

AFJ INSIDER



Dear Friend,

We hope that your holiday season is off to a good start, and that you are finding reasons to smile and celebrate. Coming together in community and solidarity is so vital to maintaining our strength for the fights ahead. As we reflect on the challenges of this past year, it's clear that our collective resolve will be tested like never before. The stakes have never been higher, and the need for bold, united action has never been more urgent.

Today, our country is mired in many of the same issues that prompted AFJ's founding in 1979 and the second Trump administration will exacerbate those issues, promising a further erosion of rights, rampant political and financial corruption, and devastation for the most vulnerable — made all the more easy given the Republican control of Congress and the state of the federal judiciary, most especially, the Supreme Court.

But AFJ is uniquely positioned to fight back. Anticipating obstruction at the federal level, we are investing the next four years in deep change work: pipeline building for the judiciary, building power in the states, and strengthening and supporting our nonprofit partners and allies.

And we're not giving up on our federal courts. We are mobilizing our members, partners, and progressive movements to oppose the extremists Trump is lining up for the federal bench. And we will double down on state courts to hold the line against federal fascism.

We continue the long-term work to build the bench of future judges committed to democracy and equality. Through our work in the state courts and building power on the front lines with our members, we will identify the most talented and thoughtful lawyers around the country who will be ready for current state court openings and the federal bench in a new administration.

We work side-by-side with grassroots groups to ensure that everyone has a voice in the policies that shape our lives. We will expand our Bolder Advocacy work by building out newer curriculum on defending against political attacks, releasing additional on-demand trainings, and utilizing our state-level resources to leverage power in state houses, Congress, and at the ballot box. This includes our 135+ diverse member organizations with whom we work in deep partnership. Our strength is rooted in our members, and we are stronger united.

We're staffing up to meet what the moment demands of us. We'll be hiring a research and advocacy director to lead our unique expertise in shining a spotlight on nominees' records. And our Bolder Advocacy team is bringing on a new attorney focused on our state law resources and being a watchdog for federal attacks on nonprofit advocacy rights.

This deep change work is not easy, and not 'sexy', but it is necessary. With your support, we will build the long-term power to emerge, if not unscathed, stronger, and more committed to building a better tomorrow.

Stand with us.

Onward,

Keith Thirion

Interim Co-President



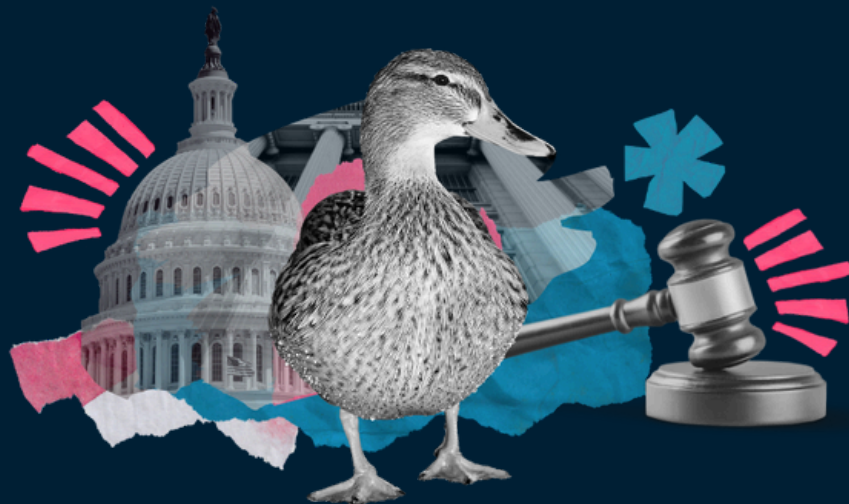
No Vacancies. No Excuses.

Federal Courts

The Supreme Court recently heard arguments in two significant cases: *United States v. Skrmetti*, challenging Tennessee's ban on gender-affirming care for transgender minors, and *Seven County Infrastructure v. Eagle County, Colo.*, addressing NEPA's requirement for environmental impact analyses. Justice Gorsuch recused himself from the latter after advocates highlighted his ties to an individual with financial interests in the case. Decisions in these cases, expected next year, could drastically influence LGBTQ+ rights and environmental protections. For more on this term's major cases, check out our [Supreme Court Term Preview](#).

As the legislative session draws to a close, time is of the essence to confirm President Biden's remaining nominees. Fortunately, the Senate has made significant progress on district court nominees, bringing **Biden's total number of judicial confirmations to 233**. Two final district court nominees are awaiting final confirmation votes on the senate floor. We look forward to their swift confirmation to the bench later this week. With the confirmation of the remaining district court judges, the Senate has ensured that the following exceptional jurists will bring much-needed professional diversity to the federal bench: [Anne Hwang \(C.D. Cal.\)](#), [Catherine Henry \(E.D. Pa.\)](#), [Cynthia Valenzuela-Dixon \(C.D. Cal.\)](#), and [Sparkle Sooknanan \(D.D.C.\)](#).

Meanwhile, AFJ is urgently pushing for the confirmation of three circuit court nominees, including [Adeel Mangi \(3rd Cir.\)](#) and [Karla Campbell \(6th Cir.\)](#). Leaving these key seats vacant would hand a future Trump administration the power to fill them, jeopardizing the civil and human rights of millions in these jurisdictions. Time is running out, and the stakes couldn't be higher.

