



THE BENCHLINE

Judicial Nominees

New Nominees

Trump has announced his second slate of federal judicial nominees — this time for the Third Circuit Court of Appeals and several district court seats in Florida. Unsurprisingly, these picks are just as **extreme and ideological** as the last.

For the Third Circuit, Trump has nominated **Emil Bove** — his *own defense attorney* in multiple criminal cases, including the New York trial where Trump was convicted on 34 felony counts, his classified documents case, and his election obstruction case. The nomination of Emil Bove is especially alarming — not just because of who he is, but because of what we lost. Bove's appointment comes at the expense of **Adeel Mangi**, a celebrated trial lawyer and historic nominee who would have been the first Muslim American to serve on a federal appellate court.

In Florida, Trump has named five more to lifetime appointments:

Middle District of Florida: **Kyle Dudek, Anne-Leigh Gaylord Moe, John Guard,**
and **Jordan Pratt**

Southern District of Florida: **Ed Artau**

Trump's picks continue a dangerous trend of prioritizing allegiance over qualifications, independence, and judicial integrity.

WHO ARE THE COURTS SERVING —
JUSTICE, OR TRUMP?

ALLEGIANCE OVER JUSTICE

Nominees chosen for loyalty to Trump — not to the Constitution.

STACKING THE BENCH

Built to lock in far-right rulings for generations..

ABA SIDESTEPED

Bypassing the gold standard in legal vetting.

ERODING CIVIL RIGHTS

Trump's picks threaten fair courts and equal justice for all.

UNFIT FOR A LIFETIME

AFJ formally opposes the most extreme, unqualified nominees.

UNQUALIFIED APPOINTMENTS

Experience optional. Loyalty required.



Senate Judiciary Committee


This week, the Senate Judiciary Committee held confirmation hearings for Trump's first slate of judicial nominees — an alarming group of far-right ideologues with minimal experience and a clear agenda to advance conservative political priorities from the bench.

The hearings included Trump's first circuit court nominee, **Whitney Hermandorfer**, tapped for the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. For the district courts, the nominees were:

Joshua Divine, nominated for both the Eastern and Western Districts of Missouri, **Maria Lanahan**, **Zachary Bluestone**, and **Judge Cristian Stevens**, all nominated for the Eastern District of Missouri.

These nominees are not committed to impartiality or the rule of law. Instead, they are deeply aligned with anti-civil rights movements and hostile to core constitutional protections. Their records show unwavering opposition to reproductive and gender justice, voting rights, and equal protection.

AFJ strongly opposes these nominations. We submitted formal letters of opposition to the Senate Judiciary Committee for **Whitney Hermandorfer**, **Joshua Divine**, and **Maria Lanahan**, citing their troubling histories and public stances that make clear they are unfit for lifetime appointments. These nominees don't represent justice for all — they represent a political agenda rooted in rolling back rights and cementing Trump's influence in the judiciary.



“ [This ruling] opens the door to more environmental harm, especially for Black and Brown communities. ”

The Supreme Court

The Supreme Court has concluded oral arguments for the term and is now issuing decisions through June. Last week they released their ruling in [Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County, Colo.](#)

In this case, the Court **significantly weakened** the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a foundational law that requires federal agencies to assess environmental harms and involve impacted communities before greenlighting major projects.

Justice Kavanaugh, writing for the majority, claimed NEPA “helps agencies to make better decisions.” Yet the ruling now allows agencies to ignore impacts deemed “too remote in time or space”— a dangerous loophole that guts accountability and opens the door to more environmental harm, especially for Black and Brown communities.

We’ll be monitoring the rest of the Court’s decisions closely. For a preview of the key cases we’re watching, visit our [Supreme Court Term Preview](#), and stay tuned for our Term Review.

HOLDING

THE BENCHLINE

This week, U.S. District Court [Judge Myong Joun](#) (D. MA) is *Holding the Benchline*.

Judge Myong Joun **blocked** the Trump administration's plan to fire thousands of employees at the Department of Education, ruling that the move was a thinly veiled attempt to dismantle the agency without congressional authorization. Rejecting the administration's justification that the terminations were aimed at improving "efficiency," Judge Joun found that the effort had instead "deeply disrupted services for students, families and states, making processes less efficient."

In his opinion, Judge Joun wrote, "[t]he record abundantly reveals that Defendants' true intention is to effectively dismantle the Department without an authorizing statute," adding, "[t]he idea that Defendants' actions are merely a 'reorganization' is plainly not true."

Judge Myong Joun's decision condemning Trump's unlawful dismantling of the Department of Education and the administration's blatant attempt to mislead the court is part of an ongoing and deeply disturbing pattern that shows this administration's open contempt for the federal judiciary and disregard for the rule of law.

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