



## News Release

For Immediate Release

For more information, contact:  
**Tim Kolly** 312-698-6220 | [tkolly@dri.org](mailto:tkolly@dri.org)

### **Financial Straits of the Judicial System Not Registering with the Public**

*New DRI Poll Shows Even Split Between “Doing Fine” and “Not So Fine”*

**Chicago, December 5, 2013** – In a new poll by DRI – The Voice of the Defense Bar, Americans appear to be evenly split on the financial soundness of the judiciary. Scores of media reports have covered the issue; Supreme Court justices have raised the alarm of the effects of funding shortages; and courts at all levels have been forced into curtailment of hours and services at courts around the country. Chief Justice Roberts has stated, “A significant and prolonged shortfall in judicial funding would inevitably result in the delay or denial of justice for the people the courts serve.”

The message appears not to be getting through to the public. The DRI Poll found that 40% of respondents feel the civil courts in their state have all the funding they need to do their job adequately. An identical 40% say the courts are short of needed funding. The rest are unsure. Their responses were based “upon what they had heard or experienced.” The poll, conducted by DRI’s Center for Law and Public Policy, was executed by Langer Research Associates, New York.

Interestingly, the responses seem to split along ideological lines. While just 29 percent of liberal Democrats say the civil courts are adequately funded, that figure nearly doubles among strong conservatives, to 54 percent.

“It’s amazing that with all the high-profile warnings, literally thousands of newspaper articles, and all the effects of the funding shortage being played out in the nation’s courts system, that 60% of respondents either think there’s no funding problem or aren’t sure there’s a funding problem,” said DRI president Mike Weston. “Given all the attention, the unawareness seems almost willful.”

Additionally, a number of judicial districts around the country have warned that in light of serious budget constraints on the local, state, and federal levels, and their constitutional requirement to provide

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speedy trials in criminal cases, they might have to curtail or suspend civil jury trials. Seventy-five percent of respondents said that they consider that option unacceptable.

“The ideological split comes as a surprise,” said John R. Kouris, DRI executive director. “You would think that funding of the courts would be a non-partisan, or at least a bi-partisan, issue given that both political parties have raised the issue. It is encouraging though that regardless of political or ideological affiliation, a strong majority finds the suspension of civil trials unacceptable.”

The 2013 DRI Poll focused on four areas: confidence in the civil justice system, class action lawsuits, juror bias, and judicial funding. Additional results of the poll will be released over the coming weeks.

The above findings come from an independent, nonpartisan telephone survey conducted via landline and cell-phone interviews with a random national sample of 1,005 adults. The results have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points for the full sample. All characterizations of differences in results have been tested for statistical significance. The survey was produced by Langer Research Associates of New York, N.Y.

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**About DRI – The Voice of the Defense Bar**

*For more than fifty years, DRI has been the voice of the defense bar, advocating for 22,000 defense attorneys, commercial trial attorneys, and corporate counsel and defending the integrity of the civil judiciary. A thought leader, DRI provides world-class legal education, deep expertise for policy-makers, legal resources, and networking opportunities to facilitate career and law firm growth. For more information, log on to [www.dri.org](http://www.dri.org)*