

AFJ INSIDER



Dear Friend,

This month I celebrated one year as President of Alliance for Justice. As you know, AFJ's history is one of courage, clarity, and an unwavering belief that the courts and nonprofit sector are central to our democracy. **"People over power"** has been the driving force of my career, and it undoubtedly led me to, and prepared me for, this moment of leadership at AFJ.

I am keenly aware of the privilege it is to continue AFJ's decades-long legacy and the responsibility of standing on the shoulders of those who came before me, including our founder, Nan Aron.

This is a moment of transition and urgency. **The attacks facing nonprofits and our courts are real, coordinated, and escalating.** This administration has now targeted a nonprofit, the Southern Poverty Law Center, with a politically-motivated criminal indictment — clearly designed to silence dissent.

Worse still, the Roberts Supreme Court has **eviscerated voting rights with the stroke of a pen** in last month's *Callais* decision.

But we at AFJ are built for this. We are entering this period with strength, experience, and purpose.

We are expanding our nonprofit defense, developing the resources, partnerships, and now legal services to protect civil society's critical role in staving off the dismantling of our democracy.

We are pulling every lever in our power to thwart Trump's attempts to stack the lower courts — often one of the few checks against many of his abuses of power — with loyalists even more committed to serving his authoritarian agenda.

At every turn, **we are also shaping the media landscape, arming Hill allies, the press, and movement partners and advocates with the information to ensure nominees face the tough scrutiny their dangerous records demand** – and making clear voters are paying attention to any attempt at dodging accountability.

As we face the real possibility of up to two Supreme Court vacancies ahead, we are mobilizing our constituencies early and decisively, building momentum through today's nominee fight rather than scrambling in the final moments. We are prepared to respond with speed, scale, and maximum impact when it matters most.

We are also laying essential groundwork for the future by advancing a bold conversation around structural court reform, to root out corruption and advocate for a court that serves the people. AFJ is not waiting for the next crisis. **We are meeting this moment head on with strategy, scale, and a clear, unapologetic sense of purpose AND preparing for the future.**

This is what people over power looks like. And you are a part of this, all of this. Thank you for standing with us.

In community and action,

Rachel Rossi

President of Alliance for Justice

DONATE TODAY



How We Fight Matters

FEDERAL COURTS

Trump recently announced six new judicial nominations last week: [Daniel Domenico](#) (U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit), [Daniel Traynor](#) (U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit), [Kasdin Mitchell](#) (U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas), [Angela Colmenero](#) (U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas), [Antonio Pozos](#) (U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania), and [Michael Martin](#) (U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan). Domenico and Traynor were both nominated for their district court seats in Trump's first term and have now been nominated for circuit court positions. Several of these nominees raise concerns, but Traynor's nomination is particularly worrisome. AFJ previously opposed Traynor's nomination to the district court seat in 2019, and AFJ now opposes his nomination to the Eighth Circuit. Prior to his first nomination, Traynor made several tweets criticizing progressive ideas on health care and immigration, expressing strong support for Trump, and spreading right-wing conspiracy theories. On the bench, Traynor has issued harmful decisions, including one [blocking a North Dakota state law](#) that would have required companies to offer discounts on prescription drugs.

