

NEWS RELEASE

ARIZONA SUPREME COURT

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Survey Reveals Broad Support for Reforms to Bail Practices, Fines, Fees

PHOENIX – Arizona voters support changes in pretrial detention and release practices as well as the way courts impose fines and fees. Arizona State University’s Morrison Institute for Public Policy surveyed registered voters in November and December 2016 and the results show strong support for reforms proposed by the Arizona Supreme Court’s Task Force on Fair Justice for All: Court-Ordered Fines, Penalties, Fees, and Pretrial Release Policies.

Specifically, the survey revealed:

- 70 percent favor release until trial if the individual has a low risk of re-offending and is likely to return for trial.
- 67 percent believe that people with no history of danger to the community should not remain in jail solely because they cannot afford bail.
- 87 percent agreed or strongly agreed that courts should use a “risk assessment” tool to determine whether an individual should remain in jail until trial.
- 85 percent believe that people who cannot afford fines or fees should be allowed to do community service or participate in other court-ordered programs.
- 68 percent said judges should be given more freedom to reduce the amount of fines or fees if the person cannot afford to pay all or part of the mandatory amount.
- 76 percent said that judges should be able to impose driving restrictions on low-risk defendants – such as driving to work or school only – instead of suspending licenses entirely for failure to appear in court.
- 60 percent believe that driving on a suspended license should be reduced to a civil violation if the reason for suspension is missing court or non-payment of a fine.

In August, the [Task Force](#) published a report believed to be the first of its kind recommending a series of reforms intended to protect public safety. The Arizona Supreme Court held a summit on January 10 to discuss these reforms featuring nationally-recognized speakers and local leaders. Video coverage of the summit is available on the Court's website at <http://www.azcourts.gov/AZ-Supreme-Court/Live-Archived-Video>. For ease in navigation, the video is set up in 'chapters,' which you can advance to by clicking on the speaker's name. Within the live video screen, viewers can advance, reverse, or pause the video.

The Arizona State Legislature is considering action on four pieces of legislation arising from the Task Force's work, Senate Bills 1157, 1158, 1160, and 1163. The Senate Judiciary Committee plans to hear these bills on Thursday, February 2 at 9:00 AM. Online summaries of these bills are posted on the Legislature's website at <http://www.azleg.gov/bills/>.

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