



THE BENCHLINE

Judicial Nominees

On Tuesday, the Senate confirmed [Katie Lane](#) to a lifetime role as a federal judge for the District of Montana and [Jeffery Kuhlman](#) for the District of Kansas.

Though the Senate Judiciary Committee (“SJC”) was originally expected to advance the nominations of judicial nominees [Mike Hendershot](#) (U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio), [Jeffrey Kuntz](#) (U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida), [Arthur “Rob” Jones](#) (U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas), and [John Marck](#) (U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas) this week, the Senate Judiciary markup appears to be canceled for now. We will continue to keep you updated on timing. During their SJC hearing, all four nominees shockingly [refused to say](#) that Trump was ineligible to run for another term as president. Additionally, the Freedom of the Press Foundation (“FPF”) filed an ethics [complaint](#) with the Florida Judicial Qualifications Committee against Kuntz for his conduct during [Alexander v. Trump](#). Kuntz not only failed to recuse himself, but ultimately ruled in favor of Trump while actively seeking a federal judicial nomination from him. As FPF stated in its complaint, Kuntz’s actions raise “serious concerns that Judge Kuntz violated his obligations under the Florida Code of Judicial Conduct.” For more information on all four of these nominees’ records, check out Alliance for Justice’s Judicial Nominees [page](#).

TRUMP IS **NOT A KING**
AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS ARE
NOT PERSONAL PROPERTY.



Alliance for Justice has also unearthed new information on **Michael Martin** (U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan). Martin serves as the criminal chief in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan. Under his leadership, and likely with his approval, several politically motivated attacks occurred in the office, including the **firing** of two seasoned prosecutors who had **successfully prosecuted** several Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act violations. His tenure at this office exemplifies another cog in the continued weaponization of the Department of Justice, and Martin's politicized actions render him unfit and unqualified for a lifetime judgeship presiding over cases in the Eastern District of Michigan.

Trump also announced one new judicial nomination last week: **Michael Byrne** (U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio). Byrne has served as a judge on Ohio's Twelfth District Court of Appeals since 2020. During his time as a judge, Byrne has **misgendered and/or deadnamed** several transgender individuals involved in cases before him. He also served as a member of the advisory board for Pregnancy Center East, an anti-abortion pregnancy crisis center in Ohio. Further, while serving as a visiting judge on the Ohio Supreme Court, Byrne **dissented** from the Court's decision to keep a stay in place on Ohio's 2023 six-week abortion ban. Byrne's Senate Judiciary Committee hearing is expected on June 24.

HOLDING

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Judge Leonie M. Brinkema of the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia ordered President Trump to **pause the creation** of the 1.8-billion-dollar fund that Trump and his allies were attempting to create to compensate those who faced “weaponization and lawfare” under Democratic administrations, which the Trump administration has since dropped. The fund was a result of a major lawsuit Trump filed against the IRS over the leak of his tax information across 2018 and 2022. The Justice Department announced the fund would be set aside for others who claim to have been victimized by the federal government. Several of Trump’s allies, including rioters convicted of crimes during the January 6 attacks on the Capitol, had expressed their plans to apply to the fund. Brinkema’s order prohibits the government from establishing the fund or processing any disbursements until a hearing is held in a suit that has challenged the fund’s legality. This is one of the first legal actions halting Trump’s efforts to make the fund, although at least two other lawsuits challenging the fund were filed in California and the District of Columbia, so other legal orders may come soon.

\$1.8 BILLION

IN TAXPAYER MONEY FOR TRUMP’S GRIEVANCES



Judge Christopher R. Cooper of the Federal District Court in Washington also **halted** another of Trump's actions last week. In his second term, Trump has used his power to take over the Kennedy Center, a premiere center of arts, culture, and music located in Washington, DC. Trump placed several loyalists on the Kennedy Center's board, who then installed Trump as the chairman. Trump has since used his authority to add his name to the Kennedy Center, control programming, and demand renovations. Several lawsuits have ensued as a result. Cooper concluded that Trump's actions to add his name to the Kennedy Center violated a law passed in 1964, which stated that the institution was to be named after former president John F. Kennedy. Only Congress may change the name given to the Kennedy Center, not the executive branch.

ICYMI: Gavel In

Last week, our affiliated organization AFJ Action Campaign hosted a virtual panel: "Gavel In: ICE Attacks and How States are Fighting Back". AFJ and AFJ Action President Rachel Rossi moderated and discussed ICE's many recent attacks on innocent people with panelists Lauren Bonds, Executive Director of the National Police Accountability Project; Ian Millhiser, Senior Correspondent at Vox; and Matthew Lopas, Director of State Advocacy & Technical Assistance at the National Immigration Law Center. The discussion centered on the Trump administration's weaponization of immigration enforcement, with the panelists proffering potential actions to counter these attacks.

If you would like to watch the discussion, you can do so via this [link](#).

For more information on our panelists' organizations and AFJ Action, see below:

National Immigration Law Center's [website](#)
National Police Accountability Project's [website](#)
To read Ian Millhiser's articles on Vox, [click here](#)
AFJ Action's [website](#)

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