



THE BENCHLINE

Judicial Nominees

The newest federal judicial nominees are scheduled for a Senate Judiciary hearing on February 4. [Anna St. John](#) (Eastern District of Louisiana), [John Shepherd](#) (Western District of Arkansas), [Chris Wolfe](#) (Western District of Texas), and [Andrew Davis](#) (Western District of Texas) are the latest nominees who align with right wing interests and lack demographic diversity. AFJ continues to dig into the records of these nominees.

WHO BENEFITS?



CORPORATIONS



WORKERS



VOTERS



COMMUNITIES



ANDREW DAVIS & ANNA ST. JOHN:



PASSED THE CORPORATE TEST



FAILED EVERYONE ELSE

All four nominees are active members of the Federalist Society. For the past seven years, Wolfe has served as an advisory board member for the Federalist Society's Fort Worth Chapter. Shepherd is a career prosecutor with less than 15 years of legal experience. Davis's and St. John's backgrounds are particularly concerning: both nominees spent their careers siding with corporations against everyday people.

Davis spent his career shielding corporations from accountability for environmental harms and civil rights violations. Davis has also worked to actively undermine voting rights and free and fair elections. He helped lead efforts to weaken voter protections in Texas in [Abbott v. Perez](#). He also [defended](#) Fox News in one of the biggest defamation suits in media history after Fox News anchors parroted lies about Dominion voting machines causing President Trump to lose the 2020 presidential election.

St. John has spent her career undermining corporate accountability and attacking critical protections for women, individuals with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people of color. Nearly two dozen national and state organizations have [signed on](#) to a letter opposing her nomination to the Eastern District of Louisiana, citing their concerns over her record on a wide range of issues, including racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, and consumer protections.

All six nominees who were marked up and reported out of the Senate Judiciary Committee earlier this month are awaiting cloture and a final Senate vote. They include [Megan Benton](#) (Western District of Missouri), [David Fowlkes](#) (Western District of Arkansas), [Nicholas Ganjei](#) (Southern District of Texas), [Brian Lea](#) (Western District of Tennessee), [Justin Olson](#) (Southern District of Indiana), and [Aaron Peterson](#) (District of Alaska).

THE SUPREME COURT

Enabled by a recent Supreme Court [decision](#), the Trump administration has continued its large-scale ICE [operation](#) in Minnesota, "Operation Metro Surge," with continuously tragic results. In recent weeks, ICE agents shot and [killed](#) two Minneapolis residents, Renee Good and Alex Pretti. The administration's escalated ICE operations have resulted in increased [violence](#) throughout the country, and Good and Pretti's murders — at the hands of the federal government — account for 2/3 of all Minneapolis [homicides](#) so far in 2026. ICE agents shot two more people outside a [Portland](#) hospital a day after agents killed Good.

These traumatic incidents follow a concerning upward trend in injuries and deaths caused by ICE actions since the Trump administration took office. 2025 was ICE's **deadliest** year in over two decades, with at least 32 reported deaths in DHS facilities or during agency operations. Already in the first **month** of 2026, there have been six disclosed deaths in detention facilities, along with the two deadly shootings in Minneapolis.

Despite ICE's increasingly extreme and tragic actions, the Trump administration has consistently denied any **responsibility** for the violence. Distressingly, the administration has repeatedly refused to allow local law enforcement to **assist** in the investigations of these shootings, severely reducing the probability that the responsible ICE agents are ever held accountable for their actions.



HOLDING **THE BENCHLINE**

Members of the federal **judiciary** have pushed back against the administration's efforts to avoid accountability. Chief U.S. District Judge Patrick **Schiltz**, appointed by George W. Bush, summoned acting ICE Director Todd Lyons to court to address the administration's repeated failure to obey court orders. Schiltz reminded Lyons that he would be found in contempt of court if he did not comply. Schiltz stated that this **"extraordinary"** step was necessary due to the administration's continued violation of judicial orders related to their illegal detainment of individuals. Since July 2025, judges concluded that ICE **illegally** detained individuals in more than 2,000 cases.

Additionally, on Monday, U.S. District Judge Katherine Menendez **heard** arguments in a lawsuit brought by several Minnesota entities against DHS. Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison filed the suit to immediately halt Operation Metro Surge because it crossed the line into “an unconstitutional and illegal occupation.” Ellison argued the administration’s actions during this operation have violated Minnesota’s **sovereignty** under the Tenth Amendment, a novel argument that could transform litigation efforts on these deployments moving forward.

The lawsuit also cited Attorney General Pam Bondi’s recent **letter** to Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, which demanded that Minnesota repeal its sanctuary policies and provide the administration with information on the state’s Medicaid programs, food programs, and voter rolls in exchange for deescalation of Operation Metro Surge. This sort of threat from the federal government is unprecedented, as it would require Minnesota officials to violate their residents’ civil rights and privacy to put an end to ICE’s reign of terror.

These are powerful examples of why we need the federal judiciary to continue pushing back on attacks against our democracy.

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