

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Katie Connolly, Senior Vice President
RE: ACLU-CT Research on Public Support for Oversight of State's Attorneys
DATE: March 18, 2020

- A recent poll conducted on behalf of the ACLU-CT among likely 2020 voters in Connecticut suggests that they would be very supportive of more transparency and accountability for state's attorneys.
 - This support crosses party lines and is likely a reflection of a broad desire for accountability for all public officials.
- When tested in our survey, a performance evaluation system was met with wide approval.
 - 86% of voters **support making state's attorneys undergo data-driven performance evaluations every two years to ensure there is no discrimination in their charges based on gender, age, race, or ethnicity, and that the same standards are being used state-wide.** Nearly half – 48% – **strongly support** such a measure.
 - Support is high among Republicans as well, with total support at 81%, and 46% saying they strongly support evaluations.

<i>% Strongly Support (Strongly + Somewhat Support)</i>	All Voters	Dem	Ind	Rep
Would you support or oppose making state's attorneys undergo data-driven performance evaluations every two years to ensure there is no discrimination in their charges based on gender, age, race, or ethnicity, and that the same standards are being used state-wide?	48% (86%)	54% (91%)	45% (83%)	46% (81%)

- When informed that Connecticut does not currently have an evaluation system in place for its state's attorneys, voters' intensity of support for enacting one spiked: fully 58% of voters said they would **strongly support a new system where they undergo performance evaluations every two years.** Support increased across the political spectrum, with the biggest jump among Independent voters.

<i>% Strongly Support (change from initial "strongly support")</i>	All Voters	Dem	Ind	Rep
If you knew that currently there is no data-driven performance evaluation system at all for Connecticut state's attorneys, would you support or oppose a new system where they undergo performance evaluations every two years?	58% (+10 pts.)	61% (+7 pts.)	60% (+15 pts.)	51% (+5 pts.)

- Voters' already clear support for oversight of state's attorneys is reinforced by the belief that as public servants paid with Connecticut residents' tax dollars and representing the people's interests, state's attorneys should have some form of accountability in their roles just as other public servants do.
 - 89% said the following was a convincing reason to support any new changes to Connecticut's state's attorneys' system, including **64% who said very convincing:**



“All public servants should have some form of performance evaluation and accountability and there is no reason state's attorneys should be exempt. They are paid with our tax dollars and their job is to represent the interests of the people of Connecticut. Even admin assistants have to have evaluations, and so should the state's attorneys who are in charge of ensuring our justice system is fair and balanced.”

- Crossing party lines, 84% of Republicans said this was a convincing reason to support changes to the current system – including 53% who said **very convincing** – as well as 84% of Independents.

➤ Further, voters see a need for ensuring accountability and fairness for all as a convincing reason to get behind changing the current state’s attorneys’ system.

- 85% of all voters, 90% of Democrats, 85% of Independents and 78% of Republicans said the following was a convincing reason to support changes to the system:

“It is critical that Connecticut lawmakers ensure our criminal justice system treats everyone fairly regardless of race, religion, gender, age, or income. We need to change our system, like they have done in other states, so that we can be sure that state's attorneys are not being biased in how they treat offenders. Right now we are flying blind because there is no data-driven performance evaluation of our state's attorneys.”

➤ Voters are highly supportive of creating explicit and consistent standards for state’s attorneys to follow so that no one person is charged or punished differently from another because of race or background.

- Similarly, voters would welcome consistent, state-wide frameworks for diversionary programs, plea agreements and bail so that we can ensure fairness across districts instead of leaving such decisions to the discretion of individual attorneys.

Would you support or oppose this policy?

<i>% Strongly Support (Strongly + Somewhat Support)</i>	All Voters	Dem	Ind	Rep
<i>Make sure that when state's attorneys across Connecticut charge someone with a crime, they press similar criminal charges, regardless of race or ethnic background, so that people are treated the same regardless of which district they are arrested in.</i>	69% (92%)	76% (95%)	67% (93%)	60% (87%)
<i>Create a set of standard rules that all Connecticut state's attorneys must follow for when they can recommend someone be sent to a diversionary program, such as a drug court, or an alternative to prison or rehabilitation program, rather than leaving that decision up to state's attorneys in each district.</i>	44% (88%)	51% (97%)	34% (82%)	48% (85%)
<i>Create a set of standard rules that all Connecticut state's attorneys must follow for things such as the amount of bail that can be set for a crime or the type of plea agreement that should be offered for a particular type of crime, instead of leaving it for individual state's attorneys in each district to decide.</i>	42% (81%)	45% (87%)	41% (78%)	38% (78%)



Methodology

Benenson Strategy Group conducted 510 telephone and online interviews from January 30 to February 5, 2020 on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut. All respondents were registered voters in Connecticut who are likely to vote in the 2020 general election. The margin of error for the data set is $\pm 4.3\%$ at the 95% confidence level and it is higher among subgroups.

