BLACK JUDGES A POWERFUL PRESENCE ON THE FEDERAL COURTS

The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AO) yesterday released its annual report on the composition of the federal judiciary. The most notable aspect of this year’s report was its finding that African Americans now comprise approximately 23.2% of all judges currently sitting on the federal bench. This means that, of 819 federal court judges, 190 of them are African Americans. This includes judges on the U.S. Supreme Court, the 13 U.S. Courts of Appeals and the 94 U.S. District Courts.

That increase in the number of black federal judges has been a relatively recent phenomenon. Just twenty years ago, the AO Report indicated that African Americans comprised only 3.6% of all federal court judges. As a result of this increase, the percentage of African Americans currently serving as federal judges is substantially higher than the percentage of African Americans in the general population of the United States (which is 12%).

When asked to comment on the Report’s findings about the current position of African Americans on the bench, Director of the Administrative Office L. Ralph Mecham observed that, “The Report’s results reflect the progress that has been made in recent years in bringing greater racial diversity to the federal bench.”
BLA\NK JUDGES REMAIN UNDER-REPRESENTED ON THE FEDERAL COURTS

The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AO) yesterday released its annual report on the composition of the federal judiciary. The most notable aspect of this year’s report was its finding that African Americans now comprise just 3.9% of all judges currently sitting on the federal bench. This means that, of 819 federal court judges, only 32 of them are African Americans. This includes judges on the U.S. Supreme Court, the 13 U.S. Courts of Appeals and the 94 U.S. District Courts.

The number of black federal judges has not increased appreciably over the past several decades. Twenty years ago, the AO Report indicated that African Americans comprised just 3.6% of all federal court judges. As a result, the percentage of African Americans currently serving as federal judges remains substantially lower than the percentage of African Americans in the general population of the United States (which is 12%).

When asked to comment on the Report’s findings about the current position of African Americans on the bench, Director of the Administrative Office L. Ralph Mecham observed that, “The Report’s results reflect a lack of progress in bringing greater racial diversity to the federal bench.”
Web Appendix B

Coding of Independent Variables Used in Regression Models

Independent Variables

*Over-representation* is a dummy variable designating whether the respondent was shown a newspaper article in which there was a greater percentage of African Americans on the federal bench than in the general population.

*Under-representation* is a dummy variable designating whether the respondent was shown a newspaper article in which there was a lesser percentage of African Americans on the federal bench than in the general population.

*Control Group* is a dummy variable designating whether the respondent was shown no information about the percentage of African Americans sitting on the federal bench. The control group serves as the baseline against which the other two conditions will be compared.

*Ideology* is a seven-point scale in which the respondent was asked “In terms of politics, would you consider yourself to be a liberal or a conservative?” The respondent was instructed to select one choice on a seven-point scale in which 1 = extremely liberal and 7 = extremely conservative.

*Over-representation * Ideology is an interaction term designed to capture the extent to which reactions to the over-representation of African Americans in the U.S. courts are dependent upon political ideology.

*Male* is a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent was male.

*Income* is a five-point scale indicating the respondent’s total household income in which 1=$0 to $19,999; 2=$20,000 to $39,999; 3=$40,000 to $69,999; 4=$70,000 to $124,999; 5=$125,000
and higher.¹

**Christian** is a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent is a member of a Christian religion.²

**Education** is a four-point scale indicating the highest level of education reached by the respondent in which 1 = high school or less; 2 = associate’s degree or some college; 3 = bachelor’s degree; and 4 = post-graduate work.³

**Age** is a seven-point scale indicating the respondent’s age in which 1=under 20; 2=20 to 29; 3=30 to 39; 4=40 to 49; 5=50 to 59; 6=60 to 69; 7=70 and older.

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¹The original survey provided respondents with choices in ten thousand dollar increments beginning with less than $10,000 up to $99,999. From $100,000 to $200,000 we used $25,000 increments. The highest choice on the income scale was “more than $200,000.” These categories were then collapsed into five categories that, given the distribution of the data for this variable, approximately correspond to quintiles.

²The original survey provided the following choices concerning respondents’ religion: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, No religious affiliation and Other (please specify). The religions included in the “Christian” variable were Catholic and Protestant.

³The original survey provided the following choices concerning respondents’ highest level of education: Less than high school; some high school, no diploma; graduated from high school – diploma or equivalent (GED); some college, no degree; associate degree; bachelor’s degree; master’s degree; professional degree; doctorate degree. These responses were then collapsed into four categories.