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

State Courts

Defending Democracy

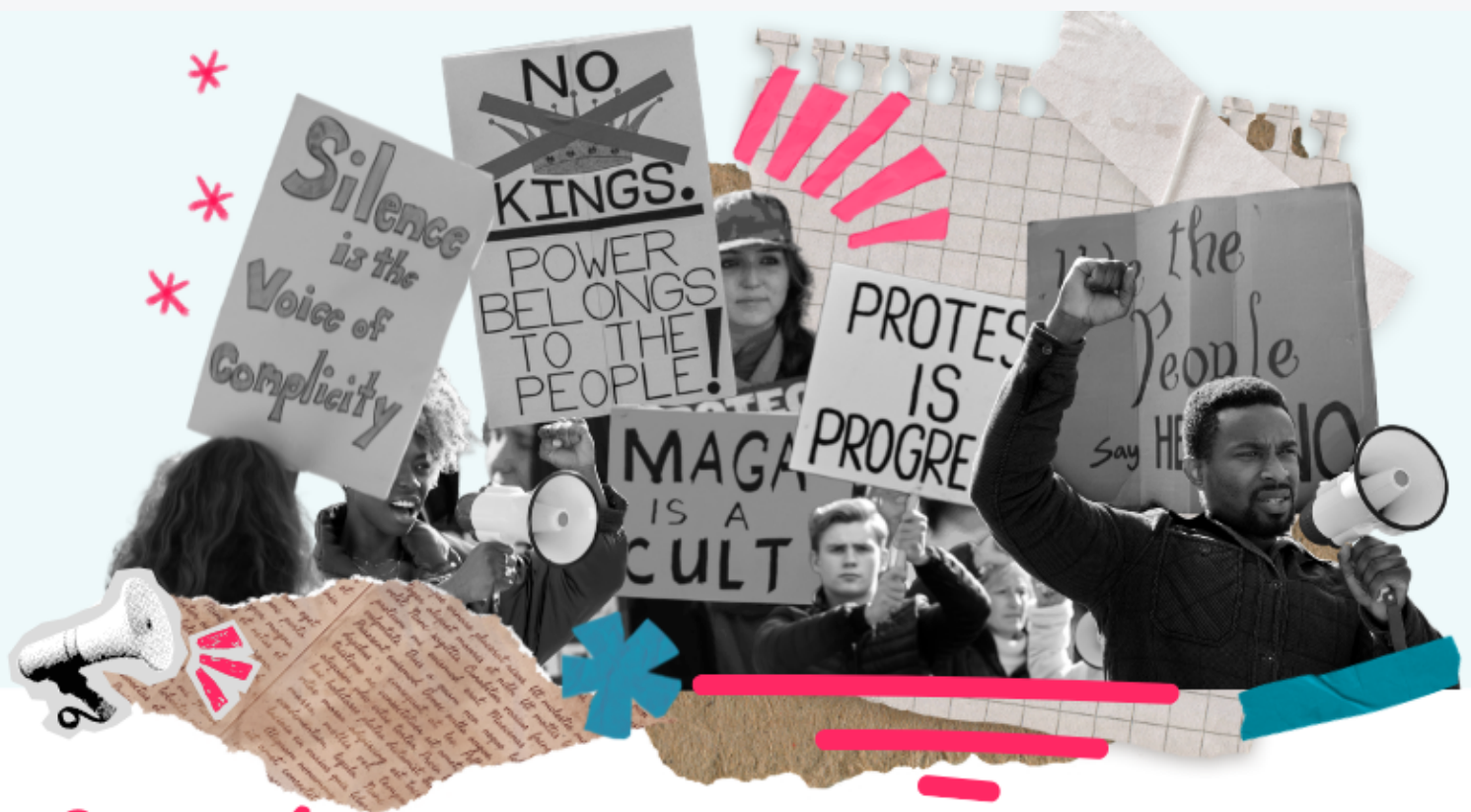
On May 19, Gov. Tim Walz (D) cemented his legacy by making the Minnesota Supreme Court a beacon in support of deepening the demographic and professional diversity on their states' supreme court. To fill an upcoming vacancy created by Chief Justice Natalie Hudson's retirement, Walz elevated Justice Theodora Gaïtas to chief. Gaïtas spent the majority of her career as a public defender, representing the most vulnerable individuals in our legal system.

Because of Gaïtas' elevation to chief justice, Walz next took the opportunity to appoint Judge Reynaldo Aligada Jr. to fill Gaïtas' seat. Before he joined the bench, Aligada worked as the first assistant federal defender and as a private practice attorney. Additionally, Aligada is the first AAPI justice to serve on the court.



