TRANSCRIPT: Colin Hanna, President of Let Freedom Ring, on Tea Party Support for the Defense Budget

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Thank you, Frank. And if I could pick up for just a moment on the question of partisanship that Tom raised, it is indeed unfortunate that the whole support of the defense establishment has become viewed by some as partisan. It's not partisan by design. It's partisan by default. And I'm going to address in the next few moments a survey we did about the Tea Party, which is also often perceived as Republican perhaps even by design. And I don't have the statistics directly in front of me, cause this wasn't what we were going to address in this survey, but you should know that the Tea Party is roughly sixty percent Republican, twenty percent independent, and twenty percent Democrat. So that when we look at the statistics we're going to see in this survey, please bear that in mind. This is—even if the representation in the Congress of those who support the defense and military tend to be almost entirely partisan, the Tea Party movement under it is a bit broader than that. Also, I noted with interest your comment, Tom, about some years ago we would have had some Jackson Democrats here. Frank referred to our being old friends, which I'm getting increasingly defensive about. But thirty-five years ago, Frank and I met. And he was, in fact, on Scoop Jackson's staff at that time. So we actually have a Scoop Jackson Democrat with us today. Although he's undergone considerable conversion and refinement since then. [LAUGHS] In any case, let me quickly take you through this survey and tell you what we did. This is a survey—if you can bring out the first slide, I'd appreciate it. On the slide—am I on? Right here. Great. This is a survey that we did about seven months ago. This is a survey of one thousand likely voters. So it's a good—it's a national sample. And then we asked the survey respondents, are you generally supportive of the Tea Party Movement or generally unsupportive? And I then characterized them in the survey you're about to see as pro-Tea Party and anti-Tea Party. But that wasn't quite the way the question was asked. It was generally supportive or not.

So what we're taking you through here is each question, I will show you the answer from all voters and then break it down into the pro and anti-Tea Party voters. So the purpose of the survey is to show you that the Tea Party is more pro-defense than you might think. Because right now, with the pressure on a budget and the characterization of the Tea Party as primarily fiscal conservatives, you—anyone can be forgiven for concluding that the Tea Party is probably in favor in defense cuts as part of fiscal conservatism. And we're going to see that that's not quite the case. So the first question that we asked was do you think that the Tea Party Movement should maintain its focus on economic issues or broaden its agenda to include such issues as defense and foreign policy? Or not sure? Forty-seven percent of all voters said it should maintain its focus and thirty percent broaden its agenda. But look what happens when you break it down. Fifty-two percent of the pro-Tea Party said that they should maintain its economic focus and thirty-nine percent of the anti-Tea Party. Then we get down into the weeds of defense budget. Is the

defense budget filled with cost-cutting opportunities or should it be maintained at approximately current levels? And the two choices – our defense budget is filled with opportunities to cut spending or defense spending should be maintained at current levels. Forty-nine percent of all voters.

But break it down. Only thirty-four percent of Tea Party or pro-Tea Party supporters think that it should be maintained at current levels, whereas seventy—excuse me, filled with opportunities to cut spending—seventy percent of the anti-Tea Party want to cut spending. Is there a threat to national security from jihadism that is greater or less than prior threats? Overall, fifty-five percent think it's greater. But sixty-seven percent of the pro-Tea Party universe think it's greater. Only forty-three percent of the anti-Tea Party. So that's us. That's our crowd. Second question on the threat of jihadism. Was the Obama or the Bush Administration, which one had a better strategy for dealing with jihadism? And thirty-six percent of all voters but only twelve percent of pro-Tea Party voters think the Obama administration was better. This is perhaps the single most stark chart in the entire survey. Sixty-six percent of the anti-Tea Party people think the Obama administration has it right. Twelve percent of the pro-Tea Party. So the Tea Party is the constituency for the support of the military and they should be seen as that and not just as deficit hawks. Third question on the threat of jihadism. Are there likely agents of al-Qaeda or other jihadists that have penetrated the federal government at high levels? Is that very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, not at all likely? Overall, twenty-nine percent very likely. Twentythree percent somewhat likely. Tea Party, forty-nine percent very likely and twenty-seven percent somewhat likely. Versus a total of only thirty percent on the anti-Tea Party. So in effect the Tea Party gets it. They are seen as fiscal conservatives, but they understand the challenges of—to defense. That is the survey. And I think our timing is fairly close for Ralph [OVERLAPPING VOICES] –questions for anyone who wants to know. I've all sorts of other cross tabs, happy to share that data. Thanks very much for your attention. [APPLAUSE]