings of the cost of the Medicare drug benefit.

March 4, 2004. The Commonwealth Fund's Washington Health Policy Week in Review quotes Centrists.Org's article on the Durbin-Lincoln Small Employers Health Benefit Program (SEHBP). This article originally appeared in the e-newsletter Washington HealthBeat.

February 23, 2004. The Commonwealth Fund's Washington Health Policy Week in Review features an article called *Will Private Health Plans Save Medicare Money?* based on Centrists.Org's *The Curious, Counter-Intuitive Relationship Between Medicare Costs and HMO Enrollment* (February 8, 2004). This article originally appeared in the e-newsletter Washington HealthBeat.

January 27, 2004. The *LA Times* quotes Centrists.Org chairman and Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget Executive Director Maya MacGuineas on the necessity of both spending cuts and revenue increases to balance the budget.

January 26, 2004. A commentary by Jonathan Rauch in *REASON* (previously published in *National*

Journal) quotes Centrists.Org chairman and Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget Executive Director Maya MacGuineas on "Nixonian" budget deficits.

January 20, 2004. United Press International quotes Centrists.Org on the President's health agenda.

January-February 2004. Atlantic Monthly article by Centrists.Org chairman and Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget Executive Director Maya MacGuineas on "Radical Tax Reform."

January 12, 2004. Fox News quotes Centrists.Org chairman and Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget Executive Director Maya MacGuineas on the difficulty of controlling spending in an election year.

January 7, 2004. Online Journalism Review highlights Centrists.Org and other Internet-centric think tanks.

January 5, 2004. Associated Press quotes Centrists.Org chairman and Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget Executive Director Maya MacGuineas on the Administration's reluctance to make "hard choices" on the budget.

December 13, 2003. National Journal quotes Centrists.Org on the cost of the Social Security proposals of Sen. Lindsey Graham and anti-tax activist Peter Ferrara.

December 11, 2003. United Press International quotes Jeff Lemieux on whether or not the Rx drug bill is "transformation."

November 4, 2003. Reuters Health quotes Jeff Lemieux in a story about disease management in Medicare.

October 1, 2003. The Hill op-ed by Jeff Lemieux A Better Drug Benefit
"The Medicare drug benefit pending in Congress is flawed. The design was a rare political compromise; however, the result is a tortured policy that may be unworkable in practice." (see also (www.thehill.com))

September 30, 2003. Roll Call's Mort Kondrake cited Centrists.Org's work on a "fall-back" Medicare and prescription drug proposal. (Link may require subscription, www.rollcall.com)

September 8, 2003. NPR's Julie Rovner interviews Centrists.Org's Jeff Lemieux on privacy issues inherent in an income-tested Medicare drug benefit. (www.npr.org)

August 4, 2003. Insight Magazine quotes Centrists.Org's Jeff Lemieux on the "ugliness" of the Medicare drug benefit.

July 31, 2003. Congress Daily's AM Report quotes Centrists.Org's Jeff Lemieux on problems with the Medicare bills' stand-alone drug benefit.

July 29, 2003. Reuters quotes Centrists.Org's Jeff Lemieux on the cost of the Medicare drug benefit.

July 7, 2003. Roll Call's Guest Observer opinion column by Centrists.Org's Jeff Lemieux: On Medicare and Budget Numbers, CBO is Failing (see also www.rollcall.com).

July 6, 2003. Orange County Register cites www.Centrists.Org and quotes Centrists.Org calculations that the proposed Medicare drug benefit "will trigger 'a permanent acceleration of spending growth' that by 2030 will take a full 1 percent of Gross Domestic Product."

July 2, 2003. Washington Post column Burdening Our Children, Robert J. Samuelson uses long-run Medicare cost calculations from Drug Benefit Costs 1 Percent of GDP by 2030 (If CBO is Right), by Jeff Lemieux of Centrists.Org (June 25, 2003).