ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE

AFJ INSIDER



Dear Friend,

The “scare!” That’s how we at AFJ have been referring to the since-retracted NPR News story that Justice Samuel Alito was retiring on Tuesday, June 30 – the last day of the Supreme Court’s heartbreaking term. A Supreme Court vacancy right now would give President Trump the ability to nominate a fourth SCOTUS Justice – **one who could cement a MAGA supermajority on the Court for several decades.**

While, thankfully, this was only a scare, AFJ has anticipated an additional vacancy (or two!) and was not caught flat-footed. AFJ has spent months preparing for this scenario, conducting extensive research on potential nominees, strengthening coalition infrastructure, and building the capacity needed to respond immediately should a vacancy occur. We have worked in partnership with our allies at the Fair Courts Table – People for the American Way (PFAW), Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (LCCHR), National Women’s Law Center (NWLC), and hundreds of our member and partner organizations.

AFJ has researched and provided dossiers on the ‘short list’ – the top 30 or so most likely to be nominated based on several factors we’ve uncovered in our research, including their youth, extreme partisanship, and fealty to President Trump. It is a remarkable and gut-wrenching body of research. You can view them all at AFJ’s “SCOTUS Shortlist” website **here**.

I am so very proud to be a part of AFJ for this fight. As Rachel takes some much-deserved time off with her family, I'm excited to fill you in on the work AFJ is doing to prepare for a potential Supreme Court vacancy and the fight ahead. For almost 50 years, AFJ has been the leader in monitoring the courts, and advocating for judges who give a damn about our rights and stand for equal justice under the law. The possibility of a SCOTUS vacancy remains very real, and the timeline for a nomination and confirmation could move extraordinarily quickly if it happens this summer or fall.

To allow us to meet the increasing demands for our expertise and engagement, and to ensure we can be nimble and swift to address new threats and attacks, AFJ has launched a Critical Response Fund. The $3.5M fund will provide the additional resources we need to respond immediately to the threats facing our courts and democracy. Since launching the Critical Response Fund last week, AFJ has already received a matching grant of $250K. Your support today will have a multiplier effect in enabling us to secure that generous funding – it will allow us to scale up our response during critical moments, expanding staff capacity, accelerating advocacy efforts, educating the public, and mobilizing partners when immediate action is needed.

If you'd like to support this work, become a monthly sustainer, or share the fund with your network, you can do so here: **Critical Response Fund.** If you would like to learn more about the Fund and its priorities, please reach out to VP of Advancement, Yasmin Khan at **yasmin.khan@afj.org**.

While this work is daunting, and the road ahead is unpredictable and yes, scary, standing with my colleagues, our allies, and you, our supporters, gives us the strength we need for the fight ahead.

In solidarity,

Jake Faleschini
Senior Director, Justice Program

DONATE TODAY



How We Fight Matters

FEDERAL COURTS

Just last week, the Senate confirmed a flurry of federal judicial nominees to lifetime seats on the bench: **Benjamin Flowers** (U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit), **Daniel Traynor** (U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit), **Michael Martin** (U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan), **Antonio Pozos** (U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania), and **Kara Westercamp** (U.S. Court of International Trade). Floweres and Traynor's confirmations are particularly concerning. Flowers has spent his career attempting to dismantle a wide range of individual rights, including **birthright citizenship**, the **right to vote,** and transgender children's access to gender-affirming care and **athletics**. Traynor authored numerous disturbing opinions as a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of North Dakota, including ruling against **workers' access** to abortion care and LGBTQ+ protections, immigrants' right to not be **detained indefinitely** without a bond hearing, and environmental advocates' **right to protest**.

Next week the Senate Judiciary Committee is expected to hold confirmation hearings for **Gregory Cook,** nominated for the Northern District of Alabama, and **Anna St. John,** a recently confirmed Eastern District of Louisiana judge who has now been nominated to sit on the Fifth Circuit. AFJ and more than two dozen organizations **previously opposed St. John's nomination** to the federal district court. Cook has spent three decades defending corporations, representing Alabama's Republican Party, and currently sits on the Alabama Supreme Court as an associate justice.

