

## **WORLD ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH (WAPOR)**

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **Public opinion research must guarantee the confidentiality of responses**

Lincoln (Nebraska, USA), February 17, 2011. The National Election Panel of Peru (Jurado Nacional de Elecciones, JNE) recently announced a requirement that polling organizations disclose all their respondents' personal identity information, forcing them to violate the profession's code of ethics, and restricting their freedom to conduct and publish public opinion polls.

WAPOR observes that this regulation would restrict both the rights of the citizens to express their opinions freely as well as the freedom of polling organizations to conduct and publish public opinion polls in Peru. It violates the fundamental ethical principle of protecting respondents' anonymity. In the Code of Ethics, Part III (On Rules of Practice between Researcher and Respondents), Section D (Responsibility to Informants), Paragraph 22, WAPOR states that:

“No response in a survey shall be linked in any way to an identifiable respondent. The anonymity of respondents shall be respected, except in rare cases, with the respondent's specific permission.”

WAPOR is aware that the JNE has now decided to revoke this new regulation and work with Peruvian pollsters. WAPOR commends the JNE for withdrawing this regulation and thereby respecting the confidentiality of respondents.

WAPOR states that:

Protecting respondent anonymity and thus the freedom to express opinions freely is a core principle of professional practice in survey research.

The protection of respondents' identities is the sole responsibility of the research organization that conducts the study, and not of any third party.

A state agency's scrutiny of respondents' identities will not improve the quality of public opinion polls. On the contrary, the requirement to disclose the identity of all respondents will likely distort the accuracy of any poll result. Prospective respondents would probably refrain from participating or would not express their true opinions, for fear of government retaliation.

Requesting citizen identification numbers will bias poll results and violate the citizens' right to keep their political preferences secret.

WAPOR opposes regulations that restrict the freedom to conduct and publish public opinion polls around the world and that limit the rights of citizens in a democracy to both participate in surveys and to be informed by them.

This press release and the principles expressed in it are also endorsed by AAPOR, the American Association for Public Opinion Research.

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