



For Immediate Release

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Conservative Pollster: Republican Voters Favor Judicial Public Financing Program, Oppose Lawmakers Who Would Kill It

RALEIGH, N.C, June 3, 2013 – A new survey by a Republican polling firm finds that legislators should think twice before destroying North Carolina’s embattled judicial public financing program. The poll, conducted by a firm that has worked for Sen. Jesse Helms and many leading conservatives, shows that 67 percent of Republican women especially like the fact that the program has increased female representation on the state’s top courts – and by a 57 percent majority, they are less likely to vote for lawmakers who end the public financing option and allow money to play a greater role in judicial elections.

Overall, a super-majority (68%) of voters said they would hold lawmakers accountable at the polls for ending the program. Sixty-one percent of voters are particularly worried about the potential for corruption if the program is eliminated and say the program “should remain in place because even the hint of bribery is too much in our judicial system.”

A [poll](#) released last month by the NC Center for Voter Education indicates the program has broad support, with backing by 67% of Republican voters and 65% of independents.

The new poll by the Republican-leaning Tarrance Group was commissioned by NC Voters for Clean Elections and delved into [more specifics](#) on voters’ feelings about the program. Leaders from both parties came together in 2004 to implement the Public Campaign Fund, in order to relieve judicial candidates from the big-money chase. Contrary to the pessimism about government programs, supporters say this one has clearly worked.

A majority of the NC Supreme Court justices are now women for the first time in history – and all have used the program to win election. Overall, 80 percent of appellate court candidates have used the program, including all four African-American appellate judges elected since 2004 and eight of the ten Republicans who won contested elections.

Despite years of success and bipartisan support, the program is under attack. The state Senate eliminates the program in its budget bill passed recently, and a similar provision was proposed by the governor’s budget.

As the State House prepares its version of the budget, advocates are fighting to preserve the popular program.

“This confirms what we knew all along, which is that voters in North Carolina get it,” said Melissa Price, Director of North Carolina Voters for Clean Elections (NCVCE). “They know that the program has meant more opportunities for talented women and minorities to get on the bench, and they know that doing away with it means the voices of ordinary people

would be drowned out in judicial elections by special interests and political parties. The poll proves that voters care enough about judicial public financing to take their concerns with them to the ballot box.”

“Ten years ago, North Carolina wisely put in place a system designed to reduce the risk of out-of-control spending on judicial elections,” added Liz Seaton, Acting Executive Director of Justice at Stake, a national watchdog group. “The public financing system is popular, and it’s really interesting that the numbers show that trying to kill it now could in turn be a career killer for a state legislator.”

Voter support for the program is broad and pervasive across party lines. Overall, 68 percent of voters say they are less likely to vote for a state legislator who supports more money in judicial elections. This sentiment is strongest with conservative Democrats, 83 percent of whom agree with the statement. Republicans and Independents also agree, with 62 percent and 63 percent respectively saying they are less likely to support a legislator who votes against public financing.

Additional key discoveries include:

- Overall, 70 percent of NC voters support public financing of elections because it has helped women and minorities win more judicial races under the system.
- 56 percent of voters support the program because cutting it would give special interests more power in the courtroom.
- 53 percent support public financing of elections because former governors from both parties proposed the program and continue to endorse it.

To execute the poll, NCVCE relied on The Tarrance Group, a widely respected and successful Republican polling firm. Their clients include more than 80 current Republican Governors, U.S. Senators and Members of Congress – as well as national organizations like the National Rifle Association and Freedom Works and former North Carolina Governor Jim Martin, U.S. Senator Jesse Helms and U.S. Congressman Alec McMillan. In 2012, the American Association of Political Consultants named partner Brian Tringali and Senior Vice President B.J. Martino ‘GOP Strategists of the Year.’

The poll on North Carolina judicial public financing was conducted as a telephone survey of 700 registered voters in the state. A random sample of this type is likely to yield a margin of error of +3.8% in 95 out of 100 cases. Responses to the survey were gathered May 6-8, 2013. Tarrance Group’s poll memo is attached.

North Carolina Voters for Clean Elections funded the poll with assistance from Justice at Stake. NCVCE and Justice at Stake are both nonpartisan, nonprofit organizations dedicated to the preservation of fair and impartial courts. See more about the two organizations at: <http://www.ncvce.org/> and <http://www.justiceatstake.org/>.