



# These Estimable Courts: Understanding Public Perceptions of State Judicial Institutions and Legal Policy-Making

*Damon M. Cann, Jeff Yates*

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In *These Estimable Courts*, Damon M. Cann and Jeff Yates explore how citizens feel about the government institutions at the front lines of jurisprudential policy-making in America - our nation's state and local courts. The book's central focus concerns a primary question of governance: why do people support and find legitimate the institutions that govern their lives? Cann and Yates evaluate the factors that drive citizens' support for their state and local courts and that influence peoples' perceptions of the proper role of these courts in our society, as well as how judicial policy-making should be made.

A viable democracy depends upon citizen belief in the legitimacy of government institutions. Nowhere is this more evident than in judicial institutions. Courts depend heavily on a reservoir of public good will and institutional legitimacy to get their decrees obeyed by the public and implemented by other policy actors. It enables courts to weather the storm of counter-majoritarian decisions and remain effective governing bodies whose edicts are respected and followed.

*These Estimable Courts* takes advantage of new original survey data to evaluate citizens' beliefs about the legitimacy of state courts as well as a number of important related concerns. These include peoples' views concerning how judges decide cases, the role of judges and courts in policy-making, the manner in which we select judges, and finally, the dynamics of citizens' views regarding compliance with the law and legal institutions.

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