ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE

AFJ INSIDER

Dear Friend,



We are truly in the dog days of summer (see profile below), but AFJ stays on the move! This month I was so fortunate to travel to Martha's Vineyard on behalf of AFJ to co-host a panel discussion with Color of Change at the Oak Bluffs Library. ***Black Leaders Roundtable: A Discussion of the state of "The State" vs. The Black Community"*** featured Nadine Smith, President and CEO of Color of Change; Marc Morial, President and CEO of the National Urban League; Damon T. Hewitt, President and Executive Director, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and me in a discussion moderated by MS NOW's Symone Sanders-Townsend.

This was an incredible experience AND a powerful indication of what was to come. The week+-long series of events, connections, community, discussions, and joy left me feeling invigorated and supported for the fights ahead.

You may know of Martha's Vineyard's deep history of Black freedom and joy despite our country's deep racial terror and oppression. In particular, the town of Oak Bluffs has served as a historic summer sanctuary for the Black community for over a century, including by, in the early 1900s allowing for property ownership by Black people despite discriminatory legal barriers, redlining, and segregation. The island provided spaces to host prominent Black artists and civil rights leaders during the segregationist and Jim Crow eras. That history reminded me of the shoulders we stand on, how hard our ancestors fought for civil rights, and that we cannot disappoint them today by giving up. Indeed, the island's legacy framed conversations about collective action, resilience, and intergenerational continuity in civil rights work. Leaders from legal, nonprofit, advocacy, philanthropic, and community organizations exchanged ideas about coordinating campaigns, protecting rights, and expanding access to resources for communities of color.

During this moment when civil rights are being stripped away, when the Supreme Court is disenfranchising Black Americans, when diversity is being attacked and demonized, and when racism is again being propped up as a political strategy, Martha's Vineyard's was the perfect place to strategize for the fight ahead. We can't do this alone. **Together we are louder, smarter, and stronger.**

In community,

Rachel Rossi
President, AFJ and AFJ Action

PS: For a quick flavor of the experience, watch my TikTok video **here.**

DONATE TODAY



How We Fight Matters

FEDERAL COURTS

Across the last month, President Trump announced 13 new judicial nominations: **Lee Rudofsky** (U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit), **Samuel Adkisson** (U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee), **Robert "Bobby" Long** (U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida), **Peter Mansfield** (U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana), **Brad Kelley** (U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana), **Daniel Ballou** (U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky),

Richard Bennett (U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas), **Courtney Coker** (U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas), **Kyle Reardon** (U.S. District Court for Arkansas), **Zach West** (U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma), **Trevor Pemberton** (U.S. District Court for Eastern District of Oklahoma), **Jesus Osete (**U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri), and **Phil Axt** (U.S. District Court of North Dakota).

Twelve of the 13 nominees appear to be white, and all 13 are men. This slate of nominees embodies the now standard characteristics of Trump's previous judicial nominees: anti-civil rights loyalists, often inexperienced, and using their positions of power and privilege to help carry out Trump's authoritarian agenda. These nominees will face their hearings when the Senate returns in September, and in the meantime, we will continue to dig into each of the nominees' records and provide more pertinent information as it surfaces.

