



Judicial Selection

Discussion Guide

Let's review

At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room. And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so be prepared to hear a different point of view. Listen first, and focus on the facts.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

The "Table-it" Rule: If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

Let's begin

- **Take five minutes** to review the [Executive Summary](#) for this brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief:
 - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
 - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

Spread the Word: Some Facts to Share with the Group During Your Discussion

- The [federal court system](#) consists of 94 district level trial courts that are organized into 12 regional circuits, each with its own court of appeals. In total, there are about [30,000 state judges](#) and over [1,700 federal judges](#).
- Today, judges are selected in [partisan elections](#) in seven states, in [nonpartisan elections](#) in fifteen states, by [legislative elections](#) in two states, and by [gubernatorial appointments](#) in three states. The [remaining states and the District of Columbia](#) use assisted appointments or a combination of methods.
- [Judicial terms](#) range from 4 to 15 years. No states impose term limits on judges, but 32 states and the District of Columbia impose a mandatory retirement age.

Let's discuss

Below are questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.

- **Community:** Have you participated in your states' judicial selection process? Why or why not? If you could choose the method of judicial selection in your state, which would you choose and why?
- **Government:** What is your view of the role of home-state Senators in the judicial selection process? During election years, should the legislative and executive branches make any changes to the timing of the judicial selection process? Should judges have term limits?

Let's act

Engage Locally

- **Take it local. Talk to your neighbors** to identify how what happens in the judicial branch at both the federal and state levels affects your community. Identify opportunities to work with other community members in your area.
- **Explore the impact of the judicial branch in your community.** Visit Ballotpedia's [County Courts and Judges page](#) to see how courts are structured and who are the judges in your state and county, and [Ballotpedia's Judicial Election Portal](#) to see past results of judicial elections and upcoming judicial elections. Click on your state on [Ballotpedia's Map](#) to see if your state judges were appointed, and if so, by whom. See the [Federalist Society's State Courts Guide](#) to determine how judges are selected in your state.
- **Research your elected officials' positions** in relation to the judicial selection processes, and their vision for how to tackle the challenges of ensuring an independent and accountable judiciary. You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). State or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.
- **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
- **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed on your stance on judicial selection methods in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
 - [The U.S. Senate](#)
 - [The Judicial Branch](#)
 - [The Executive Branch](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.