



**Justice at Stake**  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 6, 2004

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**NATIONAL REPORT: PARTISANS, SPECIAL INTERESTS BANKROLLED  
2002 ALABAMA SUPREME COURT ELECTION**

*Poll Shows Popularity of Reforms that Would  
Curb Special Interest Influence in Judicial Elections*

WASHINGTON, D.C. - A new report from a Washington watchdog organization shows that Alabama ranks among a handful of states that have become perennial “battlegrounds” for state Supreme Court elections, and that Alabama’s 2002 Supreme Court race was dominated by huge donations from outside groups.

“For more than a decade, Alabama special interest groups and political partisans have been trying to influence Supreme Court candidates with big campaign contributions and hard-ball negative TV ads. They want to pressure the judges who protect our rights to rule in their interest, not the public interest,” said Bert Brandenburg, acting executive director of Justice at Stake.

According to the report, the top two outside donors in 2002 Supreme Court races were both in Alabama. The Alabama Democratic Party gave \$893,000 to challenger James Anderson – more than two-thirds of Anderson’s total fundraising. The pro-business Progress PAC gave \$284,000 to the successful re-election campaign of Justice Harold See. The report notes that See raised 76 percent of his funds from those associated with the business community.

At a Capitol Hill news conference unveiling both the report and the poll, Senator John McCain decried the increasing influence of special interests over the judicial election process.

“The extreme amount of big money in this year’s judicial elections will only reduce public trust in the judicial system.” Senator McCain said. “Survey after survey shows that Americans from all walks of life want a fair and impartial judicial system free from the corrupting influences of special interests.”

“Voters in Alabama should be concerned when special interest groups and the political parties are making huge contributions to candidates for judicial office. In 2002, as this new report shows, the two candidates for a single Supreme Court seat raised and spent respectively \$1.5 million and \$1.3 million,” said John Pickens, executive director of the Alabama Appleseed Center for Law and Justice.

“Being dependent on special interest groups and political parties for campaign funding raises the question of to whom elected justices will be beholden – the law and the public, or the special interests groups. There should be no veil of suspicion as to the fairness and impartiality of our elected judges, so that everyone in Alabama knows that justice is not for sale,” Pickens continued.

Justice at Stake also released a new nationwide poll conducted by Zogby International showing that Americans are alarmed by the increasing power of money and special interest politics in judicial elections—and that they want reforms.

According to the poll, more than four of five voters nationwide (82 percent) are concerned that a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision allowing judges to speak more freely in their campaigns will result in increased special interest influence. Similarly, 82 percent would like to see their states match the standard adopted in the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) that requires the disclosure of those that bankroll TV advertising campaigns mentioning candidates around election season.

The report was authored by Deborah Goldberg of the *Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law* and Samantha Sanchez of the *Institute of Money in State Politics*. It was issued by the Justice at Stake Campaign, a partnership of over 40 judicial, legal and citizen groups from across the country that works for fair and impartial courts. The Alabama Appleseed Center for Law and Justice in Montgomery is a Justice at Stake Campaign partner.

Justice at Stake and its campaign partners support a variety of measures to protect America’s courts, including: campaign oversight and citizen monitoring committees to blow the whistle on inappropriate campaign conduct; providing more and better information so voters can make an informed choice when they vote for judge; and campaign finance reform.

An audio news release, complete poll results and a downloadable copy of THE NEW POLITICS OF JUDICIAL ELECTIONS 2002 is available at [www.justiceatstake.org](http://www.justiceatstake.org).