

AFJ INSIDER



Dear Friend,

As you may have learned in last month's edition of *The Insider*, I have been a proud member of the AFJ team for nine years. And while I am happy to step into a co-president role with Betsy Miller-Kittredge (see below), my real passion for Alliance for Justice is getting my hands dirty with our programmatic work. One program I am daily inspired by is Bolder Advocacy (BA), which builds the power of nonprofits by helping them maximize their advocacy capacity while staying compliant with IRS restrictions.

While this is well-known among nonprofits and foundations, our individual supporters know less about this piece of our work. You may not even know that nonprofits can lose their tax-exempt status by misunderstanding or miscalculating what they can legally do in terms of advocacy. As a result, a lot of nonprofits shy away from advocacy **at all**, not willing to take the risk. This is a travesty as nonprofits are the voice of the people in policy decisions that affect our lives, and their advocacy is responsible for social justice progress every single day.

During this fraught, tremendously fraught, election year, and due to recent SCOTUS decisions, nonprofits have been subjected to additional scrutiny and threat. Ensuring they take as active a role as they can in terms of advocacy, from getting out the vote to reminding communities about the issues at stake in the election, is the work of Bolder Advocacy. We teach the rules, answer questions along the way, and support the power of our nonprofit friends as they fulfill their missions. Never have they been more important.

It is feedback like the following from outstanding partner and member organization, **Houston in Action**, that reminds us daily of the importance of Bolder Advocacy:

"The more we build power with and for communities of color, the more we become a target. It is important compliance is tight. Everything I know from 501(c)(3) compliance when it comes to talking to voters and getting them out to vote comes from Bolder Advocacy. I am not even exaggerating," Juan Cardoza-Oquendo, Programs Director at Houston in Action explained.

Even more exciting is when we see our nonprofit partners have **tremendous success fulfilling their missions**, such as those of the **Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA)**, whose advocacy has been a part of numerous legislative victories from championing bills addressing Indigenous women's safety to securing crucial funding for community development, NAYA's advocacy has yielded tangible results, enriching lives and empowering futures.

When you support AFJ, you don't only support our crucial judicial nominations and court reform work, but you also support the work of hundreds of nonprofits annually who benefit from AFJ's Bolder Advocacy program and/or through their membership in Alliance for Justice.

On behalf of all of us, thank you.

Keith Thirion

Vice President of Strategy, Interim Co-President



Our Impact

Federal Courts

Last week, Keith Thirion's debut Democracy Docket piece went live, discussing why the current ethics corruption on the Supreme Court is such an urgent concern. [Click here to read the full story.](#) You won't want to miss it!



Earlier this month, the Supreme Court wrapped up its 2024 term with a series of impactful and highly anticipated rulings. The ultra-conservative six-justice majority dramatically altered administrative law, expanded presidential authority, and weakened protections against racial gerrymandering, underscoring the Roberts Court's persistent drive to reshape American society and the legal landscape. [You can read our 2023-2024 term review here.](#)

In other judicial news, the Biden-Harris Administration also announced its 52nd slate of judicial nominees, which includes Fourth Circuit nominee Ryan Park, Eastern District of Wisconsin nominee Byron Conway, Eastern District of Pennsylvania nominee Judge Gail Weilheimer, and Central District of Illinois nominee Judge Jonathan Hawley. AFJ is particularly pleased to see Judge Hawley, an all-star magistrate judge with 15 years of public defense experience, nominated to the federal district court, and proudly supports him. Hawley will bring much-needed professional diversity to the bench.

Even better news! On July 8, the Senate [confirmed Judge Nancy Maldonado](#) to the Seventh Circuit. In addition to her experience on the bench, Maldonado brings impressive experience in labor and employment law. Having already made history as the first Latina judge in the state of Illinois, she now again makes history as the first Latinx judge to serve on the Seventh Circuit, which makes law for Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin.

State Courts

AFJ's State Courts team is also following several upcoming leadership changes to state supreme courts around the nation. With Chief Justice Peter Massen set to retire from the Alaska Supreme Court in January 2025, the Alaska Judicial Council is accepting applications to fill the resulting vacancy on the court. The council will work with Gov. Mike Dunleavy (R) to screen, interview, and select the court's next associate justice, and the next chief justice will be chosen from among the court's associate justices by a vote. The application deadline is July 24 at 3:00 pm AKDT (7:00 pm EDT). More information can be found [here](#).

