



**New C-SPAN Poll:
Public Attitudes about the Supreme Court
and the Kagan Nomination**

***On Eve of Confirmation Hearings, What Is:
Public opinion about the hearings?
Awareness of Elena Kagan?
The Court's job approval?
Public demand for diversity on the bench?***

(June 24, 2010, Washington, DC) – On the eve of next week's Senate Judiciary Committee confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan, a new C-SPAN poll reveals interested citizens are frustrated by how little they can learn about the workings of the Supreme Court. By a 20:1 margin (62%-3%) American voters say they hear too little about the work of the Supreme Court today rather than too much. Respondents also say that the Senate confirmation hearings provide at best only limited insights on nominees and their qualifications. While voters give Senators good or ok marks (64%) for asking questions on how nominees might rule or reason, three in five (59%) voters also say Senate confirmation hearings ultimately provide only fair or poor insights on the qualifications of the nominee.

C-SPAN plans complete live coverage of the Kagan nomination hearings on C-SPAN3, C-SPAN.org, and C-SPAN Radio.

The survey of 1,512 self-identified voters, conducted for C-SPAN on June 18, 2010 by Penn, Schoen and Berland Associates, LLC, shows far less awareness of Ms. Kagan's nomination to the Supreme Court than the awareness of Sonia Sotomayor's nomination a year ago. Only 19% correctly named Ms. Kagan as the nominee, while 43% were able to correctly name Ms. Sotomayor in a July 2009 C-SPAN poll. Thirty-eight percent support the Kagan nomination, 30% are unsupportive, and a third has no opinion about the nomination.

Asked about basic qualifications for Court appointees, nearly two in three (64%) respondents say the gender of a Supreme Court nominee is not important. But when asked about a nominee's law school education, essentially the same number (63%) would prefer the next Supreme Court justice come from a "different background," other than the Ivy League Law schools of Yale, Harvard and Columbia which produced the eight incumbent justices and the current nominee.

The poll also shows that nearly half of participants (48%) believe the Supreme Court is the branch of the U.S. government that best serves the public's interest, but only 29% say the Court is doing a good or excellent job (and, 12% say the Court is doing a poor job).

Reflecting the desire for more information about the Court, support for TV camera coverage of the Court's oral arguments remains at roughly two-thirds of Americans: 63% support cameras in the Court in this poll (65% in C-SPAN's September 2009 poll and 61% in July 2009). Party affiliation does not matter in support for cameras in the Court. By a three-to-one margin, 49%-16%, voters say cameras would increase respect for court as opposed to decreasing respect, while another 35% say it would have no effect on current levels of respect for the Court.

"Less than one in three voters say the Supreme Court is doing a good or excellent job while two in three say the opposite," said Rob Green, Principal, Penn, Schoen and Berland Associates. "Televising the Court's oral arguments provides a way for the public to not only better understand the High Court's decisions, but also gain greater respect for the institution itself."

C-SPAN co-president Susan Swain said, "This poll points to the importance that citizens place on the Supreme Court and the value placed on increased information about the Court's workings."

Full results of this survey can be found at C-SPAN's website, http://www.c-span.org/pdf/2010SCOTUS_poll.pdf <http://www.c-span.org/pdf/2010SCOTUS_poll.pdf>.

About C-SPAN: C-SPAN was created by America's cable companies in 1979 as a public service and programs three public affairs television networks (C-SPAN, C-SPAN2 and C-SPAN3); C-SPAN Radio, a Washington, D.C. public affairs FM radio station also distributed by XM Satellite Radio; and a video-rich website which hosts the C-SPAN Video Library. Visit www.c-span.org.