

AFJ INSIDER



Dear Friend,

We are living through dark and often difficult times. It's not always easy to find reasons for optimism and hope. That is why I was so grateful to have presided over AFJ's annual Holding Court event earlier this month. A room full of AFJ supporters, allies, and friends (old and, happily, new!) came together to hear experts discuss the upcoming Supreme Court term – certainly a far from lighthearted topic these days. Nevertheless, the conversation and unity in the room was bolstering.

As I said “What continues to inspire me in this moment is the resilience and strength demonstrated by the people, here in DC and across this country. And remembering those who came before us, whose shoulders we stand on as we continue the fight for freedom and equality.”

On the docket for [this Supreme Court term](#) are cases that will shape the future of human rights, particularly those of LGBTQIA+ people. Last term, the Court upheld Tennessee's ban on gender-affirming care for minors. This term, in ***West Virginia v. B.P.J.*** a 14-year-old transgender girl who wanted to run cross country track was denied the ability to do so. The Supreme Court's decision will likely shape the legal status of more than two dozen anti-trans sports bans across the country. And in ***Chiles v. Salazar*** the Court will consider whether a Colorado ban on “conversion therapy” for LGBTQ+ youth is unlawful. With over 20 states having similar laws banning this devastating practice, which irreparably harms those subjected to such ‘treatments’, the decision in this case will have a far-reaching impact.

Also, on the docket are three cases related to elections, voting rights and campaign political spending. In ***Louisiana v. Callais***, the Court will address the redistricting of Louisiana's congressional map, focusing on the creation of a second majority-Black district.

The Supreme Court's ruling could have broad implications for both the Voting Rights Act and redistricting practices nationwide. The ***Bost v. Illinois State Board of Elections*** involves a challenge to counting of mail-in votes after election day, and ***National Republican Senatorial Committee v. Federal Election Commission*** will take up a challenge to federal limits on how much political parties can spend in coordination with their candidates.

These are just a few of many cases, in which the decisions made in this term will echo for generations to come. And there is no doubt that the challenges are many, but I firmly believe that when we stand together, we have the wisdom, the strategy, and the grit to counter and overcome. Alliance for Justice continues to hold this Court to account, both for its egregious ignorance of the law and for its ongoing corruption. We continue to build the network of excellent candidates for the Bench, as well as power among the movements pushing for a fair court and a true democracy.

The future we fight for — an independent, ethical, and progressive Court that represents and defends justice and the rights of the people — is worth it. I hope you will stand with us, and remain, like we are, rooted in the value of the people fighting together for the democracy we deserve.

Thank you,

Rachel Rossi

President of Alliance for Justice



How We Fight Matters

Federal Courts

The Supreme Court

- The Supreme Court, siding with the Trump administration once again, used its emergency “shadow” docket to [grant an order](#) that blocked a lower court ruling prohibiting immigrations official from detaining people primarily based on ethnicity. The order was issued with no reasoning from the conservative majority. The majority, as Justice Sotomayor noted in dissent, is turning this country into “a place where the Government can seize anyone who looks Latino, speaks Spanish, and appears to work a low-wage job.” This is not simply an assault on Fourth Amendment protections; it’s the highest court in the land legitimizing systemic racial profiling.

Trump’s Judicial Nominees:

- The Senate voted 49-47 to confirm [Zachary Bluestone](#) (E.D. Missouri), 50-43 to confirm [Ed Artau](#) (S.D. Florida), 52-45 to confirm [Maria Lanahan](#) (E.D. Missouri), and 53-45 to confirm [Kyle Dudek](#) (M.D. Florida).
- On September 11, 2025, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted on party lines to advance four nominees to the floor: [Joshua Dunlap](#), [Chad Meredith](#), [William “Bill” Mercer](#), and [Eric Tung](#). All four nominees have used their legal careers and status to advance dangerous conservative ideologies that do not support civil rights, working people, or an inclusive democracy.
- The Senate Judiciary Committee recently held hearings on Trump’s Fifth Slate of judicial nominees, which include: [Rebecca Taibleson](#) for the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals and four nominees to district courts in North Carolina: [Susan Courtwright Rodriguez](#) and [Matthew Emile Orso](#) for the Western District of North Carolina and [Lindsey Freeman](#) and [David Alan Bragdon](#) for the Middle District of North Carolina.

State Courts

Campaign spending in state supreme court races has been [steadily on the rise](#) with advocacy groups and outside interests vying for a stake in these high courts. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court retention election this November 4 is no exception. Retention elections used to be considered under the radar, but with state courts' role in protecting constitutional rights growing larger, the elections for these courts are more contested and sought after. Special interest groups are pouring money into the only remaining high court election in the country. Read about [why groups are investing](#) so much money in Pennsylvania this cycle and [why these elections matter](#). Learn more about the [Pennsylvania Supreme Court here](#).

