



Justice at Stake
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New Poll: Kansans Say Judges Should Continue to Be Chosen on Qualifications, Not Politics

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New Poll: Kansans Say Judges Should Continue to Be Chosen on Qualifications, Not Politics 61 Percent Oppose Proposal to Amend State Constitution

Washington, DC, Jan. 16 – A new poll commissioned by Justice at Stake, a nonpartisan organization dedicated to the preservation of fair and impartial courts, finds that 61 percent of Kansas voters—including majorities of Republicans and Democrats—oppose amending the state Constitution to change the way in which Kansas Supreme Court justices are selected. The findings come as the Kansas legislature begins hearings on a major change proposed to the state's merit selection system.

"Kansans don't want to tamper with their constitution," said Bert Brandenburg, Executive Director of Justice at Stake. "They want their judges chosen based on their qualifications, not partisan politics. They're not comfortable vesting so much power in the hands of a governor, even one that they like. They'd rather see judges go through an interview process that identifies the best candidates before, not after, the governor makes his pick."

Kansas voters adopted merit selection for their state Supreme Court in 1958. Under merit selection, a panel of lawyers and non-lawyers interviews applicants to be judges, checks their references and sends the most qualified finalists to the Governor. The Governor selects one of the finalists to fill the vacancy. Once on the court, judges can keep their seat if they periodically win a retention election.

By a nearly three-to-one margin, Kansans oppose abandoning their current system and replacing it with a proposed model that would allow the Governor to choose judges without first having candidates screened and recommended by a panel.

Polling was conducted by 20/20 Insight LLC, which surveyed a representative sample of 975 registered voters over a period of two days, January 13-14. The margin of error was 3.1%. [Click here](#) for polling results.

Justice at Stake is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of fair and impartial courts. Its bipartisan board of directors includes Landon Rowland—former Chairman of Kansas City Southern Industries, Janus Capital Group, & DST Systems, and current Chairman of the Lead Bank—who will testify against the proposal on Thursday*. The Justice at Stake partnership comprises some 50 organizations representing the business, academic, faith-based, and legal communities, among others. Justice at Stake provides news, resources, research, and education focusing on fair-courts issues at the state and federal levels.

*Originally stated incorrectly as Friday

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Justice at Stake is a nonpartisan, nonprofit campaign working to keep America's courts fair and impartial. Justice at Stake and its 50-plus state and national partners educate the public, and work for reforms to keep politics and special interests out of the courtroom – so judges can protect our Constitution, our rights and the rule of law. For more about Justice at Stake, go to www.justiceatstake.org, or www.gavelgrab.org.

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[« Back](#)

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