Illinois Small Businesses Support Reforming U.S. Elections

• Illinois entrepreneurs believe big businesses have an unfair influence on government decisions and the political process: Nearly eight in 10 (78%) small employers say big businesses have a significant impact on government decisions and the political process. In comparison, a mere 24% say small businesses have a significant impact on the process.

• Small business owners believe we need significant changes to the way election campaigns are financed: 76% of small business owners say major changes are needed to our campaign finance system, with a mere 5% who say no changes are needed.

• Small businesses support publicly-financed campaigns: 82% of entrepreneurs support changing the way we finance election campaigns to using only small contributions from voters and a limited amount of public funds. More than four in 10 (44%) of small businesses strongly favor this provision.

• Small employers overwhelmingly believe we need more transparency from special interest groups that finance election campaigns: A vast 94% of small business owners in Illinois support requiring special interest groups that use paid TV and mail ads during elections to publicly disclose where their money comes from; three-fourths (75%) say they strongly favor this.

• Small employers support a merit selection process for state Supreme Court seats: 72% of small business owners support selecting judges for state Supreme Court seats by a non-partisan, independent panel of lawyers and non-lawyers appointed by the governor and the state bar association that interviews applicants for state Supreme Court seats. The panel would identify several of the most qualified applicants, and send a list of finalists to the governor. The governor would then appoint one of the finalists to fill the vacancy. The selected judges would also have to face what is known as a retention election after their first term, where voters vote yes or no on whether to keep them.

• Vast majority of Illinois small businesses support taking the redistricting process out of the hands of legislators: 93% of small business owners favor having district boundaries drawn by a non-partisan independent citizens’ commission of informed voters, rather than by elected officials. This constitutional amendment would also require that districts be drawn using neutral criteria so that one political party or politician is not favored over others. More than six in 10 (61%) strongly favor this step to improve the election process.

• Small businesses support moving towards a multiparty system: More than three-fourths (79%) of small business owners believe we should change our current election system to one that allows for multiparty representation, a system that could lead to election of parties other than the Republican and Democratic parties.

• Majority of Illinois entrepreneurs are ready for ranked choice voting: 58% of small business owners support eliminating primary elections and switch to ranked choice voting. With ranked choice voting, voters rank their choices—first, second, third and so on—instead of only choosing one candidate on the ballot. If a candidate receives more than 50 percent first choice votes, that candidate wins. If not, the candidates with the fewest votes are eliminated and their votes are reallocated to remaining choices based on the voters’ next choices until one candidate receives a majority of the ballots.

• Respondents were politically diverse: 40% identified as Republican, 39% as Democrat, 16% as independent or other and 4% chose not to identify party affiliation.