

AFJ INSIDER



Dear Friend,

Last week, the same Department of Justice that I once so proudly served under President Biden has levied a sweeping legal assault – 11 indictments – against the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) in a state court in Alabama. While outrageous on its face, neither the attack nor the venue is coincidental.

The Trump administration continues to abuse its power and weaponize its agencies to threaten the very fabric of our nation's civil society – nonprofit organizations. Bringing this case in Alabama state court, where it could receive a favorable judge, is a calculated move. It is part of a broader effort to silence dissent, and to manipulate not only the Justice Department, but also our courts, to a nefarious end.

As I approach my one-year anniversary as President of AFJ next month, this moment has made one thing unmistakably clear: **the stakes are higher than ever, and so is the urgency of our work.** It is a sobering reminder of both the threats facing our democracy, and the profound privilege I feel to lead this storied organization as we fight to uphold its guardrails.

While the White House and Congress prove dangerous at worst, recalcitrant at best, the people, nonprofits, and especially our member organizations continue to stand up and fight back. And we, at AFJ, stand with them.

The challenges are steep – but as I look ahead to the future, I know this for sure: **AFJ was made for this.** We have ramped up our work in response to this onslaught with new and creative approaches. Here are just a few of the ways we are doing that:

- **Officially launching our AFJ Law pilot,** to deliver legal help to nonprofit organizations, starting with clients in Washington, DC, and expanding to a new state this year;
- **Expanding the work of the Nonprofit Legal Defense Network,** our partnership with We the Action, to train pro-bono lawyers in AFJ's expertise in nonprofit law so they can provide support to the sector through our online clinics;
- **Building state-by-state ballot measure advocacy guides** to assist nonprofits across the country in the legal use of ballot measures to advance democracy on the state level;
- **Standing against noxious unfit and unqualified loyalist judicial nominees** like Justin Smith that President Trump continues to put forward;
- **Deepening our work to Build the Bench with professionally and demographically diverse jurists,** through our focus on state courts and magistrate judgeships.

As AFJ stands alongside SPLC, and the other 140 member organizations that comprise our ranks, **we ask you to stand with us. What happens next will shape our democracy for decades to come.** These attacks are coordinated, intentional, and escalating – and our response must be just as strong.

Nothing would mean more as we celebrate this milestone.

With gratitude and hope,

Rachel Rossi

President of Alliance for Justice

DONATE TODAY



How We Fight Matters

Federal Courts

Trump continues to nominate unfit and unqualified individuals for lifetime seats on the federal bench. The most recent slate of nominees includes [Matthew Schwartz](#) for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and [Benjamin Flowers](#). They are just the latest in a string of former Trump personal lawyers nominated for a federal judgeship or appointed to an important position within his administration, and both have concerning records across a broad swath of issue areas. The Federal Courts team will continue to scrutinize these nominees' records and share any pertinent information we discover on our [Judicial Nominees](#) page.

[View all of the unfit and unqualified nominees →](#)

State Courts

Defending Democracy

At the beginning of the month, the North Carolina Supreme Court [upended](#) the state's plan to ensure that every child's right to a sound, basic, and uniform public education in its most recent decision regarding Leandro.

