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# THE BENCHLINE

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## ***The Supreme Court***

The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in several critical cases across the last two weeks, each poised to threaten everyday people. Of particular concern is ***Louisiana v. Callais***, a case with high potential to result in the final blow to the already-decimated landmark Voting Rights Act. This case revolves around whether a Louisiana congressional map with a second majority-Black district violates the Constitution. In the oral argument, the Court considered whether the landmark VRA's Section 2 protections would be allowed to stay in place and was urged to reevaluate several important, protective voting precedents that form the foundation of voting rights protection in the country.

For the past 60 years, the Voting Rights Act has been critical in expanding electoral opportunities for voters of color, especially in the South. The outcome of this case will have impacts far beyond Louisiana, and may undermine the very future of voting rights, equal representation, fair elections, and democracy. On the day of oral arguments, AFJ joined civil rights groups, community leaders, and hundreds of concerned advocates as they **rallied** to bring attention to how much is at stake in this case. We will provide coverage when the opinion is released.

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THE SENATE

# JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

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# WHO ARE OUR JUDGES WORKING FOR?



Earlier this week, [Harold Mooty](#) was confirmed by a Senate vote of 66-32 for the Northern District of Alabama. [Ann-Leigh Gaylord Moe](#), nominated for the Middle District of Florida, was confirmed by a party line vote.

In another example of the Trump administration's failure to be transparent with the public, Trump [announced](#) two new judicial nominations on Truth Social less than 48 hours before their scheduled hearings. [William "Will" Crain](#) was nominated for the Eastern District of Louisiana and [Alexander Van Hook](#) for the Western District of Louisiana. The Senate Judiciary Committee hearing for both nominees took place on Wednesday.

Louisiana-based columnist Will Sutton [highlighted](#) AFJ's concerns with Crain's record and the lack of public notice leading up to his hearing. Crain is a long-time member of the Federalist Society and campaigned as "The Conservative Choice" when he ran for the Supreme Court of Louisiana. Several civil rights and advocacy organizations, [including AFJ](#), have raised concerns about Crain's ability to keep his extreme ideological views separate from his judicial approach and decisions. As a state supreme court justice, Crain regularly penned dissents that reflect his staunchly conservative views, including decisions that overwhelmingly sided against defendants' rights, opposed social justice reforms, and shielded powerful interests from corporate accountability. His decisions also reveal a pattern of disregard for police accountability and support for rigid punishment, and language used in his opinions reveal an adherence to far-right fetal-person ideology, and his willingness to be swayed by partisan interest.

In Wednesday's Senate Judiciary hearing, Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI) questioned Crain's campaign contributions from Big Oil and Gas and the Koch brothers, and how that may have impacted his decisions siding with these powerful interests. The public deserves jurists who will administer laws fairly and independently, not ideologues who seek to remake constitutional law from the bench.

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HOLDING

## THE BENCHLINE

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Federal judges continue to act as a critical backstop to President Trump's federal overreach in cities across the country. Judge Sara Ellis of the District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, concerned with the federal agents' use of force used to execute immigration enforcement in the Chicago area, **issued an order** that barred federal agents from using crowd control devices like tear gas or pepper balls on the public, including on clergy and journalists. In a hearing days later, Ellis **expressed serious concerns** about whether her order was being followed, noting that she saw images of tear gas being deployed and read reports there were no warnings issued before. In this hearing, Ellis expanded her initial order to include a requirement that all federal agents who have body cameras must turn them on during encounters with protesters. Earlier this week, Ellis **continued to question immigration authorities** on violations of her order, demanding they provide answers to her questions on why the order was not being properly enforced.

Last week, a federal judge stood in the way of another attempt by the Trump administration to push the bounds of the law and harm everyday people. Judge Susan Illston of the Northern District of California **temporarily blocked** the administration from conducting massive federal layoffs during the ongoing government shutdown. Trump has been trying to use the government shutdown to make even more cuts to the federal workforce, but Illston rebuked the administration, noting that politics were leading to their decisions and that the administration was assuming "laws don't apply to them anymore." Her full order blocked recently announced layoffs and similar future cuts and is an early indicator Trump will face legal hurdles if he continues to use the government shutdown to carry out partisan punishment.

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**VIRTUAL EVENT**  
A conversation on judicial nominations and the future of democracy

Wednesday, Oct. 29, 2025  
6:00 PM ET

Sponsored by  | 

**Rachel Rossi**  
President, Alliance for Justice

**Marc Elias**  
Founder, Democracy Docket

Join Democracy Docket for a live virtual conversation with Founder Marc Elias and AFJ President Rachel Rossi. They'll discuss the future of the Voting Rights Act, the impact of Trump-appointed judges on democracy, and growing attacks on advocacy organizations. [Register here!](#)

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