

AFJ INSIDER

Dear Friend,



This week, AFJ is dropping its [Courting Change: 2023 Momentum for Movement Law](#) report. This report shares both the highlights and challenges of last year, where we saw great strides in the breadth of qualified individuals who were confirmed to the Federal bench, while we also continued to experience great injustices at the hands of the Supreme Court.

In 2023, 69 judges were confirmed, bringing the total to date for the Biden Administration to 177 - the majority of whom were women (and specifically women of color).

The Administration also advanced the professional diversity of the bench by including numerous public defenders and civil rights lawyers among those confirmed. Despite this remarkable progress, as I wrote in one of my recent columns in [Democracy Docket](#), more than 25% of federal districts have still never had a non-white judge. *We have a long way to go.*

Finally, as the Supreme Court continues to be embroiled in some of the most noxious ethics scandals in its history (see [HERE](#)), it also continues to hear (and will ultimately decide) cases that are amongst the most consequential in recent memory. This includes the February 8 arguments in *Trump v. Anderson*, the case challenging Colorado's right to remove former President Trump from the ballot over his participation in the January 6 insurrection. In my column for [Democracy Docket](#), I wrote about the consequences of this case. And while we don't yet have a decision, it appears the Justices are poised to be ready to force states to keep Trump on the ballot. You can read AFJ's statement [here](#).

When you are a part of AFJ's community, you are a part of all these fights for a fairer and more equitable judiciary and a multiracial democracy that represents us all. Thank you for being with us.

Rakim

P.S. Please [RSVP](#) for our next Holding Court on Wednesday, February 21 at 3 PM - Holding Court: Black Grief/White Grievance – featuring Dr. Juliet Hooker, Brown University professor and author, speaking about her recently published book, [***Black Grief/White Grievance: The Politics of Loss.***](#)



OUR IMPACT

Federal Courts

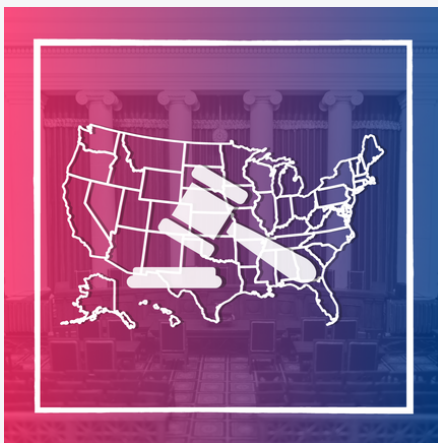
AFJ celebrates the recent confirmation of nine judges, encompassing six district court judges, one Seventh Circuit judge—Joshua Kolar—and two judges to the United States Court of International Trade, including Lisa Wang. Highlighting professional diversity, AFJ applauds the confirmation of former public defender Judge Amy Baggio to the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon.

Additionally, AFJ notes significant milestones with the confirmations of Judges Cristal Brisco and Jacquelyn Austin, marking Judge Brisco as the first person of color on the District Court for the Northern District of Indiana and Judge Austin as the sole Black woman on the District Court for the District of South Carolina.

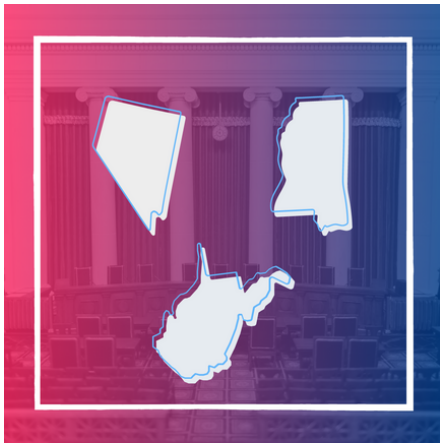


This once again emphasizes the critical need for Senate allies to vote on pending nominees, including Nicole Berner, Adeel Mangi, Judge Mustafa Kasubhai, Eumi K. Lee, and Sarah Russell, who have already cleared the committee stage.

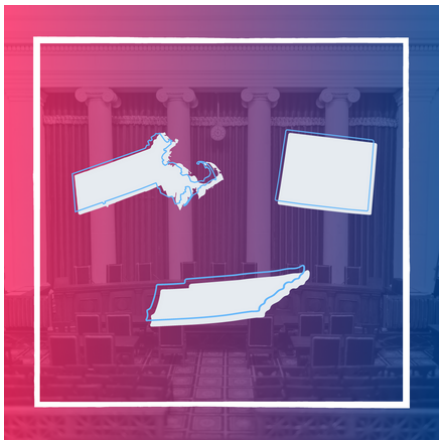
State Courts



Thirty-three states will hold elections for at least one seat on their state's highest court. Over the past year, these courts defined rights for their states such as **voting rights, reproductive freedom, environmental protections, LGBTQ+ protections**, and more. AFJ is monitoring a number of these state courts.

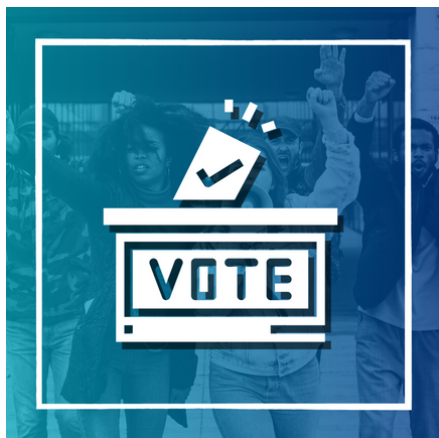


Three incumbent justices on the Nevada Supreme Court are up for nonpartisan re-election in 2024 and will all run unopposed to retain their seats. In Mississippi, four seats on the state supreme court are up in 2024, and all four incumbent justices **will seek re-election**. As the two West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals justices expire later this year, the incumbent justice and Senate Judiciary Chair **will run unopposed** in a nonpartisan election.