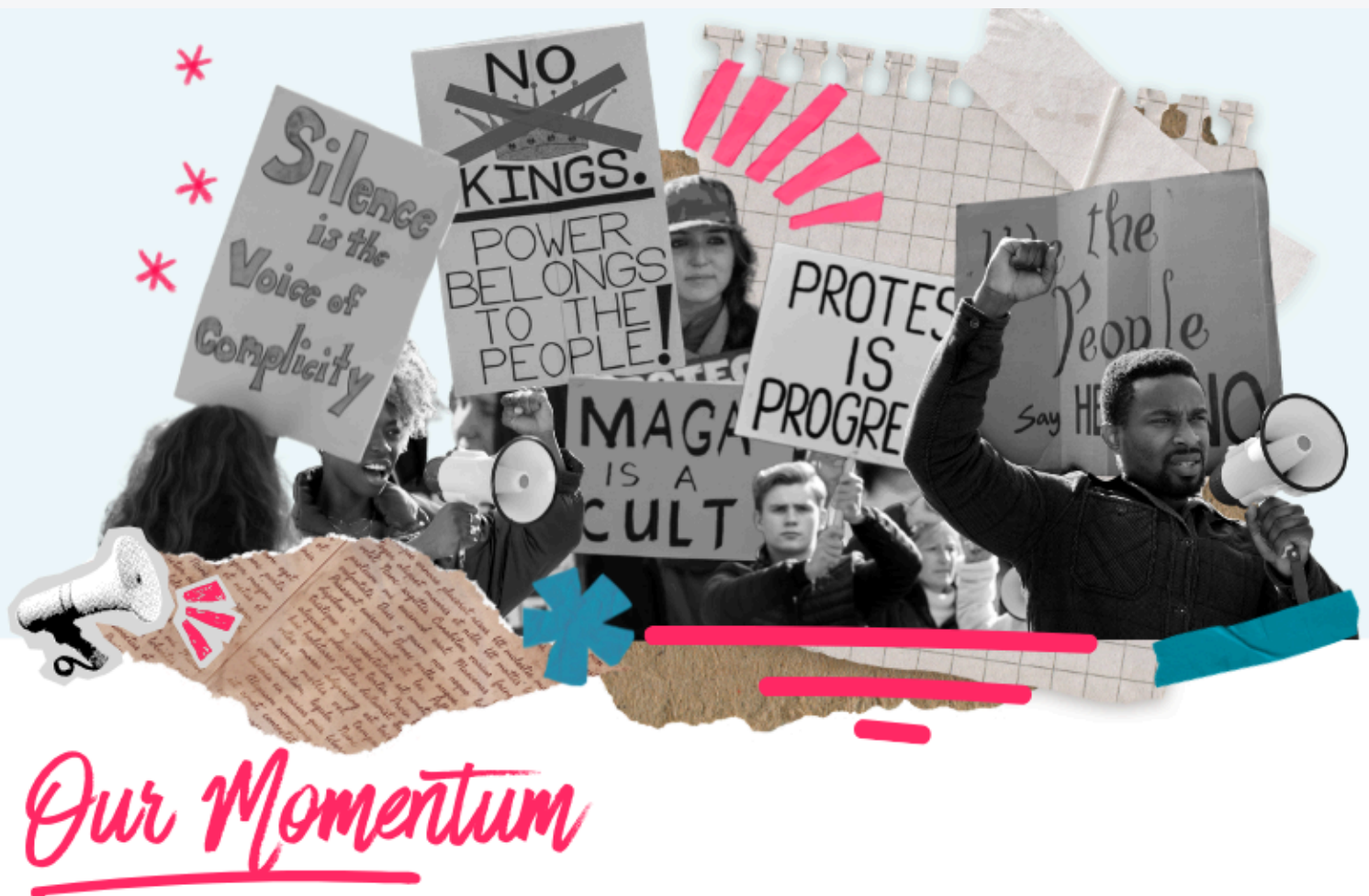


The court's decision threw out a \$5.6 billion plan to fix education funding inequities across the state. As a result of the court's decision, students are left with uncertainty about their education's future with no clear funding plan. Justice Anita Earls dissented writing:

"It is difficult to estimate the damage this Court has done to its own legitimacy by trying to rewrite a fundamental constitutional guarantee because it no longer comports with the Justices' individual political preferences — and denying any relief to injured parties who proved in a court of law that the State violated their fundamental education rights."

In the April 7 Wisconsin Supreme Court election, Wisconsin Court of Appeals Judge Chris Taylor defeated Wisconsin Court of Appeals Judge Maria Lazar to fill the seat being vacated by Justice Rebecca Bradley. Taylor's victory solidifies progressives' control of the court to a 5-2 balance. Taylor began her legal career in private practice, focusing on family and plaintiff-side employment litigation, and then worked as legal and policy director for Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin for nearly a decade. In 2011, she was elected to serve in the state assembly and served in that position until Gov. Tony Evers (D) appointed her to the Dane County Circuit Court. She was elected to the court of appeals in 2023.

