THREE-FOURTHS OF AMERICANS WANT CAMERAS IN THE SUPREME COURT; OVERWHELMING MAJORITIES SUPPORT ADDITIONAL SCOTUS TRANSPARENCY MEASURES

New poll finds live video, live audio and online disclosures all favored by wide margins across ideological lines

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Americans want the Supreme Court to broadcast its hearings live on television and its justices to abide by a code of ethics, according to a national poll conducted by McLaughlin & Associates and released today by the Coalition for Court Transparency, a non-partisan alliance that advocates for a more open and accountable High Court.

Seventy-four percent of respondents would like the justices to allow news cameras to film the court’s proceedings and broadcast them live to the American people. Seventy-two percent say the court should at least broadcast live audio of the court’s hearings over the Internet and on the radio.

Another CCT proposal – that the justices be required to post their annual financial disclosure reports online and not only release them by paper, as is the current practice – received support from 69 percent of respondents.

“In a country governed by the rule of law, citizens have the right to see that law being debated,” said Doug Kendall, co-founder and president of the Constitutional Accountability Center, a CCT member. “Given the paralysis and rancor among our other branches of government, the justices should seize this moment and allow some sunlight into their courtroom.”

“It’s almost unbelievable that three-fourths of Americans agree on anything tangentially political these days, but we’re seeing the same results on cameras in the court, across party lines, in poll after poll,” added Michael Ostrolenk, co-founder and chairman of the Liberty Coalition, a CCT member. “The American people expect greater transparency from their public officials, and while recent focus has been on the executive branch’s obfuscation, the Supreme Court finds itself in a co-equal position of opaqueness. Broadcasting court hearings would help reverse that trend.”

In surveying 1,000 likely Nov. 2014 voters last month, McLaughlin & Associates found broad support across ideological lines on questions about cameras, live audio and online disclosures.

Further, only 35 percent of those surveyed gave the justices a positive approval rating – as opposed to 59 percent who gave them a negative rating. By a margin of 54-32, respondents said they believe that the justices too often let their own personal or political views influence their decisions, as opposed to deciding cases based on legal analysis without regard to their own personal or political views.
The coalition believes that a more open media and online policy at the court would help restore some of the “shaken public faith” in government institutions that Chief Justice Roberts was lamenting during an American Bar Association meeting in August.

The polling firm also asked participants their views on a number of other Supreme Court-related issues that, while not a focus of the CCT, indicate that the public is not satisfied with the status quo at the court.

For example, **86 percent** of those surveyed favor requiring Supreme Court justices to follow the Judicial Code of Conduct, the ethical code that other federal judges are required to follow, from which High Court justices are currently exempt.

**Seventy-one percent** of participants said that the practice of lifetime appointments for Supreme Court justices should be abolished, and instead justices should serve only a fixed term. When pushed for specifics, 69 percent supported a term limits proposal whereby justices would serve a fixed term of 18 years, staggered in a way that a new justice would be appointed every two years.

The results of the McLaughlin & Associates research are consistent with other recent national surveys on the Supreme Court. A survey conducted April 16-24, 2014, by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research for Democracy Corps found **71 percent** of respondents – 1,004 Americans 18 and older – support cameras in the Supreme Court, and **67 percent** support live audio. In March 2013 a Fox News poll of 1,002 registered voters found **77 percent** support cameras at the High Court.

For complete McLaughlin & Associates poll results, please visit OpenSCOTUS.com.

**About the Coalition for Court Transparency:**

The Coalition for Court Transparency is an alliance of 18 national media and legal organizations who advocate for a more open and accountable U.S. Supreme Court. The coalition supports a number of pro-transparency policies at the court, including cameras in the courtroom, live audio of hearings, online financial disclosures and recusal explanations from the justices. To learn more, visit OpenSCOTUS.com or follow the coalition at @OpenSCOTUS.