Additionally, several state justice nominees have been named to fill several state supreme court vacancies. Governor Maura Healey **nominated** Massachusetts Appeals Court Associate Justice **Gabrielle Wolohojian** to serve on the state's highest court to fill the vacancy from the retirement of Justice David Lowy. In Wyoming, Republican Governor Mark Gordon **appointed** Cheyenne attorney **Robert Jarosh** to fill retiring Justice Keith Kautz's seat on the Wyoming Supreme Court. Lastly, Republican Governor Bill Lee **nominated** Shelby County Circuit Court Judge **Mary Wagner** to fill the vacancy due to Tennessee Supreme Court Justice Roger Page's retirement later this year.

Latest Resources from Bolder Advocacy



As your nonprofit gears up for its get out the vote initiatives this year, Alliance for Justice's Bolder Advocacy program is dedicated to ensuring you're fully prepared for the frontlines of democracy. From our blog featuring [top resources for an impactful 2024 election season](#) to our free [Practical Guidance – Nonprofit Voter Assistance series](#), developed in collaboration with the Democracy Capacity Project, we're here to assist your organization in selecting the most effective activities for your civic engagement and GOTV programming. By steering clear of activities that could be compromised by state law restrictions or prohibitions, we can focus efforts on making your programs bolder, more effective, and operationally smoother to execute.



By steering clear of activities that could be compromised by state law restrictions or prohibitions, we can focus efforts on making your programs bolder, more effective, and operationally smoother to execute. Furthermore, lobbying presents a crucial opportunity for nonprofits to positively impact their communities. As states increasingly become battlegrounds for various issues leading up to the election, our [Practical Guidance – Nonprofit Lobbying series](#), also created in partnership with The Democracy Capacity Project, arrives at a pivotal moment. This resource, available publicly on both websites, is already being utilized by organizations, offering essential support as they advocate for change.



Additionally, our Bolder Advocacy team also brings you two new podcast episodes on [nonpartisan election year activity](#) and [grassroots advocacy](#). Alliance for Justice also [joined](#) the Council on Foundations, Independent Sector, and many other organizations in [signing a letter](#) supporting the rights of philanthropic organizations, charitable nonprofits, and individual donors to support advocacy that promotes the work of historically marginalized groups and other aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our society.

MEMBERSHIP SPOTLIGHT



Mi Familia Vota is a national civic engagement non-profit organization that unites Latino, immigrant, and allied communities to promote social and economic justice through citizenship workshops, voter registration, and voter participation.

Our spotlighted member for February and March is [Mi Familia Vota](#). In case you missed it, our Member Spotlight for December and January was [Texas Watch](#).

OUR STAFF

Each year, Alliance for Justice welcomes two recent law school graduates as Dorot Fellows, whose fellowships are generously supported by the Dorot Foundation. Dorot Fellows provide vital research and capacity to AFJ's Justice team, helping identify, vet, and support diverse nominees to the federal courts.

This month, current Dorot Fellow [Brianna Davis](#) shares her experience at AFJ. (In March, we'll hear from AFJ's other Dorot Fellow [Hayley Durudogan](#).) Head over to [our website](#) to read the full interview, including Brianna's recommendations for her favorite Black- and Nigerian-owned restaurants in the D.C. area!



BRIANNA DAVIS

DOROT FELLOW

"I wish more people understood the profound impact that the judiciary has on our daily lives. The decisions made by judges shape the very fabric of our society, influencing everything from individual rights to broader issues that impact communities."

What drew you to AFJ?

I was drawn to Alliance for Justice because it stands at the forefront of advocating for a fair and independent justice system, having successfully shifted the dialogue surrounding the crucial role of our courts. AFJ's commitment to shaping a future where rights are protected, and justice prevails, resonates deeply with me. Personally, being able to check two diversity boxes as a Black woman, I place immense importance on diversity and inclusivity. Witnessing individuals who resemble me working tirelessly to create a just and equitable environment is not only inspiring but also crucial in fostering a sense of belonging for everyone."

What does a typical week of work look like for you?

The beauty of my role lies in the fact that there is no “typical” day. The fast-paced and ever-changing environment at AFJ ensures that each day brings new challenges and opportunities, making the work incredibly fulfilling.

Among the diverse assignments that I've had the pleasure of working on, a few stand out. Crafting fact sheets and letters of support for our exceptional nominees has been a highlight, allowing me to contribute to the advocacy for deserving candidates. Additionally, taking charge of "The Rush," delving into pre-nomination research for our Building the Bench initiative, and working to draft the amazing [Courting Change report](#) has been both rewarding and intellectually stimulating. The variety in my responsibilities keeps me on my toes and allows me to make meaningful contributions to AFJ's impactful work. It's a fantastic journey, and I look forward to the unique challenges each day brings!

[Read more.](#)

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Alliance for Justice
11 Dupont Circle NW
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036
United States