

AFJ INSIDER



Dear Friend,

The Trump administration's trampling of the Constitution, the rule of law, and democratic norms continues apace. So far judges are holding the line against the worst of these abuses and constitutional violations. In just the past week:

- **Judge James Bredar**, appointed by President Obama, reinstated approximately 20,000 probationary government employees across 18 agencies who had been 'illegally' terminated.
- **Judge Amir Ali**, appointed by President Biden, ordered the Trump administration to pay the 'unlawfully restricted' USAID funds to contractors for work already completed.
- **Judge Beryl Howell**, appointed by President Obama, temporarily blocked parts of the executive order that targeted the law firm Perkins Coie for its representation of Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign and its role in investigating possible ties between Trump's 2016 campaign and Russia.

While these cases play out, there is a new nefarious plot afoot: President Trump is seeking to cripple civil society and nonprofit organizations, to weaken the ability of all of us, to resist and to fight back. On March 12, news broke that *"Trump's FBI is moving to criminalize groups like Habitat for Humanity for receiving grants from the Environmental Protection Agency under the Biden administration."* It is not enough that the administration has frozen federal grants meant to fund the important and potentially lifesaving work of organizations like Habitat, but these organizations are being forced to deal with a criminal investigation rather than focus on their life- and planet-saving work. As Capital Hunters wrote on X this week:

"The FBI has told Citibank that recipients of EPA climate grants are being considered as potentially liable for fraud. That is, the Trump administration wants to criminalize work on climate science and impacts...An incoming administration not only cancels federal grants but declares recipients as criminals. All these grantees applied under government calls FOR ENVIRONMENTAL WORK, were reviewed and accepted. Trump wants to jail them."

We can only hope that the judges that inevitably hear cases against this ridiculous move act like many before them, and say, "No. No. This is not constitutional, and it cannot stand."

Our work to ensure our courts protect our rights and democracy and to defend nonprofit advocacy could not be more urgent. We're in a grave game of despotism whack-a-mole, and AFJ is endeavoring to keep up, joining the battlefields or leading the fight where we are called to do so.

Journey with us,

Keith Thirion

Interim Co-President



How We Fight Matters

Federal Courts

The Trump administration has yet to announce its first slate of judicial nominees. However, AFJ stands ready to steadfastly oppose all unqualified nominees and those who threaten our democracy, civil rights, and the rule of law. As it currently stands, Trump has 55 lifetime judicial vacancies to fill: four circuit court seats and 51 district court seats. You can rely on us to conduct deep dives into the backgrounds of nominees, forecast the destruction they may cause, and instruct our members on how to take action to prevent any unqualified and unfit nominees from taking the bench.

In the meantime, AFJ vociferously opposed several troubling nominees to serve as part of the Department of Justice leadership. Last month, we wrote three letters of opposition to [Harmeet Dhillon](#) (assistant attorney general for civil rights nominee), [John Sauer](#) (solicitor general nominee), and [Aaron Reitz](#) (assistant attorney general for the Office of Legal Policy nominee). Alarming, all three nominees advanced out of the Senate Judiciary Committee despite their history of flagrant disregard for the rule of law, civil rights, and the basic norms of democracy. During their shared hearing, the nominees even suggested that government officials [could ignore certain court orders](#) that they personally disagree with.

Later this month, the Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in several consequential cases. This includes [Louisiana v. Callais](#), which might further weaken the Voting Rights Act, and [Catholic Charities Bureau v. Wisconsin Labor & Industry Review Commission](#), which will decide whether denying a religiously affiliated organization a tax exemption that applies exclusively to religious institutions violates the First Amendment. For more detailed information, check out AFJ's [Supreme Court Case Preview](#).

State Courts

The April 1 Wisconsin Supreme Court election is at the center of national attention as outside spending from conservatives like Elon Musk and progressive-aligned groups like Planned Parenthood Votes ramp up ahead of election day to influence the partisan balance of the state's highest court. Last year's election of Justice Janet Protasiewicz shifted the court's majority, and it has since delivered decisions reshaping voting rights, abortion access, and executive authority in the state. Now, outside expenditures from conservatives and progressives are rising in the state hoping to swing the court's control in their favor or maintain the hard-fought majority they gained last year.

