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May 6, 2004

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**LAWYERS CONTINUE DOMINANCE IN TEXAS SUPREME COURT GIVING,
SAYS NATIONAL REPORT ON 2002 ELECTIONS**

*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 Texas has cemented its place among a handful of states that have become perennial “battlegrounds” for state Supreme Court elections. According to the report, lawyers gave more than 66 percent of all the money donated to candidates for the Texas Supreme Court, while business interests accounted for more than 25 percent of the nearly \$5.9 million donated to high court candidates. Texas ranks second in the nation in total fundraising by Supreme Court candidates – over \$25 million – in the past ten years.

“For more than a decade, Texas 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, 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.

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.