View all of the unfit and unqualified nominees →

State Courts

Defending Democracy



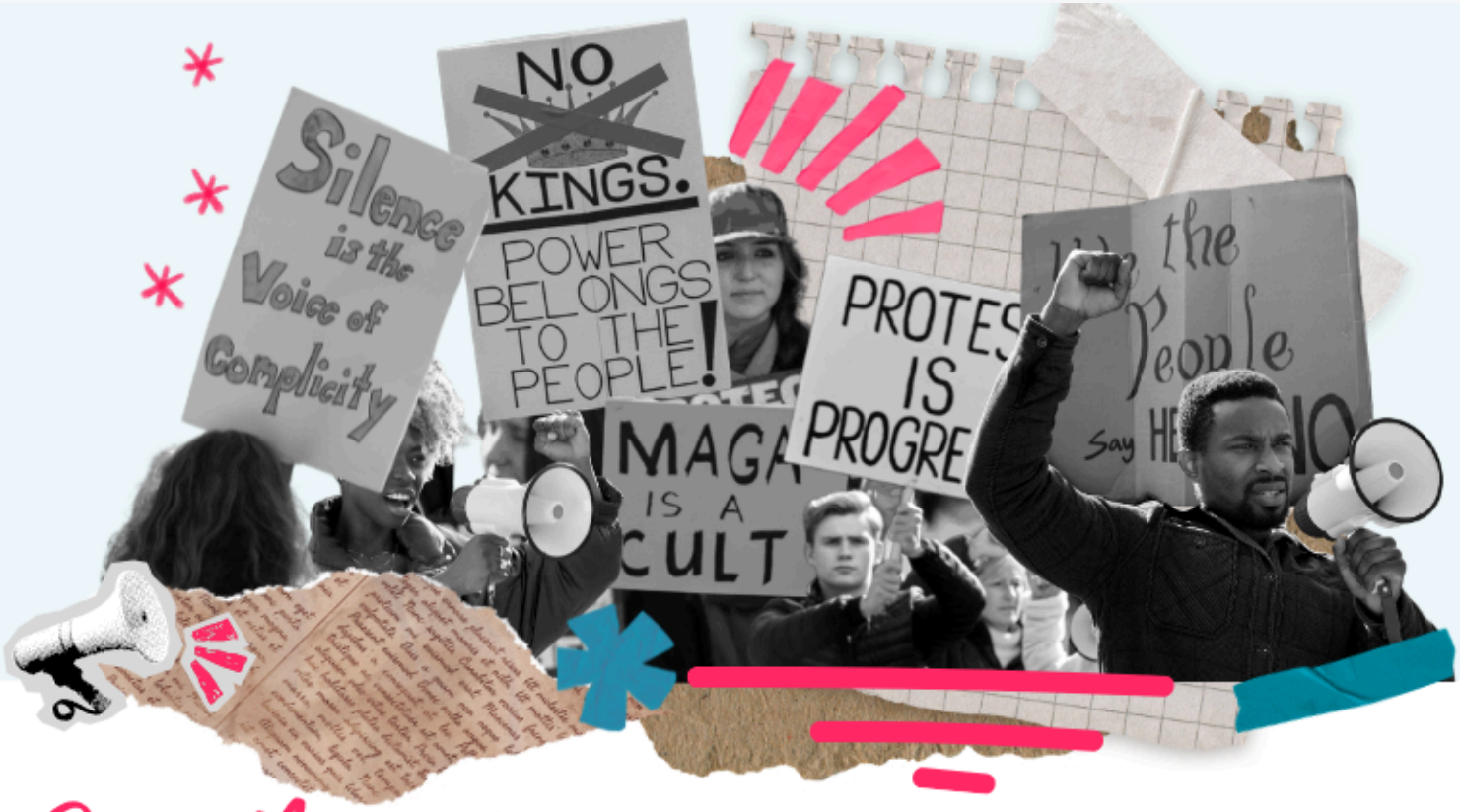
Utah Gov. Spencer Cox (R) has **filled two newly created seats** on the now **seven-member** Utah Supreme Court, appointing Jay Jorgensen, senior counsel for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Stephen Dent, a senior federal prosecutor in Utah. The Utah Senate **confirmed** both nominees on June 17, and they are expected to be sworn in soon.

