

AFJ INSIDER



Dear Friend,

Times are **hard** for nonprofits these days — whether it's loss of federal funding, threats to eliminate the 501(c)(3) status that allows organizations to do their work and advance their mission, or security threats due to misinformation and fear-mongering rhetoric. And all this amidst unprecedented pullbacks in federal support for social services and other crucial programs, leading communities to lean on the support of nonprofits more than ever. The Trump administration is trying to gut civil society as an intentional strategy to eliminate critical work for communities, silence dissent, and embolden executive power.

But AFJ is fighting back. Building on the singular expertise of Bolder Advocacy, AFJ's 25-year-old program that teaches nonprofits how to conduct advocacy, and funders how to support it, we are launching two new programs to deepen our commitment and expand our work in this moment of crisis. With these programs, we are stepping into the breach on behalf of nonprofits across the country.

First, I am thrilled to announce a new network designed to connect nonprofits with pro-bono attorneys. AFJ has partnered with We the Action (WTA) to launch the [Nonprofit Legal Defense Network \(NLDN\)](#). This new network will help nonprofits seek legal guidance, technical assistance, and legal defense if needed.

Combining the tried-and-true methods of our two organizations — AFJ's Bolder Advocacy program's trusted expertise in 501(c)(3)/501(c)(4) compliance and WTA's network of more than 54,000 lawyers poised to provide pro bono assistance — NLDN will connect organizations to AFJ-trained lawyers, who are prepared to assist organizations with the completion of AFJ's [Advocacy Check-Up Tool](#), and to be connected with one of WTA's attorneys for further help, if need be.

Second, we will shortly launch **AFJ Law**, a program that will supercharge what we have done for nearly three decades through Bolder Advocacy. It will go beyond providing technical assistance (as BA does) to providing legal advice on nonprofit clients' activities (likely when they're most complex or fall into a gray area). AFJ Law will also be able to provide the benefits that come with formal legal representation and attorney-client privilege. By offering these groups critical legal services on the most challenging advocacy rules and regulations, AFJ Law will empower them to be both bold and secure in their advocacy as they fight to advance their missions, protect their communities, and transform our democracy. We are delighted to announce that we've hired AFJ Law's inaugural director, **Deepa Padmanabha**, whose profile you can read below.

These are unprecedented times. Civil society and nonprofit organizations are not only under attack; they are also attempting to fill out the social service and other gaps created by an anti-democratic administration. By standing with our fellow nonprofits, we stand against increasingly dangerous authoritarian actions. And with your support, AFJ is able to be responsive, build new programs, and expand our reach and the services we provide to the field.

Thank you,

Rachel Rossi

President of Alliance for Justice



How We Fight Matters

Federal Courts

The Supreme Court

- The 2025 Supreme Court term officially began earlier this month. The term is posed to be hugely consequential as the Justices will be asked repeatedly to stand up against a presidential administration's intent to consolidate power, buck the rule of law, and limit constitutional rights. The term will cover a wide range of impactful issues, with cases that could further decimate (or even end) the Voting Rights Act, define what qualifies as "persecution" in asylum cases, and decide whether incarcerated people can seek damages from state officials who violate their religious rights. We are watching closely.

Trump's Judicial Nominees:

- The Senate Judiciary Committee advanced four of Trump's judicial nominations for consideration by the full Senate, two with support from Senate Judiciary Democrats. [Jennifer Mascott](#) (3rd Circuit) and [Edmund LaCour](#) (Northern District of Alabama) were both advanced on party-line votes. [Bill Lewis](#) (Middle District of Alabama) and [Harold Mooty](#) (Northern District of Alabama) were confirmed by votes of 14-8 and 18-4.
- The Committee also advanced a slate of North Carolina nominees, as well as [Rebecca Taibleson](#) (7th Circuit). [David Alan Bragdon](#) (Middle District of North Carolina) advanced on party line votes, while [Lindsey Ann Freeman](#) (Middle District of North Carolina), [Susan Courtwright Rodriguez](#) (Western District of North Carolina) and [Matthew Emile Orso](#) (Western District of North Carolina), advanced with support from Senate Judiciary Democrats.

