

AFJ INSIDER



Dear Friend,

Yesterday was a sad day for the United States as we swore into office a president who has been convicted of corruption and incited a violent insurrection. We are steeling ourselves for what the next four years will hold.

But we are not cowed. Thanks to your support and our movement's work over the past four years, Trump is inheriting fewer than half of the judicial vacancies he started with us in 2017.

And the power we built during the Trump 1.0 through fierce opposition and strengthening progressives' advocacy capacity prepared us to capitalize on the opportunities of the Biden administration. It made remarkable progress toward diversifying our federal judiciary possible, and it prepared nonprofits to fiercely advance their agendas while the getting was good. They are also stronger now than ever before, prepared to meet the challenges of Trump 2.0.

We are undaunted, well-equipped, and ready for the fight ahead.

Like you, AFJ supports well-qualified jurists who reflect the diversity of people and legal professions across the country. Over the next four years, we will seize every opportunity and leverage every procedural tactic **to block every Trump nominee who does not meet this standard**. Our playbook is aggressive, and full of ways to slow down, if not prevent, these confirmations.

In my latest [Democracy Docket piece](#), I argue that Senate Democrats must fully, unapologetically, and completely **refuse to compromise during the confirmation process**. AFJ will once again conduct research to expose nominees' backgrounds, develop talking points for partners and allies, provide advocacy tools, and mobilize to block confirmations.

We've been here before. We know that spending the next four years building a judicial pipeline and power and capacity among nonprofit organizations will pay dividends under the next, hopefully more friendly, administration. The work we did under Trump 1.0 meant that President Biden was able to surpass Trump's appointments, **with the most diverse set of judges selected by one administration in our nation's history.**

And while we oppose dangerous nominees, we will also continue to strengthen our movement's ability to safely participate in opposing the Trump agenda and defend nonprofits rights to advocate against what we predict will be an uptick in politically motivated attacks.

Please stay in touch and join us in the fight. We're optimistic that together we can make a meaningful difference in this political reality – we've held the line for our democracy even **under the most challenging of circumstances**, and together we will again.

Onward,

Keith Thirion

Interim Co-President



No Vacancies. No Excuses.

Federal Courts

As we begin day two of the second Trump administration, Alliance for Justice has published a new report highlighting judicial confirmations during 2024 and across the entire Biden presidency. With 235 judges confirmed, Biden and Senate Democrats surpassed Donald Trump's total of 234, while also bringing unprecedented diversity to the federal judiciary. [Our Courts, Our Rights: Defending Justice Beyond 2024](#) details these historic advances, missed opportunities, and the challenges ahead. The report features standout nominees confirmed under Biden, examines how Senate Republicans blocked several highly qualified candidates, and outlines what's at stake as Trump begins filling judicial vacancies with extremist nominees.

AFJ will continue to lead the fight to protect our courts and democracy, pushing back against extremist judges and harmful policies targeting advocacy organizations. We remain steadfast in defending the rights of communities and nonprofits to stand up for justice, knowing that the attacks ahead require resilience and resolve. The work to resist today and build a better tomorrow begins now.

State Courts

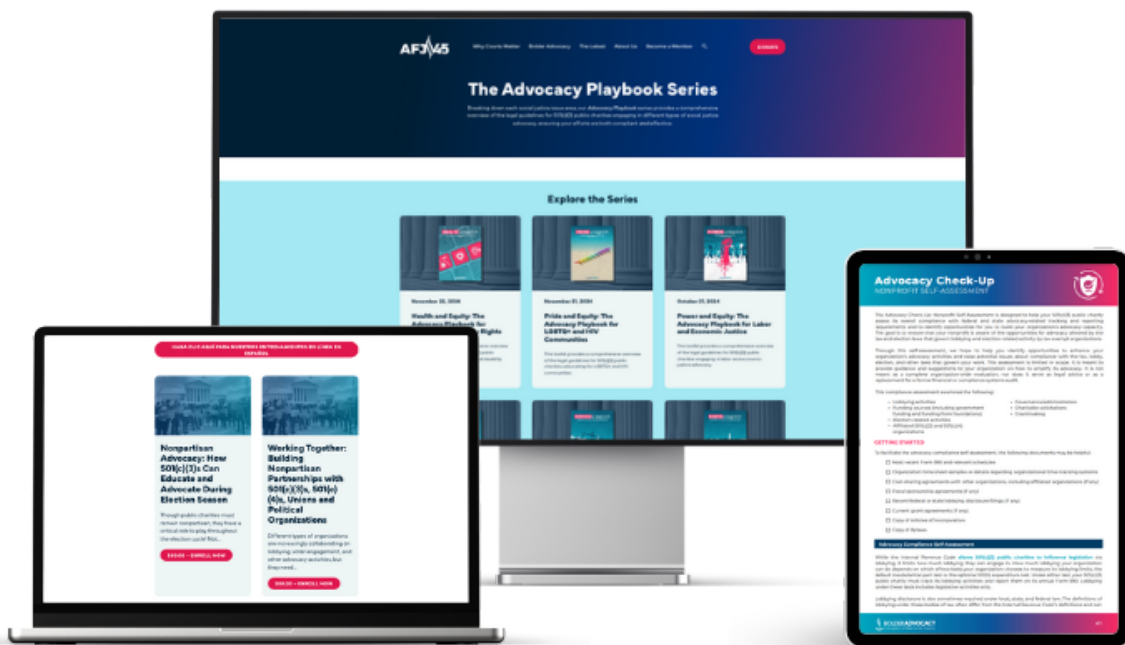
As we enter 2025, state supreme courts are already shaping critical legal landscapes with significant elections, appointments, and decisions. In Mississippi, State Senator Jenifer Branning narrowly unseated incumbent Justice Jim Kitchens in a November runoff. Arkansas made history with Justice Karen Baker becoming the first woman elected Chief Justice, while Kentucky's Pamela R. Goodwine became the first Black woman to join that bench. Meanwhile, upcoming vacancies are set to be filled in Connecticut, Arizona, and Maine, with governors expected to make appointments soon.

