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**NEW POLL SHOWS VERY STRONG SUPPORT FOR
DISCLOSURE OF “STEALTH” TV ADS**

New Report Notes Ohio Topped Nation in Supreme Court Spending in 2002

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A new poll from the Justice at Stake Campaign shows that more than four of five voters nationwide (82 percent) would like to see their states match the standard adopted in the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA). BCRA, also known as McCain-Feingold requires the disclosure of those that bankroll TV advertising campaigns mentioning candidates around election season. Such a measure has recently passed the Ohio Senate and is under consideration in the Ohio House.

The poll was released in conjunction with a new report from a Washington watchdog organization showing that Ohio has the questionable distinction of being on the frontier of “the new politics of judicial elections.” The report reveals that Ohio Supreme Court candidates combined to spend more money than the combined total of candidates in any other state – over \$6.2 million. Ohio was also the only state in which every Supreme Court candidate raised at least \$1 million.

“Ohio has become the national poster child for Supreme Court elections that are nasty, noisy and costly. At election season, the sense that special interests are watching over their shoulder is forcing Ohio judges to work around the clock raising money, so they can defend themselves against an onslaught of TV attack advertising,” said Bert Brandenburg, acting executive director of Justice at Stake. Brandenburg said that the poll underscores that Americans are demanding accountability in the election process.

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.”

“In Ohio during Election 2002, almost half of special interest ads attacked a candidate,” said Catherine Turcer of Ohio Citizen Action in Columbus. “These special interest groups cannot continue to operate in secrecy. We have four seats for the Ohio Supreme Court up this year and we need a full picture of all the political dollars.”

The nationwide poll conducted by Zogby International shows that Americans are alarmed by the increasing power of money and special interest politics in judicial elections—and that they want reforms. For instance, two out of three voters (67 percent) said that receiving a nonpartisan voter guide on judicial candidates would make them somewhat or much more likely to vote in judicial elections. Efforts are underway to develop a broad network of groups who will work with print and broadcast media to put a voter guide in the hands of as many Ohioans as possible.

“With judicial election costs going sky high in Ohio, and with special interest groups playing bigger roles in the 2002 elections than ever, now is the time for the Ohio legislature to look at making changes that will help preserve the public’s confidence in our courts,” said Terry McCoy, President of the League of Women Voters of Ohio.

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. Ohio Citizen Action and the League of Women Voters of Ohio are both partners in the Justice at Stake effort.

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.

Complete poll results and a downloadable copy of *THE NEW POLITICS OF JUDICIAL ELECTIONS 2002* is available at www.justiceatstake.org.