



**Justice at Stake**  
c a m p a i g n

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**NATIONAL REPORT:  
MISSISSIPPI SUPREME COURT COSTS EXPLODED IN 2002**

*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 the average cost of winning a seat on the Mississippi Supreme Court nearly doubled between 2000 and 2002, and that the state now ranks among a handful of perennial “battlegrounds” for state Supreme Court elections.

“Mississippi 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.

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, 82 percent of voters in America 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 mentioning candidates around election season. Legislation to address this matter has been given close scrutiny by the Mississippi legislature. The poll also revealed that voters would be more likely to cast ballots in judicial elections if they had access to nonpartisan voter guides.

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.”

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.

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](http://www.justiceatstake.org).