Walz's impact on Minnesota's courts is not just limited to these appointments; he appointed five of the seven justices on the court. In his appointments to the court, [Walz made historic firsts](#) that broke barriers, like Hudson as the court's first Black chief justice, Justice Karl Procaccini as the court's first Muslim justice, and, as noted above, Aligada as the first AAPI justice. Walz has also ensured his appointees have served and represented the interests of the people before joining the court. For example, Gaitas is the first former public defender to serve as chief justice. Hudson practiced housing and employment law. Justice Sarah Hennessy worked as a public defender and as a legal aid attorney. As Walz closes out his decades of public service, other governors across the country should follow his lead to create a legacy of preparing state supreme courts to fill the gap created by the U.S. Supreme Court.

[Help protect our state courts →](#)



Our Momentum



BOLDER ADVOCACY

Protecting Nonprofits on the Front Lines

The Bolder Advocacy team is closely tracking legislative and regulatory developments across the country that could significantly impact how nonprofits engage in lobbying and election-related activities. Our recent analysis highlights emerging state-level efforts tied to the [“Corporate Power Reset” movement](#), which seeks to restrict corporate (including nonprofit) election spending.

We are also continuing to monitor state lobbying compliance changes, including [newly adopted rules in Texas](#) that substantially lowered lobbying registration thresholds and could require more nonprofit staff to register and report with the Texas Ethics Commission.

To learn more about the lobbying and election season advocacy rules that apply to your nonprofit organization, feel free to reach out to our [free technical assistance hotline](#). We are also available to [host a training](#) for your team or coalition.

[Tune in now to learn more →](#)

MEMBERSHIP & OUTREACH

A Stronger Movement — Because of You

Last week, AFJ President Rachel Rossi moderated Holding Court: The Trump DOJ on Trial, with Former Pardon Attorney of the United States, Liz Oyer. It was an important discussion exploring the recent developments seen within the second Trump administration’s Department of Justice. If you would like to re-watch the discussion, you can do so via this [link](#).

We are also excited to invite you to [AFJ’s Justice Trivia Night](#) – a lively evening dedicated to all things courts, pop culture, and legal trivia!



Tuesday, June 23, 2026



6:30 – 8:30 p.m. ET



[Stoney’s on P Street NW \(DC\)](#)

Whether you're a legal genius or just in it for the vibes, we'd love to see you there. Bring your A-game, enjoy two complimentary drinks, and compete with friends and colleagues for trivia glory (and bragging rights). We hope you're as excited as we are! Grab your gavels and join us for a night of free food, facts, and friendly competition. [Register here to join!](#)

[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 →](#)



May 5, 2026

[National Nonprofit Leaders Launch “Voices in Action” to Strengthen Civic Participation Ahead of 2026 Elections](#)

Together, this effort aims to reduce barriers to participation, increase voter engagement, and strengthen nonprofits' role as trusted civic leaders by normalizing voter engagement as a mission-aligned practice across the sector.

[Read the press release here →](#)



April 14, 2026

[Trump Judicial Nominee Would Weaken Environmental Protections and Champion Corporations](#)

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 Nicole F., a legal professional from Arizona.

Her first introduction to AFJ's work was in 2017 when, as a legal fellow in Washington, DC, she and her friends attended a Justice Trivia night hosted by AFJ. Nicole has been supporting AFJ since 2017 and became a sustainer in 2024 because she feels

"confident in the work AFJ is doing on my behalf as a donor. I donate regularly to support the work [AFJ] is doing that I can't do myself."

Nicole values AFJ's Justice work, especially our deep research into judicial nominees and vacancy tracking. She appreciates it because **"We're all busy and there are more than enough issues to advocate on, but it's hard to do when you work in a role where you can't appear political,"** noting that there is a large grey area in her field regarding involvement in political advocacy. Nicole trusts AFJ to do the work that others cannot and keep the public informed about threats to our civil rights, especially now that the American Bar Association is no longer vetting judicial nominees. AFJ's work is even more vital, as it is the only organization conducting independent, rigorous analysis like this. We're grateful for the support of people like Nicole, who recognize how important it is!

Nicole's support and engagement enable AFJ to continue our groundbreaking research into nominees, exposing those who prioritize political loyalty over judicial independence, and track ongoing threats to our judicial system so we know how to prepare our partners and communities for long-term resilience. Thank you, Nicole, for your continued support and for sharing your AFJ story!

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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