Snapshot of Panama

- **Population**: 3 million
- **Climate**: Tropical
- **Size**: 29,208 sq.miles, about the size of South Carolina
- **Language**: Spanish, English a strong second language
- **Government**: Democratic
- **Religion**: 85% Catholic,
- **Ethnic groups**: 70% mestizo, 14% black, 10% white, 6% Amerindian
- **Currency**: US dollar
- **Economy**: 75% services, 16% industry, 10% agriculture
Republic of Panama

The narrowest section linking the Americas. With population of 3 million and per capita income in excess of US$ 7,000 per year. A dollarized economy, highly stable and with little inflation.

75% of GDP is generated out of international services mostly related to trade and commerce. Services include Panama Canal operations, the largest free trade zone of the continent, a well known banking sector, the largest container operation in the Americas.

Economic growth at 7.6% for 2004, 6.4% for 2005 and an estimated 8% for 2006.

Government fiscal deficit has declined from 7.0% in 2004 to 3.2% of GDP in 2005 and 1.5% in 2006.
The Panama Canal

- Under U.S. control from 1914 until the handover to Panama on December 31, 1999
- 50 miles or 80 km long between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans
- Approximately 13-14,000 vessels transit annually
- The waterway serves more than 144 different transportation routes from every corner of the globe
- The Canal accounts for nearly 5% of world trade
- Employs 9,000 people, open 24/7
- Millions of goods are moved through the Canal every year – from cars, to clothes, computers, fruits, etc.
- On October 22, 2006 the Panama Canal expansion was approved through a national referendum by 77% of Panamanians
What is the Panama Canal Expansion?

- Expansion is the largest project since the Canal's original construction in 1914.
- Expansion will build a new lane of traffic along the Canal through the construction of a new set of locks.
- Expansion will double the current Canal's capacity.
- The Canal expansion will use unique water-saving basins to help preserve the freshwater resources along the waterway (60% will be reused).
- Expansion will not interrupt current operations.
- The estimated cost of expansion is $5.25 billion.
- Construction of the project is slated to conclude by 2014.
Third Set of Locks

Components

- Deepening of the Pacific and Atlantic Entrances
- Deepening and widening of the navigational channels of Gatun Lake and deepening of Culebra cut
- Construction of the new locks and water-saving basins in the Atlantic and Pacific
- Raising Gatun Lake to its maximum operational level
The National Referendum on Expansion

- The Panama Canal Authority (ACP) presented its formal proposal to the Panamanian government on Monday April 24, 2006

- On Friday, July 14, Panama's National Assembly unanimously approved the proposal to expand the Panama Canal. In addition, the Assembly created and passed a law mandating a national referendum in which the people of Panama would vote to approve expansion.

- On Sunday October 22, 2006 a national referendum was held allowing all Panamanians to decide on the future of the Canal.
Communications Campaign

The Canal embodies the most heartfelt emotions of the Panamanian people
Communications Campaign

- Training key personnel: 60 ACP spokespersons
- Logistics
- Polling
Communications Campaign

The campaign was put in motion to ensure that every Panamanian was informed on the project of expansion through:

• 2,088 presentations attended by more than 235,692 people
• Daily outreach to the media – 1,100 interview were given
• 16 information centers visited by 34,500 people
• ACP’s website received more than 3.6 million hits and 738,000 downloads
• Telephone hotline “ACP Responds” received 26,268 calls
• Literature distribution: 820,000 copies of the proposal, 872,000 explanatory brochures and 300,000 copies of Law 28
• Mobile exhibits in buses “The Canal Reaches You” received 10,120 visitors
• TV, radio and print campaign “The ACP Responds”
• A mobile phone strategy via text messaging to encourage people to vote
• Blogging and monitoring
• Videos on YouTube, Revver, Google Video, Blip TV, The Newsmarket
• Wikipedia
• 2,088 presentations attended by more than 235,692 people
• 16 information centers visited by 34,500 people
Mobile exhibits in buses “The Canal Reaches You” received 10,120 visitors
Communications Campaign

Voices opposing expansion: Groups against the project
The Challenges

- By law, the ACP could not enlist the support of voters. Our job was to merely communicate and educate Panamanians about the expansion proposal.

- Communicating the complexities and benefits of a project of this magnitude to some groups who had not even seen the Canal.

- Creating a sense of ownership of the Canal.

- Meeting opposition to Canal Expansion.
How the ACP Faced the Opposition
Days before the Referendum: The “Sí” Campaign
Days before the Referendum:
Press conference with ACP Chairman of the Board, Panama’s Vice President and Panama Canal’s Administrator
Voting Day at a Local School
Voting Day at a Local School
EXPANSION WINS!

- YES vote wins overwhelmingly- 76.33 % voted Yes
- Construction work to begin in September 2007
- Expansion will increase Canal capacity, allow passage of larger vessels and thus get more goods to market
The SUCCESS Story

• The communications campaign educated nearly three million Panamanians

• Nearly 80% of Panamanians voted in favor of expansion

• The result of the referendum will propel the waterway into the next frontier in interoceanic transit
Thank you