

April 14, 2026

Senator Charles Grassley
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee

Senator Richard Durbin
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Durbin,

Missouri AFL-CIO, Center for Common Ground, and Courts Matter Illinois, organizations focused on protecting workers' rights, voting rights, and the integrity of the courts, oppose the nomination of Justin Smith for the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals. As we recently witnessed in Minnesota, our safety and well-being depends on a strong and independent federal judiciary. Federal judges must be willing to hold wrongdoers accountable when they break the law. Unfortunately, Smith's demonstrated loyalty to Trump renders him unfit and unqualified to sit on the Eighth Circuit.

Smith continues to demonstrate biases favoring Trump, putting him at odds with a circuit court judge role that requires total judicial independence. On Trump's second inauguration day, [Smith tweeted](#), "Its morning again in America. Our long national nightmare is over." Smith also spent years helping Trump avoid accountability for wrongdoing. He co-owns the James Otis Law Group, a firm that represented Trump before the Supreme Court in his presidential immunity case. Now seemingly above the law, Smith is helping [Trump overturn the judgment entered](#) against Trump in the sexual abuse and defamation case brought by journalist E. Jean Carroll.

As someone who has also supported Missouri Attorney General Schmitt's efforts to [challenge the 2020 election outcomes](#) in swing states, Smith's confirmation to the Eighth Circuit may further jeopardize free and fair elections in states like Minnesota, which was recently threatened by the Trump administration when it refused to turn over voter rolls.

Confirming Smith to a circuit court seat risks not only the safety and well-being of those in Missouri, but could leave harmful impacts on all of the states covered by the Eighth Circuit. Our freedom and democracy cannot afford the confirmation of any circuit court judges who merely serve as an extension of the Trump administration, willing to rubber stamp unprecedented and illegal actions to further an authoritarian agenda. For these reasons, we urge you to oppose the nomination of Justin Smith to the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Sincerely,
Missouri AFL-CIO, Center for Common Ground, Courts Matter Illinois