



## News Release

For Immediate Release

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### **22,000 Defense Attorneys Support Roberts Call for Judicial Funding**

*“Justice Is Not A Budget Line Item” DRI President Declares*

**Chicago, January 3, 2014** – Declaring that “justice is not a budget line item,” Mike Weston, president of DRI – The Voice of the Defense Bar, threw the support of the 22,000 members of his organization of defense bar attorneys behind Chief Justice John Roberts’ call for a restoration of judicial funding. Weston echoed the Chief Justice’s assertion that underfunding the judiciary undermines justice which in turn undermines the faith of people in their government and all its branches.

The Chief Justice said in his year-end report on the state of the judiciary that the courts had been working to reduce costs “long before the talk of fiscal cliffs and sequestration came into vogue” and that the draconian cuts had put both the public and justice at risk.

DRI has been a steady voice of opposition to steep cuts in funding of the court system. Last year, it issued a [joint declaration](#) with the American Bar Association and the American Association for Justice (plaintiff attorneys) calling for adequate funding; [wrote to leaders of Congress](#) in support of a \$73 million emergency funding measure; and [appealed](#) to Vice President Biden in support of the Chief Judges of 87 federal districts “to support sufficient funding levels for federal courts that would relieve them of the crisis in which they have been placed by past funding cuts and the effects of sequestration.”

“We must help the public understand the enormous, negative impact that the deprivation of judicial system funding has upon them and this country,” said John R. Kouris, executive director of DRI.

“Democracy is not a spectator sport, and democracy doesn’t work without a viable and independent judiciary.”

Despite all of the work of advocates of the courts, the high visibility warnings of the courts themselves, literally thousands of newspapers articles, and all the effects of the funding shortage being played out in the nation’s courts system, the message appears not to be getting through to the public. A DRI Poll result released last week found that 40% of respondents feel the civil courts in their state have all the funding they need to do their job adequately. An identical 40% say the courts are short of needed

funding. The rest are unsure. The poll, conducted by DRI's Center for Law and Public Policy, was executed by Langer Research Associates, New York.

"That 60% of respondents either think there's no funding problem or aren't sure there's a funding problem, is baffling," said Weston. "We need to make the public fully aware that a judiciary starved of funds is a threat to their constitutional protections."

Additionally, a number of judicial districts around the country have warned that in light of serious budget constraints on the local, state, and federal levels, and their constitutional requirement to provide speedy trials in criminal cases, they might have to curtail or suspend civil jury trials. A broad-based seventy-five percent of DRI poll respondents said that they consider that option unacceptable.

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**About DRI – The Voice of the Defense Bar**

*For more than fifty years, DRI has been the voice of the defense bar, advocating for 22,000 defense attorneys, commercial trial attorneys, and corporate counsel and defending the integrity of the civil judiciary. A thought leader, DRI provides world-class legal education, deep expertise for policy-makers, legal resources, and networking opportunities to facilitate career and law firm growth. For more information, log on to [www.dri.org](http://www.dri.org)*