View all of the unfit and unqualified nominees →

State Courts

Defending Democracy

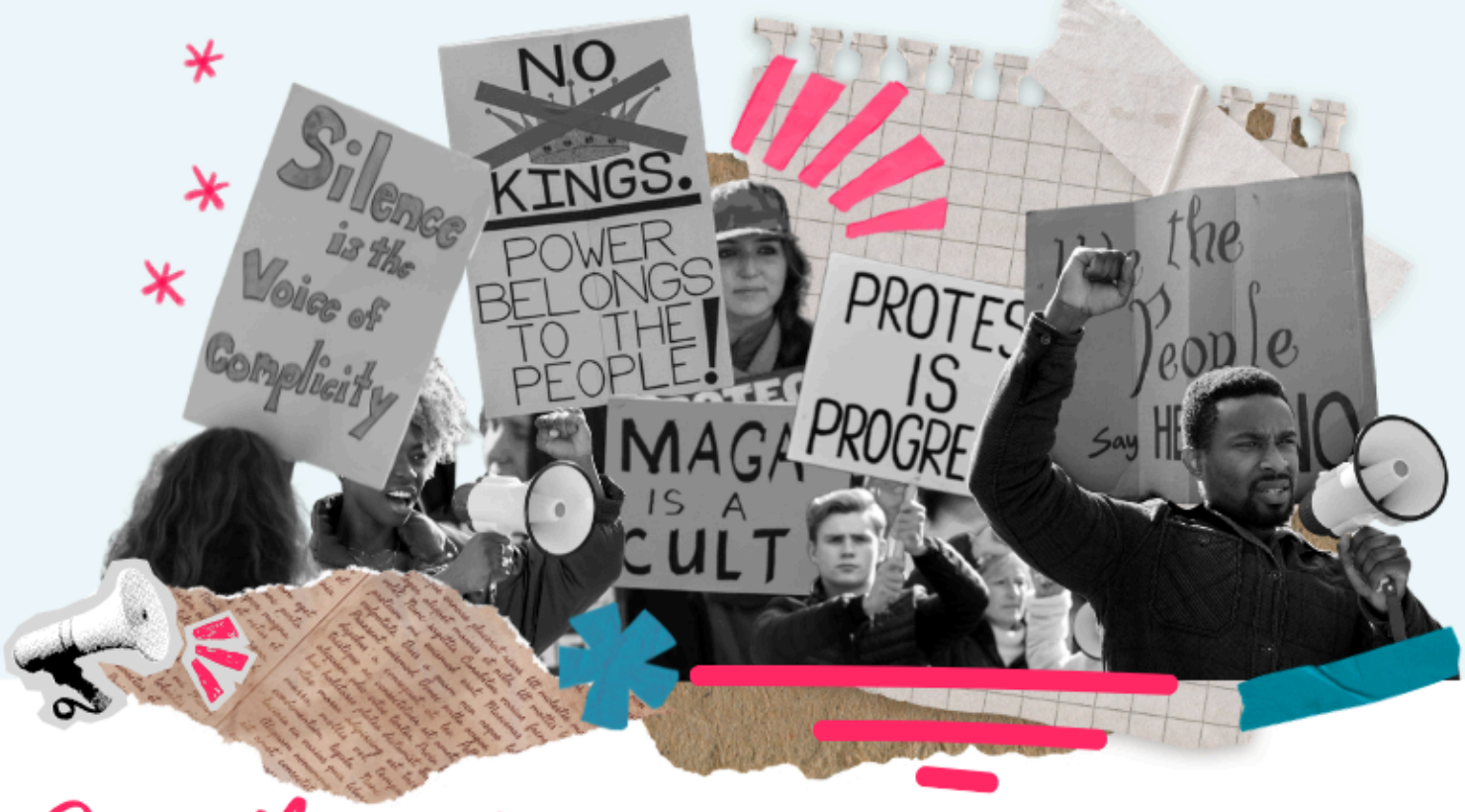
Election Day is just 70 days away! Have you made your plan to vote?



You may be hearing a lot about upcoming races for governor or Congress in your state. But have you checked to see if your state is holding elections for the justices of your state supreme court this year?

On November 3, 25 states are holding elections for a total of 52 seats on state supreme courts across the country. Six states are holding partisan elections for 17 seats; seven states are holding nonpartisan elections for 14 seats; and 12 states are holding retention elections for 21 seats. Is your state one of them? Find out if your state is holding a supreme court election this November **here!**

Help protect our state courts →



Our Momentum



BOLDER ADVOCACY

Protecting Nonprofits on the Front Lines

As nonprofits across the country gear up for the 2026 midterm elections, many are preparing to engage their communities, educate voters, and advocate for the issues that matter most to their missions. Election season brings critical opportunities for nonprofit advocacy, but it also comes with several rules that tax-exempt organizations need to understand. Our Bolder Advocacy program is ready to help your nonprofit navigate those rules and make the most of your advocacy opportunities in the lead-up to November.

Check out our recent Rules of the Game episode, **"Mobilizing Communities Through Nonpartisan Voter Engagement,"** for practical tips on engaging voters while remaining in compliance with the rules governing 501(c)(3) advocacy. If your 501(c)(3) is considering forming an affiliated 501(c)(4), we have resources for you too! Tune in to **"Forming a 501(c)(4)"** for an overview of the election season advocacy opportunities available to social welfare organizations.

Bolder Advocacy provides free written legal resources and **technical assistance** on election-related advocacy activities in both English and Spanish. Visit our **resource library** and "**Bolder Advocacy en Español**" hub for more information on how you can advocate boldly, effectively, and in compliance with election-season advocacy rules.

Tune in now to learn more →

UPCOMING OUTREACH & MEMBERSHIP EVENT

HOLDING COURT



Join us for an in-depth insights and analysis on the cases, justices, and issues that will shape the Supreme Court term ahead.