Similarly, the chief justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court, Richard Robinson, will retire in September after six years of service. Robinson was the first Black chief justice of the state's highest court. Gov. Ned Lamont (D) may choose to elevate one of the court's associate justices to the position of chief justice and appoint a new associate justice, or he may appoint someone new to the court to serve as chief justice.

In Indiana, Chief Justice Loretta Rush's term expires in August. She announced her bid for a third term, with support from the other four justices of the court. The Indiana Judicial Nominating Commission is tasked with choosing the chief justice from among the five justices on the court. Rush, first appointed in 2012 and retained for a second term in 2019, will also stand for retention election in November.

Bolder Advocacy

Earlier this year, Bolder Advocacy released the 5th Edition of The Connection, a guide for 501(c)(3)s, 501(c)(4)s, and Political Organizations. Since then, exciting new developments have emerged, with an [FEC advisory opinion](#) impacting the work of some organizations engaged in door-to-door canvassing activities. For more details, [download your free copy](#) of The Connection and refer to a [client memo](#) by Trister, Ross, Schadler & Gold, PLLC for an in-depth analysis.

Like summer, GOTV efforts are heating up on all fronts. Our Bolder Advocacy Program Director, Natalie Roetzel Ossenfort, joined the [Center for Effective Philanthropy](#) to outline how foundations can support their grantees as they look to ensure that all eligible voices are heard during the 2024 general election. With the rise of artificial intelligence in elections, our Brittany Hacker and Alexandra Roseberry's [latest blog](#) equips nonprofits with a few tools to safeguard against the misuse of AI heading into the November election. Lastly, catch our latest Rules of the Game [podcast](#) episodes where we explore [politically motivated attacks](#); uncover [campaign finance reporting](#); and discuss [tax law and elections with NEO Law Group's Erin Bradrick](#). Let's make our voices heard!



Advocacy Wins

Native American Youth And Family Center (NAYA)

Join us in celebrating the remarkable advocacy successes of Native American Youth And Family Center (NAYA). With support from Bolder Advocacy, NAYA has achieved significant milestones, from enhancing record-keeping practices to championing legislative victories. Through dynamic coalition building and expanded advocacy efforts, NAYA has made tangible impacts on issues vital to our communities. These accomplishments reflect NAYA's steadfast dedication to cultural empowerment and community well-being. Together, we're shaping policies and amplifying voices for a brighter future. Read more about their inspiring journey in [our latest blog](#).

Membership & Outreach Community

Our spotlighted member is [The Arc](#). The Arc is a nationwide network advocating for and serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), such as Down syndrome, autism, and cerebral palsy.



with Betsy Miller Kittredge



In both last month's and this edition of the Insider, we are highlighting our interim Co-Presidents: [Keith Thirion](#) (current Vice President of Strategy) and [Betsy Miller Kittredge](#) (current Vice President of Operations and Chief of Staff)!

With decades of experience in the progressive movement, Betsy specializes in building the robust internal infrastructure necessary for nonprofits to achieve their missions. Heading into this new chapter of AFJ, we're glad to have Betsy at the helm, ensuring that AFJ is equipped to meet the moment and pursue our vision of a vibrant, multiracial constitutional democracy, with justice for all.

What are three words you'd use to describe AFJ today?

Strategic, strong, and determined. We have an amazing staff of experts who are committed to our mission, and a strategic plan keeping us on track to achieve our goals.

What is your favorite part of working at AFJ?

By far, my colleagues are my favorite part of the job. I appreciate working with this group of people who are so committed to AFJ's vision and who work so earnestly together. Plus, they're fun! The organization has gone through a lot of growth and change over the past few years, and every single person on staff has played a part in creating an organization I'm proud to work for.

And lastly: What are your go-to spots in DC for relaxing and decompressing from work?

I live in Silver Spring, MD, now, but I really enjoy disappearing into the trails of Rock Creek Park. I even drive through the park instead of driving down 16th Street any chance I get. It's very grounding to have such a beautiful green space right in the middle of the city. Another place I go to clear my mind is Yoga Heights DC in Takoma Park. I'm a new convert to yoga, and the instructors have been very welcoming.

[Read the full interview here.](#)

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