Bolder Advocacy

Nonprofits have many tools in their toolbox that they can use to defend our democracy, protect community interests, and pursue justice. One such tool is voter registration. On September 16, our Bolder Advocacy team celebrated National Voter Registration Day alongside hundreds of nonprofits across the United States. In advance, we published a blog about how [501\(c\)\(3\)s can safely engage in nonpartisan voter registration](#) activities in support of their charitable missions. Voter registration offers the opportunity to ensure that every eligible American can fully participate in our democracy.

Our team is also focused on educating nonprofits about their ability to engage in ballot measure advocacy to impact local and state-level public policy. Ballot measure advocacy is yet another tool that nonprofits can utilize to pursue positive policy change and ensure that their communities' voices are heard. That is why, on a [recent episode of our Rules of the Game podcast](#), we were joined by Emma Olson Sharkey, who discussed how nonprofits can participate in ballot measure campaigns, including measures related to redistricting.

As always, if you have questions related to your nonprofit's ability to engage in election-related activities, you can reach out to our [free technical assistance](#) hotline.



Membership & Outreach

Are you located in the DMV area? Come join us, test your knowledge of the courts, and unwind with free food and drinks! The Alliance for Justice is hosting a Trivia Night dedicated to all things “courts” at Stoney's on P Street NW on [Thursday, October 23 from 6:30 – 8:30pm ET](#).

Join us for this night of legal brilliance and brainy battles! 🇺🇸🧐

[Register here!](#)



ICYMI: Alliance for Justice and AFJ Action hosted the fourth annual Holding Court: Supreme Court Term Preview on Tuesday, September 9. We analyzed the upcoming Supreme Court term with **Congressman Hank Johnson** (GA-04); **Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon** (PA-05) **Deepak Gupta**, Founding Principal of Gupta Wessler LLP; **Tara Malloy**, Senior Litigation Strategist at Campaign Legal Center; and **Allen Morris**, Policy Director at the National LGBTQ Task Force. AFJ and AFJ Action president **Rachel Rossi** emceed and moderated the panel.

Team Spotlight

Welcome to AFJ! Christine Chen Zinner and Randy Faigin

AFJ's Justice program has recently welcomed two new members to the team, and they couldn't have come at a better time! As our Justice work shifts to opposing Trump's judicial nominees who lack the most basic qualifications for judgeships, Christine's opposition research, and advocacy experience is supercharging our efforts. And, as our Building the Bench program expands to include magistrate judges, as well as federal and state supreme court judges, Randy's deep experience adds vital capacity to these efforts.



Christine Chen Zinner joined AFJ in August as Director of Research and Advocacy, fulfilling a crucial role in vetting and reporting on President Trump's judicial nominees, a role typically played by the Department of Justice and the President. Her work informs advocacy efforts against the worst of the nominees and creates a historical record. Working on federal judge nominations is incredibly meaningful to Christine. She says *"In this moment, the federal judiciary sometimes feels like the last working branch of government holding the line for democracy and defending our Constitution."*

Federal judges play such an important role shaping our day-to-day lives in ways many people don't realize, and I want to do everything possible to make sure the federal judiciary is representative of the people they should be serving." Just as important to her is her work to develop, encourage, and support AFJ's talented Dorot fellows (recent law school graduates who provide crucial capacity on our Justice team for two-year terms). She says, *"They have so much to offer our community and having also started my post-law school career as a fellow, I want to be a resource to our Dorots, to help them maximize their fellowship experience, as others did for me."* In a fun fact/full circle moment Christine began her career as the 2006 Esther Peterson Fellow at Consumer Reports, where she first met AFJ founder Nan Aron, who was part of the selection panel.



Randy Faigin joined AFJ in June as our Building the Bench Counsel supporting the development of the pipeline of professionally and demographically diverse state and federal judges. Randy says about her work: "my role at AFJ is to empower movement lawyers to become judges. Many of us who work for the public interest do not feel like we have the "pedigree" to become a judge...but lawyers working for the public interest are exactly the people who should become judges!" She goes on to say that "before coming to AFJ, I spent six years working in voter protection...

Now I am devoting my time to ensuring that the judicial branch can fairly apply laws and uphold the Constitution. Judges should reflect the diversity of America, and judges should have legal backgrounds that include working for the public good." Hailing from the Atlanta area, Randy says her favorite thing about the city is the people. Whether it's going to a Beyonce concert, a Pride parade or a little league game, people come together and have fun. She also says the weather doesn't hurt - *"I grew up in Ithaca, NY and am grateful every single day for warmth and sunshine."*

Welcome to AFJ, Christine and Randy!

Stand With Us in This Critical Moment

Federal overreach is threatening democracy, nonprofits, and vulnerable communities. Alliance for Justice has fought back since 1979 — and today, the stakes couldn't be higher. We need just **17 people** more to step up as monthly sustainers to hit our donor goal and to ensure we have the resources to protect our courts and democracy.

👉 [Become a Sustainer Today](#) 👉

Together, we can ensure every voice — not just the powerful — is heard.



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