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NCSC
METHODOLOGY

WHAT: NCSC nationwide telephone survey

WHO: Conducted by GBA Strategies

WHEN: October 28-November 1, 2017

POLLED: 1,000 Registered Voters

STATS: MOE +/- 3.1% 19 times out of 20
The justice system is still seen as too complicated to allow for self-representation—but the public can identify specific customer service challenges and simple solutions to remedy this.

Access to justice in rural areas is a concern for many—especially those in the South and Southwest.

Judges are perceived as out of touch with community concerns, and the public seeks greater engagement from the courts.

After several years of survey work, we see consistency emerging on core questions of public trust and confidence.
Courts remain the most trusted branch of government.

Q: “How much confidence do you, yourself, have in each institution—a great deal of confidence, some confidence, not very much confidence, or no confidence at all.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>2017 Percentage</th>
<th>4 Year Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Legislature</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Court System</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent saying either a great deal of confidence or some confidence.
Public trust barometers closely track to the State of the State Courts polling averages since 2012.

Q: “Do the following words or phrases describe the state courts very well, well, not very well or not well at all?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017 Percentage</th>
<th>4 Year Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fair &amp; Impartial</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Good Customer Service</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Equal Justice to All</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Represent a Good Investment of Tax $</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A 2017 NCSC Public Opinion Survey
Voters continue to remain wary that politics undermines the impartiality of the court system.

**Q:** “Which statement comes closer to your own view: Judges in (STATE) courts are selected based on their qualifications and experience OR Many judges are there because of personal connections or political influences rather than qualifications.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judges are selected based on…</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications/Experience</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections/Political Influence</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q:** “Which statement comes closer to your own view: Judges in (STATE) courts make decisions based on an objective review of the facts and the law OR Judges in (STATE) courts make decisions based more on their own beliefs and political pressure.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judges make decisions based on…</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facts &amp; the Law</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs/Political Pressure</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Judges are perceived as out of touch with community concerns.

Q: “Which statement comes closer to your own view?”

Statement 1
“In general, judges in (STATE) courts reflect the values of our communities and understand the challenges facing the people who appear in their courtrooms.”

Statement 2
“Many judges in (STATE) courts don’t understand the challenges facing people who appear in their courtrooms and need to do a better job of getting out into the community and listening to people.”

Don’t Know
FIGURE #5

What respondents told our pollster...

Q: “If judges from the (STATE) courts came into your community to learn more about the challenges facing your family and others like you, what would you tell them? What do judges in the (STATE) courts need to know about your community?”
Delivering access to justice in rural America presents challenges to which most voters are sympathetic…

Q: “A challenge facing many state court systems is how to provide court services to rural, remote, and underpopulated areas that are sometimes 100+ miles away from the nearest courthouse. Do you view this as a major problem, a minor problem, or not a real problem in (STATE)?”
And most would like to see these challenges addressed.

**Q:** “Which of the following proposed solutions do you think is the best way for states to address the question of how to provide court services to people living in rural, remote, and underpopulated areas?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solution</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Require rural residents to travel</td>
<td>13% (Status Quo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build and staff more courthouses</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow residents to do court business online</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow residents to travel OR wait for a traveling judge to come to their community</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A 2017 NCSC Public Opinion Survey
The court system is still seen as too complicated to allow for self-representation.

Q: “Despite the cost, I would want to be represented by a lawyer anytime I was dealing with the court system.”

Percentage saying somewhat or strongly agree.

- Ages 29 & Under: 53%
- Ages 30-49: 66%
- Ages 50-64: 71%
- Ages 65 & Over: 63%

All respondents (average): 63%

A 2017 NCSC Public Opinion Survey
Customer service concerns tell courts where to focus resources...

**Q:** “If you had an issue that needed to be resolved in the (STATE) courts, which **TWO** of the following customer service concerns would you be most worried about?”

- Help with forms or procedures
  - Navigation inside the courthouse
  - Amount of time spent at the courthouse
  - Inability to conduct business online
- Rude/intimidating staff
  - Different hours of operation for departments
  - Not being able to take phone inside
FIGURE #10

...and should be relatively easy for courts to remedy.

Q: “Tell me whether you think each idea would significantly improve the customer service experience in [STATE] courts, somewhat improve it, or make no difference.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idea</th>
<th>Significantly Improve</th>
<th>Somewhat Improve</th>
<th>Total Improve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plain language forms</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching court staff online/by phone</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online services to file forms/pay fees</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A 2017 NCSC Public Opinion Survey
Voters are familiar with the opioid epidemic with a majority seeing it is a major problem or a crisis.

Q: “Now let me ask you about an issue that has increasingly been in the media lately. How would you characterize the issue of opioid abuse in your local community?”

- 61% Major Problem
- 34% Minor Problem
- 5% Don’t Know

By Race
- White: 65%
- Non-White: 51%