

Defending Justice, Protecting Citizens



The rule of law is the cornerstone of American democracy. Americans depend on the courts to protect our rights and resolve disputes in a fair and impartial manner. Judicial decisions should be based on the law and not influenced by politics or special interests.

Today, all across the nation, the ability of courts to deliver on these basic tenets of democracy is being threatened by powerful special interest groups seeking to politicize the courts and tip the scales of justice in their favor. The success or failure of special interest efforts to weaken the courts rests on their ability to mislead voters, who often lack sufficient knowledge about the courts' role in protecting constitutional freedoms.

Our system of checks and balances will fail if we allow narrow special interests to control the selection and retention of judges.



JUSTICE FREE FROM SPECIAL INTERESTS



Informed Voters FAIR JUDGES

JUSTICE FREE FROM SPECIAL INTERESTS



Citizens can ensure that they have fair judges and equal justice in their state courts through reasoned and informed voting.

The National Association of Women Judges “Informed Voters – Fair Judges” project is a nonpartisan voter education project developed to increase the knowledge of our citizens about the judicial branch, to inform them that politics and special interest attacks have no place in the courts, and to give them the tools they need to exercise an informed vote.

Voters must be educated about the value and importance of fair and impartial courts BEFORE elections.

The message will be communicated nationally and in nine pilot-project states considered vulnerable to special interest attacks – Alaska, California, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Tennessee, Washington and Wisconsin. By establishing a baseline understanding of the unprecedented threats our courts face today, “Informed Voters – Fair Judges” will help state-level organizations energize voters to get involved and exercise an informed vote.



What Voters Need to Know



THE ROLE OF THE COURTS

- Our Founding Fathers created our courts to stand apart from politics in order to uphold the Constitution.
- The courts are an important part of our democracy and provide essential balance in our government.
- Americans depend on the courts to uphold the Constitution, and to rule on every case fairly and impartially.
- American democracy depends on the People's knowledge of the role of the courts within our constitutional system, the difference between judges and other elected officials, how judges make decisions, and the reasons why our courts should be free from political influences.
- Politics and special interest attacks have no place in the courts.



THE COURTS MUST BE PROTECTED FROM THOSE WHO WOULD POLITICIZE THEM

- Fair and impartial courts should not be threatened through politicization of judicial races by narrow special interests.
- Fair and impartial courts protect our rights. In a constitutional system where “majority rules,” sometimes the rights of the poor, the unpopular, or the minority may be restricted.
- By standing up for all, the courts are vulnerable to being politicized by those whom they hold in check.
- To protect access to justice for all and our rights under the Constitution, we must defend fair and impartial courts from special interest attacks and improper political interference and pressure.



JUDGES SHOULD BE JUDGED ON THEIR CHARACTER AND INTEGRITY

- How judges are selected varies from state to state, but all systems share one common goal: to ensure that those on the bench honor their oath to provide fair, impartial, and equal justice under the law.
- BEFORE the election cycle begins, voters must understand the role of the courts and the qualities/characteristics important to consider when evaluating judges.
- When voters understand what judges do and how the courts are supposed to work, they are more likely to vote for judges possessing character, integrity, impartiality, and a willingness to decide cases on the evidence presented and the law, not on political or special-interest agendas or out of a fear of unpopularity.
- If we support or oppose judges based on the popularity of their decisions, the threat of political retribution will undermine fairness, equality, and impartiality in our courts.

Campaign Tools

Public opinion research has consistently shown citizens want their courts to make decisions in a fair, impartial, and non-political fashion.

Informed Voters – Fair Judges will educate voters by using a variety of communications vehicles:

- Alerts, presentations and publications from a large and growing network of campaign partners and participants, including:

*League of Women Voters
Justice at Stake
Brennan Center for Justice
National Center for State Courts
American Constitution Society
National Constitution Center
Our Courts America Project
American Judicature Society
Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System
ABA Standing Committee on Judicial Independence
State Bars, nonprofit organizations, etc.*



- Community presentations
- Radio and television public service announcements
- Web sites and Web page content
- A social media campaign
- Newspaper and electronic media coverage



WE NEED YOUR HELP

NAWJ and our campaign partners are committed to defending the fairness and impartiality of our courts. Voter education is the key, and we need your help. Please make a contribution today. Find out how at www.NAWJ.org or contact:

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