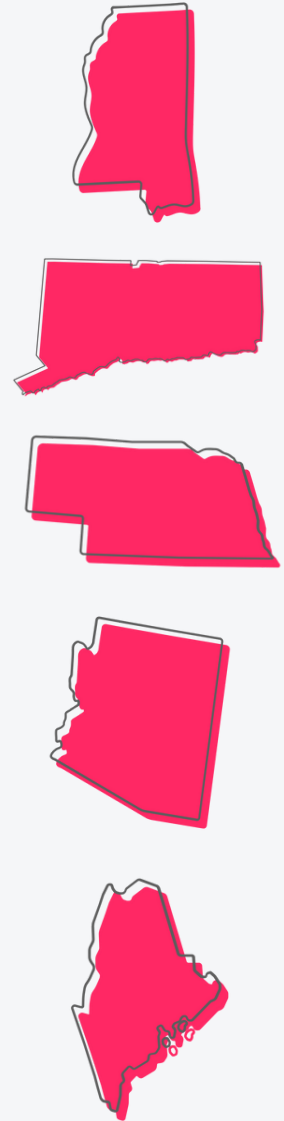


A lame duck is *still* a duck that can
confirm judges.

State Courts

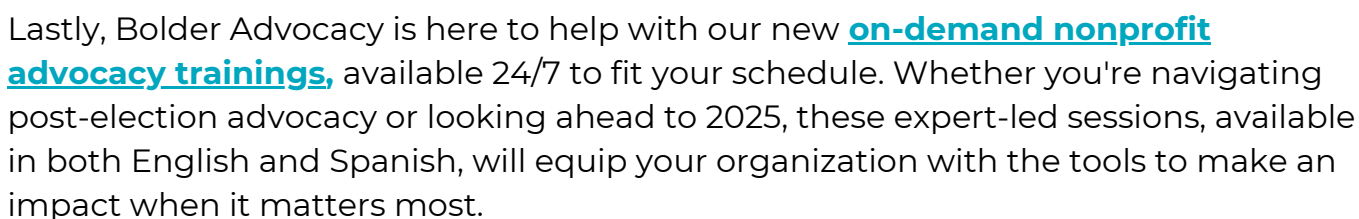
In a November 26 runoff election for the Mississippi Supreme Court's Central District, State Senator Jenifer Branning [defeated incumbent](#) Justice Jim Kitchens by a razor-thin margin. The runoff occurred after no candidates secured 50% of the vote in the five-way election for the seat held on November 5. Mississippi elects its supreme court justices in nonpartisan elections. Our team is also watching vacancies on several state supreme courts, including Connecticut, Nebraska, Arizona, and Maine.

In Connecticut, Gov. Ned Lamont is expected to name a successor to the seat vacated by [the elevation](#) of Justice Raheem Mullins to serve as the court's chief justice earlier in August after former Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson [retired from the court](#). In Nebraska, the District 5 judicial nominating commission has [forwarded three finalists](#) to Gov. Jim Pillen to fill the vacancy created by Justice Jeffrey Funke's elevation to chief justice following [the retirement](#) of former Chief Justice Mike Heavican in October. In Arizona, Gov. Katie Hobbs will choose from [five finalists](#) to name a new justice to the court following [the retirement](#) of Justice Robert Brutinel, also in October. And in Maine, Gov. Janet Mills must appointment a new justice to fill [an opening](#) on that has been vacant for nearly a year.



Bolder Advocacy

We are excited to announce the launch of [The Advocacy Playbook social justice series](#). Designed for social justice organizations, these playbooks offer a concise guide to the laws and regulations governing 501(c)(3) public charities as they engage in advocacy, including during election seasons. So far, we've released six of eight critical publications covering environmental justice, criminal legal reform, gender and reproductive justice, labor and economic justice, LGBTQ+ and HIV communities, and health disability rights. Stay tuned for more resources to help you navigate advocacy rules with confidence! We are also excited to announce our new ["Advocacy Check-up: Nonprofit Self-Assessment"](#) resource. This tool is designed to help 501(c)(3) public charities assess their overall compliance with federal and state advocacy tracking and reporting requirements and identify opportunities to build organizational advocacy capacity.



We are thrilled to introduce a new membership benefit for 2025: **free consultations with AFJ staff!** Starting soon, member organizations will be able to sign up for **consultations on graphic design, fundraising, and compliance and disclosure laws** with experts from our Communications, Development, and Bolder Advocacy teams. More details, including how to sign up, will be coming soon — stay tuned! We are also getting started on our dues renewal process so please keep an eye out for an email about dues coming your way next week! If you anticipate any challenges, questions, or concerns regarding your organization's dues, please reach out to us as soon as possible.

Finally, we hope you continue to share feedback through our [annual member survey](#) and as always, if you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to reach out to us via [email](#).

Donor Profile

We like to use this space to profile an AFJ donor, a new staff member, or someone else affiliated with AFJ. But this month, **we want to thank you, our donors.** There is no typical AFJ donor profile. You are activists, students, lawyers, and full-time parents. You come from all backgrounds and all walks of life. And whether you give \$10 a month (thank you, Sustainers!) or \$10,000 (thank you, Allies!), we appreciate each and every one of you. You make this work possible. And more importantly, you make AFJ staff feel less alone. Working at the vanguard of social justice and in the struggle for a truly multi-racial democracy can sometimes be inspiring and celebratory, but it can often be demoralizing, divisive, and lonely. When we look ahead to the challenges of 2025 and/or when we're overwhelmed by the news, as we know you all can be as well, we turn to our supporters and friends, who galvanize us, and remind us we're in this together.

FROM THE BOTTOM OF OUR COLLECTIVE AFJ HEART

thank you



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

What concerns you now and in the future?

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

December 24, 2024 - January 1, 2025
Alliance for Justice offices will be closed.

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