Notable 2024 election outcomes include progressives securing a 5-2 majority in Michigan, conservatives expanding dominance to 6-1 in Ohio, and Montana narrowing but maintaining its progressive majority. Significant decisions have also emerged: Wisconsin's supreme court dismissed a conservative push to access voter records, and the Montana Supreme Court affirmed that the state's constitution protects the right of all residents to live in a healthy environment free from the impacts of climate change. As the new year unfolds, these courts will play crucial roles in defining justice at the state level, reinforcing the importance of vigilant oversight and advocacy of these courts.

Bolder Advocacy

Just a few weeks into 2025, we are anticipating a year filled with bolder advocacy — literally. We are thrilled to announce that [**The Advocacy Playbook social justice series**](#) is now complete! 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. The full series of eight publications is live, covering environmental justice, criminal legal reform, gender and reproductive justice, labor and economic justice, LGBTQ+ and HIV communities, health disability rights, voting rights, and immigrant rights. These resources are here 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.



Don't miss our new blog, [**Ballot Measure Advocacy for Public Charities: Key Laws and Activities to Consider in 2025 and Beyond**](#), which offers vital insights to help organizations engage in ballot measure advocacy while staying compliant. For those working in Texas, our blog, [**How to Prepare for the 2025 Texas Legislative Session**](#), provides a roadmap for effective and strategic advocacy as the new legislative cycle begins.

Lastly, Bolder Advocacy is here to help with our new [on-demand nonprofit advocacy trainings](#), available 24/7 to fit your schedule. These expert-led sessions, available in both English and Spanish, will equip your organization with the tools to make an impact when it matters most.



Membership & Outreach

We are thrilled to uplift our newest member, [The Jeremiah Program](#). The Jeremiah Program is a national organization focused on disrupting the cycle of poverty for single mothers and their children by providing a holistic approach that includes access to college, quality early childhood education, safe housing, career support, and a supportive community, aiming to empower mothers to achieve economic mobility while supporting their children's development as well. Learn more about them [here](#).

Member Profile: April Verrett



April Verrett

President, SEIU

April Verrett is a fighter for working people and a visionary leader at the forefront of building a modern-day labor movement that is anti-racist at its core.

AFJ-member organization, [Service Employees International Union \(SEIU\)](#) is a powerful labor union of 2 million dedicated members united by the belief in the dignity and worth of workers and the services they provide. It's dedicated to improving the lives of workers and their families and creating a more just and humane society. And no one exemplifies the spirit and resourcefulness of that fight more than its new president April Verrett. A life-long champion for working people, Verrett was elected the first Black woman president of SEIU on May 20, 2024, following two years serving as secretary-treasurer.

At a time of such uncertainty, it's more important than ever that organizations committed to protecting the rights of all people come together. AFJ is excited to continue our labor and economic justice work with SEIU and Verrett, who has always been guided by her belief that unions are a transformative force capable of eradicating generational poverty, dismantling structural racism, strengthening democracy, and uplifting the lives of workers and their communities.

"... Make no mistake – working people are under attack and the stakes have never been higher; but the real challenge and opportunity of leading our union in this moment is meeting the momentum of workers across the country – especially the young people of color – who are showing us what's possible," Verrett said during her convention acceptance speech. "I'm energized and honored to take on that challenge, and I believe that together we can end poverty wages once and for all."

In just the last few months, Verrett continues to lead on major initiatives to strengthen the worker movement, including fighting for higher wages, protecting Medicaid from greedy billionaires, helping workers form unions, and finalizing a historic labor partnership that saw SEIU [rejoin the AFL-CIO](#) after 20 years.

[Read the full profile here.](#)

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

What concerns you now and in the future?

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