[Help protect our state courts →](#)





BOLDER ADVOCACY

Protecting Nonprofits on the Front Lines

It's only April, but midterm election season is already in high gear. 501(c)(3) public charities around the country are actively advocating for and against ballot measures that directly impact our communities and our rights. Bolder Advocacy Counsel, Brittany Leonard, has the latest updates in [her recent blog](#) about nonprofit engagement in direct democracy initiatives.

We also discuss how public charities can lawfully engage in ballot measure advocacy on a recent Rules of the Game podcast entitled [“Ballot Measure Advocacy: Yes, You Can Influence That Vote!”](#) Subscribe to [“Rules of the Game: The Bolder Advocacy Podcast”](#) on your favorite podcast platform or [listen to the latest](#) on our website.

[Tune in now to learn more →](#)

MEMBERSHIP & OUTREACH

A Stronger Movement — Because of You

Read our most recent Member Spotlight covering the lifesaving work of TransFamily Support Services (TFSS) [here!](#) An excerpt of TFSS's spotlight is below:

“Founded on the belief that every young person deserves to be safe, supported, and celebrated, TFSS works closely with families from the earliest stages of self-discovery through every step of transition. Its programs are designed to provide guidance, education, and empowerment — equipping caregivers and youth alike with the tools they need to thrive... Thousands of educators and professionals have already benefited from these programs, helping to create safer and more affirming spaces for youth nationwide.”

[Join the movement →](#)



AFJ INSIGHTS

What Matters Most Right Now

Don't miss timely reads from our experts breaking down the issues shaping our courts and our communities. [More on the blog →](#)

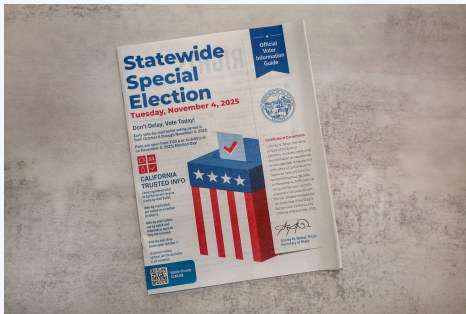


April 28, 2026

[Justin Smith's Anti-LGBTQ+ Attacks Could Lead to a Lifetime of Harm](#)

Given his long record of advocating against LGBTQ+ rights, there is every reason to question whether Smith can provide those individuals with equal justice under the law.

[Read the article here →](#)



April 14, 2026

[93 Ballot Measures and Counting: Nonprofits Engaging in Direct Democracy in 2026](#)

In contentious times like these, policy change can feel out of reach. Ballot measures offer a unique opportunity to make change that truly represents the will of the people.

[Read the article here →](#)

Donor Profile



Meet Jenn Diagostino, an AFJ sustainer since 2017.

Jenn works in the nonprofit space, helping organizations build stronger leadership and organizing strategies. She became a monthly donor at a moment many will recognize: **“After Trump took office, every day felt more crushing than the last and I needed to do something.”**

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Jenn first connected with AFJ in 2013 through a Bolder Advocacy training, when her organization's board had concerns about lobbying. That training didn't just answer questions — it gave both staff and leadership the confidence to engage in bold, compliant advocacy and expand their impact.

What keeps Jenn invested is AFJ's focus on long-term change. From strengthening nonprofit capacity to safeguarding our courts, she trusts AFJ to elevate qualified, values-driven leaders to the bench, and to stand watch against threats to our civil rights. Beyond her monthly gift, Jenn spreads the word, encouraging her community to support the causes that matter most.

Sustainers like Jenn power this work. Recurring donations help us plan ahead, expand our programs, and provide critical resources to the organizations and communities who need them most.

Want to share your story?

[Reach out to Caroline McFall →](#)

COURTS ARE DECIDING THE
FUTURE OF OUR FREEDOMS RIGHT NOW.

ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE IS FIGHTING BACK,
BUT WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU.

DEFEND JUSTICE. SHAPE THE FUTURE.

GIVE TODAY



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