State Courts

Despite Nevada, Illinois, North Carolina, and Georgia being within the top 10 states with the highest Hispanic population, none of those states have had a Hispanic justice serve on its respective state supreme court. The State Courts team's latest [Faces of Justice report](#) chronicles the history and representation of Hispanic justices on state supreme courts. Representation of all identities on our state courts is critical as AFJ State Courts Director Tish Gotell Faulks said it best, "the common occurrences that shape the lived experiences of these immigrants, indigenous cultures, and their diversifying histories in the United States — contributes to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the diverse populations that come before the courts."

[Read the latest report here.](#)

Bolder Advocacy

The start of the current Supreme Court term has many nonprofits wondering how they can respond to cases that have the potential to dramatically shape our rights. In preparation for the case decisions and arguments that will be made in the coming months, AFJ's Bolder Advocacy team released a [new podcast episode](#), which provides a preview of several critical cases currently under consideration by SCOTUS and offers advocacy options for nonprofits whose communities are likely to be impacted by the Court's decisions. From filing amicus briefs [to influencing judicial nominees](#), there are many avenues of advocacy available for organizations standing up to preserve our rights and our democracy during this critical Supreme Court term.

But, court-related advocacy is not the only advocacy nonprofits are currently engaging in. In fact, many organizations are making great strides to impact state-level laws through the [traditional legislative process](#) and via [ballot measures](#), and these activities could become even more important if the Court makes decisions that adversely impact local communities absent the passage of local legislative solutions. For a refresher on the rules that apply when engaging in legislative and other advocacy as a tax-exempt organization, check out our ["Back to Basics"](#) podcast, which offers insights into lobbying and election-season advocacy rules for 501(c)(3)s, 501(c)(4)s, and more and provides guidance on how different types of tax-exempt organizations can work together to amplify their impact.



Membership & Outreach

Justice Trivia Night

October 23 from 6:30 - 8:30 pm

[Stoney's on P Street NW](#)

Calling all D.C. folks and members! The Alliance for Justice invites you to **[Justice Trivia Night](#)** this Thursday October 23 from 6:30 – 8:30 pm at **[Stoney's](#)**.

Think you know your Supreme Court from the Judge Judy court? Want to prove your legal skill and enjoy a fun night out with friends? Grab your team, or join one on the spot, and enjoy free drinks and food as you compete. **[Register here to join!](#)**

Team Spotlight



AFJ is delighted to announce the hire of Deepa Padmanabha, AFJ's inaugural AFJ Law Director. As you read in the letter from Rachel above, AFJ Law is designed to supercharge and go beyond what AFJ's Bolder Advocacy program does, to provide legal advice on nonprofit clients' activities (likely when they're most complex or fall into a gray area). AFJ Law will also be able to provide the benefits that come with formal legal representation and attorney-client privilege. This work is more crucial now than ever, as nonprofits face unprecedented threats. Welcome, Deepa! To learn more about Deepa click [here!](#)

Important Dates

Live Virtual Fireside Chat

 **Tuesday, October 29 at 6:00 p.m. ET**

 [Register here.](#)

Join Democracy Docket for a special live virtual conversation featuring **Marc Elias**, Founder of Democracy Docket, and **Rachel Rossi**, President of Alliance for Justice.

This timely event will blend historical context, legal analysis, and practical strategies for how advocates and everyday people can stand up for their democratic rights.

Together, they'll examine critical issues including:

- The future of the Voting Rights Act and what's at stake for voter protection.
- How Trump-appointed judges are reshaping the balance of power and threatening agency independence.
- The increasing attacks on nonprofits and advocacy organizations working to hold institutions accountable.

We hope to see you there!

A rectangular button with a blue-to-pink gradient background and the word "DONATE" in white, bold, uppercase letters.

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