Cox will also make two additional appointments following the retirement of Justice Diana Hagen in May and the upcoming retirement of Chief Justice Matthew Durrant on August 31. In Delaware, Gov. Matt Meyer (D) nominated Vice Chancellor Morgan Zurn to the state's high court to succeed Justice Karen Valihura, who retired on July 25. Zurn previously served on the Court of Chancery since 2018.

Before that, she worked as a deputy attorney general. Zurn was confirmed by the Delaware State Senate on June 30 and sworn in on July 26.

AFJ is also monitoring vacancies on state supreme courts in **California**, **Mississippi**, **Rhode Island**, **Kansas**, **Hawaii**, **Idaho**, and **South Carolina**. Meanwhile, two states are weighing changes to judicial selection systems. In August, Kansas **voters will decide** whether to replace the state's **assisted appointment method** for supreme court justices with direct elections. In Ohio, Justice Jennifer Brunner has **filed a federal lawsuit** challenging a 2021 law requiring appellate judges to run with partisan labels, arguing it conflicts with judicial ethics rules that restrict candidates from discussing political issues.

Help protect our state courts →



Our Momentum

BOLDER ADVOCACY

Protecting Nonprofits on the Front Lines

In recent weeks, our Bolder Advocacy team quickly responded to emerging advocacy opportunities and threats to the nonprofit sector. When rumors of a potential Supreme Court vacancy began to circulate, we sprang into action and recorded a new podcast episode entitled "The Confirmation Conversation," offering practical guidance on how 501(c)(3) public charities can legally weigh in on executive branch nominations requiring legislative confirmation.



The team also **mobilized a broad coalition of 112 organizations** to fight back against a proposed Office of Management and Budget rule that could chill nonprofit advocacy, including voter registration, executive branch advocacy, and public education. The rule would dramatically expand restrictions on federally funded nonprofits, so Bolder Advocacy drafted a comment opposing the proposal, emphasizing that nonprofits should not have to choose between federal funding and lawful civic engagement on behalf of the communities they serve.

Together, these efforts reflect the team's dual focus: equipping nonprofits with clear legal education and organizing collective action to protect the advocacy rights of the sector.

Tune in now to learn more →

OUTREACH & MEMBERSHIP







A Stronger Movement — Because of You

ICYMI, earlier in July, we hosted a virtual discussion reviewing the 2025-2026 Supreme Court term. Holding Court: SCOTUS Review — The Power of Dissent featured Jess Braverman, Legal Director at Gender Justice and Imani Gandy, Executive Producer of Legal Content at Rewire News Group and host of the B*tch, Listen! Podcast. AFJ Federal Research and Advocacy Director Christine Zinner moderated the discussion. **You can watch it here.**

Our panelists discuss this year's decisions, and the dissents that lay out the groundwork of potential future legal battles. This year's term saw several momentous decisions that will have major impacts, such as their controversial decision in Louisiana v. Callais that has greenlit redistricting that disadvantages voters of color and another decision that allows schools to force transgender athletes to compete on teams aligned with their biological sex.

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 →**

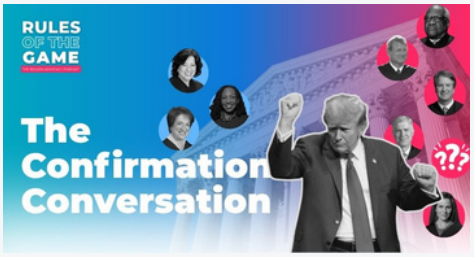


July 1, 2026

Supreme Court Invites Billionaires to Outright Buy Elections

The Supreme Court just weakened key campaign finance safeguards, making it easier for the wealthy and powerful to influence elections through political parties.

Read the press release here →



June 23, 2026

Rules of the Game: The Confirmation Conversation | What Nonprofits Need to Know About Nominations

On this episode, we explore the nomination process for key positions and give you some best practices on how to ensure your organization can effectively (and legally) advocate for specific nominees.

Listen to the episode here →

HELP ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE
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