



Courts, Democracy and the Polarization of America... Ways to Strengthen Public Trust in the Rule of Law WEBINAR

Thursday, February 24, 2022

Pacific

Mountain

Central

Eastern

12Noon

1:00 PM

2:00 PM

3:00 PM

Guardians of the *rule of law* is a phrase often used to define the overall purpose of courts in the United States. Although there are many procedural and substantive dimensions to this concept, it essentially means an independent judiciary is entrusted with safeguarding the law as the highest authority in society. It requires courts to apply the law fairly, equally, and factually (truthfully) to all persons and all public and private institutions, including the government itself. The guiding values for judges and lawyers in doing so are human rights' freedoms, norms and standards prescribed by federal and state constitutions. As such, courts have been and continue to be the most vital government entity in ensuring our democratic principles endure and remain strong.

Yet despite the serious, important role courts play in our democratic republic, public attitudes continually show sinking confidence in the judicial branch. According to a recent National Center for State Courts' poll, only 6 out of 10 people have some or a great deal of confidence in their state courts, a 10% drop from 3 years ago.

Some have speculated that the persistent and growing polarization in America, exhibiting deep social cleavages and acute political tensions, has further weakened support for the *rule of law* as a democratic principle upon which courts rest. Yale University Professor Milan Svokik, a highly-regarded political scientist, contends from his research that people today with strongly held partisan and policy allegiances are more willing to trade-off democratic principles for partisan interests. He feels such an inclination may partly "explain why polarized democracies appear to be particularly vulnerable to democratic backsliding."

This 75-minute webinar promises to be an interesting, thought-provoking discussion about ways to cultivate trust in the *rule of law* and the role of courts in what many feel is an increasingly divided America.

REGISTRATION: [Insert Zoom webinar hyper link here](#)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

NOTE: You **MUST** register to receive the Webinar link, call-in number, etc. Questions? ncosby@ncsc.org

Moderator: **Darren Toms, Public Information Officer | President, Conference of Court Public Information Officers**
Common Pleas Court of Ohio in Cuyahoga County (Cleveland)

Panelists: **Hon. Scott Bales (ret.), Chief Justice**
Supreme Court of Arizona (Phoenix)

Jesse Rutledge, Vice President for External Affairs
National Center for State Courts (Williamsburg, VA)

Hon. Julio L. Mendez, Assignment Judge
Superior Court of New Jersey in Atlantic City and Cape May Vicinages

Sherri R. Carter, Court Executive Officer
Superior Court of California in Los Angeles County

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