



# Anna St. John

Nominated for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

## COURT

U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana

## Introduction

This past January, Anna St. John was nominated by President Trump to serve a lifetime role as a federal judge for the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana. During her confirmation process, dozens of national and state organizations advocating for civil rights, gender equality, reproductive justice, economic justice, workers' rights, environmental justice, and democratic accountability opposed St. John's nomination. Many of these groups expressed concerns about St. John's deep biases favoring powerful corporations and far-right agendas at the expense of civil rights, access to reproductive care, and consumer protections for everyday people.

Concerningly, a mere six months into her tenure as a federal judge, President Trump has now nominated St. John for a lifetime appointment on the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. This further elevation to one of the most powerful federal judiciary seats in the country — as an appellate judge presiding over cases from Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, only after half a year on the federal bench — raises serious concerns. Instead of being the most qualified pick, St. John is likely being nominated to this powerful seat mostly because of her demonstrated allegiance to Trump and his authoritarian, far-right agenda.

## St. John's deep ties to corporate-backed special interests

Prior to her current role as a federal judge for the Eastern District of Louisiana, St. John spent her legal career leading special interest organizations tied to silencing women, attacking LGBTQ+ rights, and cutting off corporate accountability for everyday people. She led organizations like the Hamilton Lincoln Law Institute (HLLI), a far-right extremist group that routinely files lawsuits to attack civil rights, undermine consumer protections, eliminate gender equality, and deny basic human rights. Prior to this, St. John led the so-called Center for Class Action Fairness (CCAF) (now rolled into HLLI), an organization that routinely challenged class action settlements with the effect of diminishing corporation accountability for misconduct.

At one time, CCAF was a sub-unit of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, whose funding came from millions in contributions from Koch family foundations, The American Conservative, Monsanto, the American Bankers Association, and the Exxon-Mobil Corporation. These corporations and entities have worked for decades to attack consumer rights and undermine corporate accountability.

For example, in 2021, St. John testified on behalf of HLLI against the “Ending Forced Arbitration for Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault” legislation being considered by lawmakers. This modest, bipartisan legislation (now enacted into law) eliminates forced arbitration for certain cases. Forced arbitration clauses, buried in the fine print of take-it-or-leave-it terms and conditions, give corporations and employers the power to funnel cases of workers and consumers into private, secret tribunals. Forced arbitration clauses are so rigged that they amount to virtual immunity for wrongdoing. While champions of the #MeToo movement, including former *Fox News* journalist Gretchen Carlson, testified how forced arbitration silenced women who experienced sexual assault and sexual harassment, St. John tried to convince Congress that allowing these women to voluntarily choose whether they wanted to enter into an arbitration instead of exercising their right to proceed in court would actually hurt them.

## Anti-LGBTQ+ and Anti-Trans

Prior to serving as a federal judge for the past six months, St. John also authored and co-authored numerous amicus briefs undermining LGBTQ+ rights. In *303 Creative LLC v. Elenis*, St. John supported allowing businesses to discriminate against LGBTQ+ individuals under the guise of religious freedom. In *Green v. Miss USA*, St. John called for banning transgender women from the Miss USA pageant as it “would infringe upon the pageant’s rights” (emphasis added). Using dehumanizing language, St. John has also supported banning transgender women and girls from teams that are consistent with their gender identity, cruelly misgendering them in her legal briefs.

While at HLLI, St. John also filed an amicus brief in *Little v. Hecox* and *West Virginia v. B.P.J.*, two cases recently decided by the U.S. Supreme Court that greenlit continued discrimination against transgender girls and women. St. John’s brief used sexist stereotypes, arguing that cis women and girls would not be able to compete against trans athletes allowed to participate in sports.

Indeed, Trump seems to have nominated St. John to the bench, in part, for her anti-trans stances. He noted in his Truth Social post announcing her nomination that she “has a strong record of tirelessly fighting to protect Free Speech, champion Religious Liberty, and keep men out of women’s sports.”

## Anti-Racial Justice

St. John’s name also appears on a brief filed on behalf of HLLI that called for the Supreme Court to end race-conscious admissions in the landmark case *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*. The Court’s subsequent decision to end race-conscious admissions has already started to undermine civil

rights, equity, and campus diversity. HLLI's brief argues that decades of precedent preserving affirmative action must be overturned because electing a Black president and vice president in the wake of *Grutter v. Bollinger* rendered such racial justice protections unnecessary.

## Anti-Access to Reproductive Care

St. John also has ties to the far-right feminist-front-group Independent Women's Forum (IWF) having served as a visiting fellow at the extremist organization. While the organization generally avoids taking an explicit anti-abortion stance, its affiliated entities and broader network continue to engage in efforts pushing for more abortion restrictions. HLLI has also engaged in litigation to chip away at access to reproductive care. Reproductive Freedom for All, a leader in the fight for abortion rights, notes they HLLI successfully litigated efforts to prevent a pro-reproductive rights organization from receiving settlement funds and also attempted to block millions of dollars of settlement funds from being distributed to organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union and the Electronic Frontier Foundation, fighting to protect health privacy for abortion access.

When questioned by Senator Hirono (D-HI) about whether St. John thought *Griswold v. Connecticut* was correctly decided and settled law, St. John stated she had no idea, answering, "I would have to look and see whether they've been overturned, senator. If they're binding law, I would apply them to be correctly decided." This famous Supreme Court case law from 1965 has held for decades that a state's ban on birth control violated the right to marital privacy. Signaled Loyalist to Trump During Confirmation Hearing

Like nearly all of Trump's second administration judicial nominees, St. John was also unable to acknowledge the January 6 insurrection and admit that President Biden won the 2020 election. Failing to answer these basic questions continue to signal a nominees' unfettered loyalty to Trump.

When asked these basic questions by Senator Blumenthal (D-CT) during her district court confirmation hearing, St. John was only able to admit after much questioning that, "Joe Biden was certified the winner of the 2020 election and served four years" (emphasis added). On the events of January 6, St. John could only answer that it would be "inappropriate, as a judicial nominee, to weigh in on these political controversies." Such failure to admit basic truths for the record — that Biden won the 2020 election, and that the United States Capitol was attacked on January 6 — continue to serve as a tell that a nominee like St. John values loyalty to Trump over loyalty to uphold the law, fairness for all, and the Constitution.