As a new election year ramps up, there is still one uncertified judicial election left — the North Carolina Supreme Court election. Justice Allison Riggs's 734 vote victory will be heard before a Republican majority panel on the statewide court of appeals as conservative candidate Judge Jefferson Griffin refuses to concede and seeks to disenfranchise over 60,000 North Carolina voters.

Georgia and Michigan have upcoming vacancies on their state's highest courts. Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice Michael Boggs will retire at the end of his term in March. The state Judicial Nominating Commission opened nominations and applications for the high court vacancy. Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Elizabeth Clement is retiring from the state's highest court, giving Gov. Gretchen Whitmer her second appointee to the court.

Bolder Advocacy

Bolder Advocacy's newly updated **[Robocalling Rules](#)** guide is here to help your nonprofit reach more people while staying on the right side of FCC, FEC, and FTC regulations. Whether you're mobilizing voters, rallying supporters, or launching an advocacy campaign, this is your must-have playbook for making the most of robocalls and robotexts — check it out now! Speaking of playbooks, in case you missed it — **[The Advocacy Playbook social justice series](#)** is also 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.



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

Join Alliance for Justice on Wednesday, March 26, at 1 PM ET for ***Holding Court: From Visibility to Victory — Defending Trans Rights***, a virtual event on safeguarding trans rights amid rising legislative and judicial attacks. Featuring Meghann Burke (National Women's Soccer League Players Association) and Shayna Medley (Advocates for Trans Equality), the discussion will explore advocacy strategies, legal interventions, and grassroots organizing to push back against regressive policies. This conversation highlights the power of solidarity and collective action in ensuring a future where trans rights are protected and celebrated. Click **here to register!**

HOLDING COURT:
From Visibility to Victory — Defending Trans Rights

WHEN:
Wednesday
March 26
1pm ET

WHERE:
Virtual

Meghann Burke (she/her)
Executive Director
NWSLPA

Shayna Medley (they/she)
Senior Litigation Staff Attorney
Advocates for Trans Equity

All AFJ members now have access to free, one-on-one consultations with experts from our Communications and Development teams. This is an exclusive pilot program with a limited number of spots available, so sign up early to secure your spot!

Fundraising Consultation

Boost your fundraising efforts with personalized guidance from **Amy Ciciora, our director of individual giving**. Amy will work with you to develop strategies to grow your donor base, optimize appeals, and build deeper relationships with your supporters!

Graphics and Communications Consultation

A consultation with **Branding Strategist Nadia Watson** can help you sharpen your messaging, elevate your organization's visual identity, and create a stronger connection with your audience. Take your brand to the next level with expert insights!

This exciting benefit is available **only to current member organizations**. So if **you haven't renewed your membership yet** — don't miss out and [renew your membership today!](#)

Staff Profile: Tish Gotell Faulks



Tish Gotell Faulks

State Courts Director

Strengthening State Courts for the Future of Democracy

Tish Gotell Faulks joins AFJ at a pivotal moment in our fight for democracy, bringing a fierce competitive spirit to her new role as state courts director. She's playing the long game, looking ahead to the 2030 redistricting cycle, and recognizing that state courts — not the federal judiciary — will be key to combatting partisan and racial gerrymandering. "I wanted to work in an environment that recognizes the value and importance of state courts as we continue our experiment in self-representation," she says. With deep roots in the Deep South, Tish has seen firsthand how court decisions impact rural communities, from access to reproductive healthcare to the devastating loss of community hospitals.

Beyond the courtroom, Tish channels her competitive nature into cooking and baking — especially perfecting chocolate chip cookies. She playfully recalls how her husband, once a novice in the kitchen, became a professional line cook, sparking her own determination to sharpen her culinary skills. Cooking has become a source of both relaxation and friendly competition in their home. Through it all, whether in the fight for democracy or in the kitchen, Tish remains committed to mentoring the next generation, ensuring that the lessons of past victories — and losses — aren't forgotten.

[Read the full profile on Tish here.](#)

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

What concerns you now and in the future?

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

DONATE



If you believe you received this message in error or wish to no longer receive email from us, please [unsubscribe](#).

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