WHEN
Wednesday, September 30, 2026
6:30-9:00 PM ET

WHERE
The Eaton Hotel
1201 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

OPENING REMARKS
Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse
U.S. Senator for Rhode Island



Janai Nelson

President and Director-Counsel of the Legal Defense Fund



Rachel Rossi

Moderator + AFJ and AFJ Action President



Steve Vladeck

Agnes Williams Sesquicentennial Professor of Federal Courts at Georgetown University Law Center

Please join Alliance for Justice and AFJ Action for our fifth annual **Holding Court: Supreme Court Term Preview** on **Wednesday, September 30, 2026, from 6:30–9:00 PM ET at The Eaton Hotel in Washington, D.C.** We'll look ahead to the cases and issues that could shape the 2026-2027 Supreme Court term – and their potential implications for our courts, rights, and communities.

We are honored that **Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse** will deliver opening remarks, followed by a conversation with **Janai Nelson,** President and Director-Counsel of the Legal Defense Fund, and **Steve Vladeck,** Agnes Williams Sesquicentennial Professor of Federal Courts at Georgetown University Law Center. **AFJ and AFJ Action President Rachel Rossi** will moderate. Additional speakers will be announced in the coming weeks.

Thank you to our generous sponsors: Americans United for Separation of Church and State, National Abortion Federation, and the American Constitution Society.

Interested in sponsoring? Contact **Amy Ciciora** and **Caroline McFall** for more information.

Holding Court is a nonpartisan event. All elected officials are speaking in their official capacity as a Member of Congress and are not appearing as candidates. AFJ does not endorse, support, or oppose candidates.

Register for Holding Court today →

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 →**



August 12, 2026

One Supreme Court Case That Majorly Undermined Its Claim to Impartiality

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 blog here →



August 4, 2026

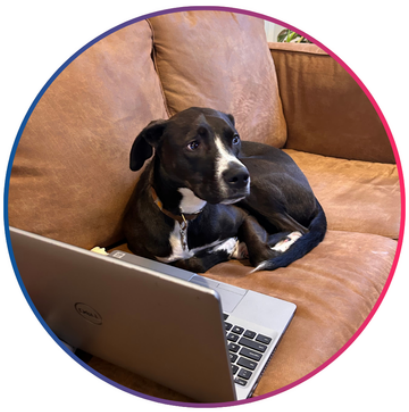
How Nonprofits Are Resisting Trump's War on Immigration at the State Level

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.

Read the blog here →

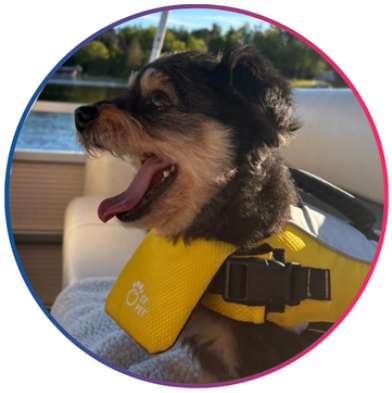
THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER

Meet the four-legged friends supporting the people doing the work.



Benny L.
Paw-alegal, PowerPoint Division

Making the case for better slide decks, one paw-erful presentation at a time. 😂



Benny M.
Senior Manager, Treat Acquisition

Proof that you're never too small or too young at heart for an adventure.



Esther
Director, Bolder Awoo-cacy

Bringing some extra awoo to the BA team — and making sure her human never forgets who really runs the program.



Lucy & Meadow
Grassroots Organizers (Literally)

Keeping their human company while she works to save democracy — and protecting the grassroots from squirrels.



Pumpkin & Stella
Chief Morale Officers

Dispensing joy and cuteness to colleagues and neighbors alike.



Har
Senior Pawlicy Counsel

Ensuring her human stays sane by strictly enforcing a strict walks-and-sunshine mandate.



Toast
Director, Work-Life Balance

Reminding us to smile, take a walk, grab a snuggle, and not take everything quite so seriously.



Baby & Jake
VPs, Mischief Management

Keeping things cool during the dog days of summer — and proving a little cuteness can excuse a whole lot of mischief.



Bali & Berlin
Special Consultants to the President, Fluff Division

The President's niece and nephew lend their expertise to AFJ in the areas that matter most: fluff, joy, and being ridiculously cute.



Kea and Princess Baguette
Counsel for the Defense of
Daily Joy

Providing highly questionable legal advice and highly effective daily doses of happiness.

HELP ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REMAIN A LIFELINE IN A TIME OF UNPRECEDENTED ATTACKS ON OUR RIGHTS.

GIVE TODAY

If you believe you received this message in error or wish to no longer receive email from us, please **unsubscribe**.

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