

CONFERENCE OF CHIEF JUSTICES

Resolution 10

In Support of the National Association of Women Judges' Informed Voters Project

WHEREAS, state judicial branches rely greatly upon the trust of the American public in performing their role in the American constitutional system of government; and

WHEREAS, maintaining that trust requires that judges reach their decisions based on the law and the facts in a case, without influence from political party agendas, economic or social interest groups, or public opinion; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of 39 states elect some or all of their judges either through contested or retention elections; and

WHEREAS, voters can ensure that fair and impartial courts and equal justice for all are maintained by exercising an informed vote for judges at the ballot box; and

WHEREAS, informed voters should be aware of the differences between judges and other elected officials, the unique role of judges in resolving disputes, and the reasons courts should be free from political influences; and

WHEREAS, voters casting a ballot for judges rarely have available relevant, accurate, and easy to access information on individual candidates or on the role of the judiciary that would help voters understand qualities required of a good judge; and

WHEREAS, the source of information about judicial candidates increasingly comes from television and other advertisements, often negative in nature, and sometimes sponsored by groups with an interest in the outcome of specific categories of cases; and

WHEREAS, the proliferation of costly, negative, and often misleading advertising threatens to erode the differences between the judiciary and holders of legislative or executive office; and

WHEREAS, the National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ) has embarked upon an ambitious effort designed to "highlight the role of courts in American society with the goal of helping voters understand their role in ensuring fairness and justice for all who enter the legal system;" and

WHEREAS, NAWJ's Informed Voters Project is currently being implemented in eight states in partnership with many of the nation's leading organizations;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Conference of Justices expresses its support for the objectives and educational materials prepared by the NAWJ Informed Voter Project and encourages state supreme courts, judicial associations, and all groups dedicated to a fair and impartial judiciary to actively participate in building public awareness of the Informed Voters Project.

Adopted as proposed by the CCJ Task Force on Politics and Judicial Selection/Compensation at the CCJ Midyear Meeting on January 29, 2014.

