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FIRST OF ITS KIND JUDICIAL POLL SHOWS WASHINGTON STATE VOTERS WANT ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

January 20, 2025 — A new statewide [judicial poll](#), conducted by Napolitan News Service Survey this month, reveals interesting feelings and mixed approval of the Washington State Supreme Court amid strong voter desire for accountability, transparency, and meaningful information when voting in judicial elections.

The poll reveals that voters overwhelmingly want to choose elected judges and oppose a growing trend of judges running for re-election and then resigning part way into their new term to allow the Governor to select their replacement.

In addition, just 41% of voters approve of the Washington State Supreme Court's performance. Only 8% strongly approve, compared to 17% who strongly disapprove, indicating a soft and uncertain level of public confidence.

Voters also expressed concern about the Court's ideological direction and criminal justice decisions. Nearly one-third (32%) believe the Court is too liberal, 11% believe the Court is too conservative, while 45% say it is too lenient in criminal cases.

"These numbers show many voters are paying attention and are not fully satisfied with the direction of the State Supreme Court," said Tim Kavis, Executive Director of Full Court Press. "There is a clear appetite for judges who apply the law with a facts-based approach that is founded upon long-standing legal principles and independent of political ideology."

Voters Want More Information — and Better Judges

When asked what qualifications matter most, voters overwhelmingly prioritized character, with 75% saying it is “very important.” Other top factors included:

- Tough-on-crime positions — 56% very important
- Education — 55% very important
- Legal experience — 52% very important
- Community involvement — 46% very important

By contrast, political party endorsements ranked last, with only 21% saying they are very important, and nearly half (44%) saying they are not very or not at all important.

“These results confirm that voters want judges selected on merit, integrity, and experience — not partisan or ideological labels,” Mr. Kovis added.

Strong Support for Letting Voters Choose Judges

The poll also found overwhelming opposition to the practice of judges running for re-election and then resigning their new terms early so the Governor can appoint their replacement. Seventy-two percent (72%) of voters say judges should be expected to serve their full terms so voters — not politicians — choose their successors. Only 14% support allowing judges to resign early for appointment-based replacements.

“This is one of the clearest findings in the poll,” said Mr. Kovis. “Voters believe judicial power ultimately belongs to the people, and they want a direct say in who serves on the bench.”

Conclusion

Overall, the poll paints a picture of voters who value fairness, accountability, and transparency in the judicial system. While some voters remain uncertain about the Supreme Court’s performance, there is broad agreement on what qualities matter in judges and how they should be selected.

“These results should serve as a wake-up call,” Mr. Kovis said. “Washington voters care deeply about their courts — and they expect judges to earn and maintain public trust.”

This polling data is from a Napolitan News Service survey of 800 Registered Voters in Washington State, conducted online by Scott Rasmussen, January 2-7, 2026. RMG Research, Inc., conducted the field work for the survey. It has a margin of error of +/- 3.1.

Poll Topline results:

Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of the state Supreme Court?

- 8% Strongly approve
- 33% Somewhat approve
- 25% Somewhat disapprove
- 17% Strongly disapprove
- 17% Not sure

When considering voting in judicial elections, where do you get most of your information about candidates?

- 41% Voters' pamphlets
- 13% Social media
- 12% Television and radio ads
- 10% Campaign websites
- 7% Friends or family
- 9% Some other source
- 4% I don't vote in judicial elections
- 3% Not sure

When considering candidates in judicial elections, how important are each of the following qualifications?

Very Important		
	Among all voters	Among those who vote in judicial elections
A candidate's character	71%	75%
Tough on crime positions	54%	56%
Education	53%	55%
Legal experience	50%	52%
Community involvement	44%	46%
Political party endorsements	20%	21%
Source: Napolitan News Service		

When considering candidates in judicial elections, how important are each of the following qualifications?

[Among all voters] A candidate's character

- 4% Not asked, do not vote in judicial elections
- 71% Very important
- 20% Somewhat important
- 3% Not very important
- 1% Not at all important
- 1% Not sure

[Among those who vote in judicial elections] A candidate's character

75%	Very important
21%	Somewhat important
3%	Not very important
1%	Not at all important
1%	Not sure

When considering candidates in judicial elections, how important are each of the following qualifications?

[Among all voters] Tough on crime positions

4%	Not asked, do not vote in judicial elections
54%	Very important
29%	Somewhat important
9%	Not very important
4%	Not at all important
0%	Not sure

[Among those who vote in judicial elections] Tough on crime positions

56%	Very important
30%	Somewhat important
9%	Not very important
4%	Not at all important
0%	Not sure

When considering candidates in judicial elections, how important are each of the following qualifications?

[Among all voters] Education

4%	Not asked, do not vote in judicial elections
53%	Very important
33%	Somewhat important
7%	Not very important
2%	Not at all important
0%	Not sure

[Among those who vote in judicial elections] Education

55%	Very important
35%	Somewhat important
7%	Not very important
2%	Not at all important
0%	Not sure

When considering candidates in judicial elections, how important are each of the following qualifications?

[Among all voters] Legal experience

4%	Not asked, do not vote in judicial elections
50%	Very important
34%	Somewhat important
8%	Not very important
2%	Not at all important
1%	Not sure

[Among those who vote in judicial elections] Legal experience

52%	Very important
36%	Somewhat important
9%	Not very important
2%	Not at all important
1%	Not sure

When considering candidates in judicial elections, how important are each of the following qualifications?

[Among all voters] Community involvement

4%	Not asked, do not vote in judicial elections
44%	Very important
39%	Somewhat important
9%	Not very important
2%	Not at all important
1%	Not sure

[Among those who vote in judicial elections] Community involvement

46%	Very important
41%	Somewhat important
9%	Not very important
2%	Not at all important
1%	Not sure

When considering candidates in judicial elections, how important are each of the following qualifications?

[Among all voters] Political party endorsements

4%	Not asked, do not vote in judicial elections
20%	Very important
32%	Somewhat important
27%	Not very important
14%	Not at all important
2%	Not sure

[Among those who vote in judicial elections] Political party endorsements

21%	Very important
33%	Somewhat important
29%	Not very important
15%	Not at all important
2%	Not sure

Is the Washington State Supreme Court too liberal, too conservative, or is the ideological balance about right?

32%	Too Liberal
11%	Too Conservative
37%	About right
21%	Not sure

When it comes to criminal cases, is the Washington State Supreme Court generally too lenient, too harsh, or about right in its rulings?

45%	Too lenient
8%	Too harsh
29%	About right
17%	Not sure

In Washington state, we elect all our judges. However, many resign before their terms end so that the governor can appoint their replacements rather than allowing voters to fill these vacancies.

Should judges continue to be allowed to do this, or should they be expected to serve their full terms so that their replacements can be chosen by voters?

14%	Judges should be able to resign whenever they want so the Governor can appoint their replacements
72%	Judges should be expected to serve their full terms so their replacements can be chosen by voters
10%	It doesn't make any difference
4%	Not sure

Measures of openness to experience

12%	Not open to experience
48%	Somewhat open to experience
40%	Strongly open to experience

Measures of conscientiousness

8%	Not conscientious
46%	Somewhat conscientious
45%	Strongly conscientious

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Full Court Press is a 501(c)4 nonprofit organization with the mission to bring balance to our state's judicial system. Full Court Press recruits and trains candidates for judicial offices from trial courts to the Supreme Court in Washington state. Full Court Press' judges are committed to applying the law with a facts-based approach that is founded upon long-standing legal principles and independent of political ideology.