ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE

AFJ INSIDER



My dad with my great grandmother when leaving the Dominican Republic for the U.S.

Dear Friend,

This Hispanic Heritage month, I think about the hard work of my father, my grandparents, and the family who's shoulders I stand on. My dad survived the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo as a child and moved to the United States from the Dominican Republic, barely speaking English, with a dream to one day protect and provide for his family. And he did just that throughout my childhood, from when he worked at McDonalds and as a door-to-door vacuum salesman, to when he worked as a Spanish professor, to when he one day became the president of a university. Only later as an adult did I find out that my dad would often proudly take pictures of our refrigerator full of food – his unspoken vow that his children would be safe and they would never go hungry.

My father taught me and still teaches me to work hard and to always live a life of service to others. He taught me to forgive quickly and to love those who hate. He taught me to lead with integrity, humility, and hope. He taught me that I can achieve anything.

Those lessons are part of why this work is so personal to me. So, when we fight for nonprofits to be louder and bolder as they work with, defend, and serve Spanish-speaking communities, it's not only to protect and defend this group being illegally targeted and maliciously and dishonestly vilified — although that is important now more than ever. It's also about allowing Latinx, Latine, Latino, and Hispanic communities to thrive, to lead, and to shape the decisions that affect all of our lives. Because when they do, we are all stronger, smarter, and better as a society.

That's what we're doing across all of our work at AFJ. One example is **Bolder Advocacy en Español** at Alliance for Justice, where we've made key advocacy resources available in Spanish so that language is not a barrier to understanding your rights, building power, and making your voice heard.

That same commitment to representation extends to our courts. It's why we encourage professional and demographic diversity on the bench. Last Thursday, we hosted a virtual Hispanic Heritage Month Pathways to the Bench panel. Co-sponsored by ACS and HNBA, we featured four Hispanic judges at four levels of the American judiciary who shared their paths to the bench and discussed their experiences as Hispanic jurists.

If you're interested in a judgeship at any level, we'd love to hear from you. Our **Judge Interest Form** is a good place to start. When you fill it out, we follow up personally to help you figure out next steps.

Representation matters. Language access matters. Diverse leadership on the bench matters. And making sure every community has the knowledge and tools to advocate boldly matters.

But having a voice also means being able to tell our own stories and ensuring those stories are part of the conversations that shape change. Last week, as the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference wrapped up, I was privileged to team up with Speechwriters of Color to co-host an event, "Law, Story, and Social Change: Winning in Two Courts."



Left to right: Ethel Mwedziwendira, Rachel Rossi, Michael Franklin, Brandon Tensley

At the event, we talked about something I believe deeply: every consequential legal fight happens in two places — the court of law and the court of public opinion.

That idea is central to our work at Alliance for Justice. The law can protect rights, hold institutions accountable, and create change. But for that change to take root, people also need to understand what is at stake, whose lives are affected, and why those fights matter.

Our conversation brought together lawyers, advocates, communicators, and journalists to explore how narrative and culture can help create the conditions for legal progress — and how the work we do in and around the courts can expand what people believe is just and possible.

Our heritage is more than a celebration on the calendar. It's part of who we are, how we lead, and how we continue opening doors for those who come after us.

In service,

Rachel Rossi
President of AFJ

DONATE TODAY



FEDERAL COURTS

With **Kasdin Mitchell's** (N.D. TX) **Matthew Byrne's** (S.D. OH) and **Angela Colmenero**'s (S.D. TX) recent confirmation's, the second Trump administration has now secured 56 Article III judicial confirmations. Byrne, Mitchell, and Colmenero all follow the pattern of Trump judicial nominees: ideologically driven attorneys who have demonstrated loyalty to Trump.

The Senate Judiciary Committee recently held a hearing that included **Courtney Coker** (N.D. TX), who planned and supported **one of the largest ICE raids in U.S. history**, and Daniel Ballou (E.D. KY), who received an **ethics reprimand for political activity** supporting Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) while serving as a state court judge.

This week, the Senate Judiciary Committee is expected to hold a hearing on a new slate of nominees, including **Lee Rudofsky** (Eighth Circuit), **Samuel Adkisson** (Eastern District of Tennessee), and **Jesus Osete** (Western District of Missouri). As a judge, Rudofsky became the very first jurist in the entire country to hold that Section 2 violations of the Voting Rights Act **are not privately enforceable,** despite decades of precedent to the contrary.

Osete was tapped by Pam Bondi to lead the Department of Justice's (anti) civil rights litigation. Osete represented the Trump DOJ in **Tangipa v. Newsom**, challenging California's congressional redistricting map, which California adopted in response to Texas's mid-decade redistricting and its effort to add five Republican-leaning seats.

Samuel Adkisson has only been a lawyer for 10 years, three of which were spent clerking. Adkisson has only tried one case to judgment, but was heavily involved in *Students v. Fair Admissions v. Harvard,* which **sharply limited colleges' ability** to consider race in admissions and overturned decades of legal precedent recognizing the educational benefits of diversity.

View all of the unfit and unqualified nominees →

State Courts

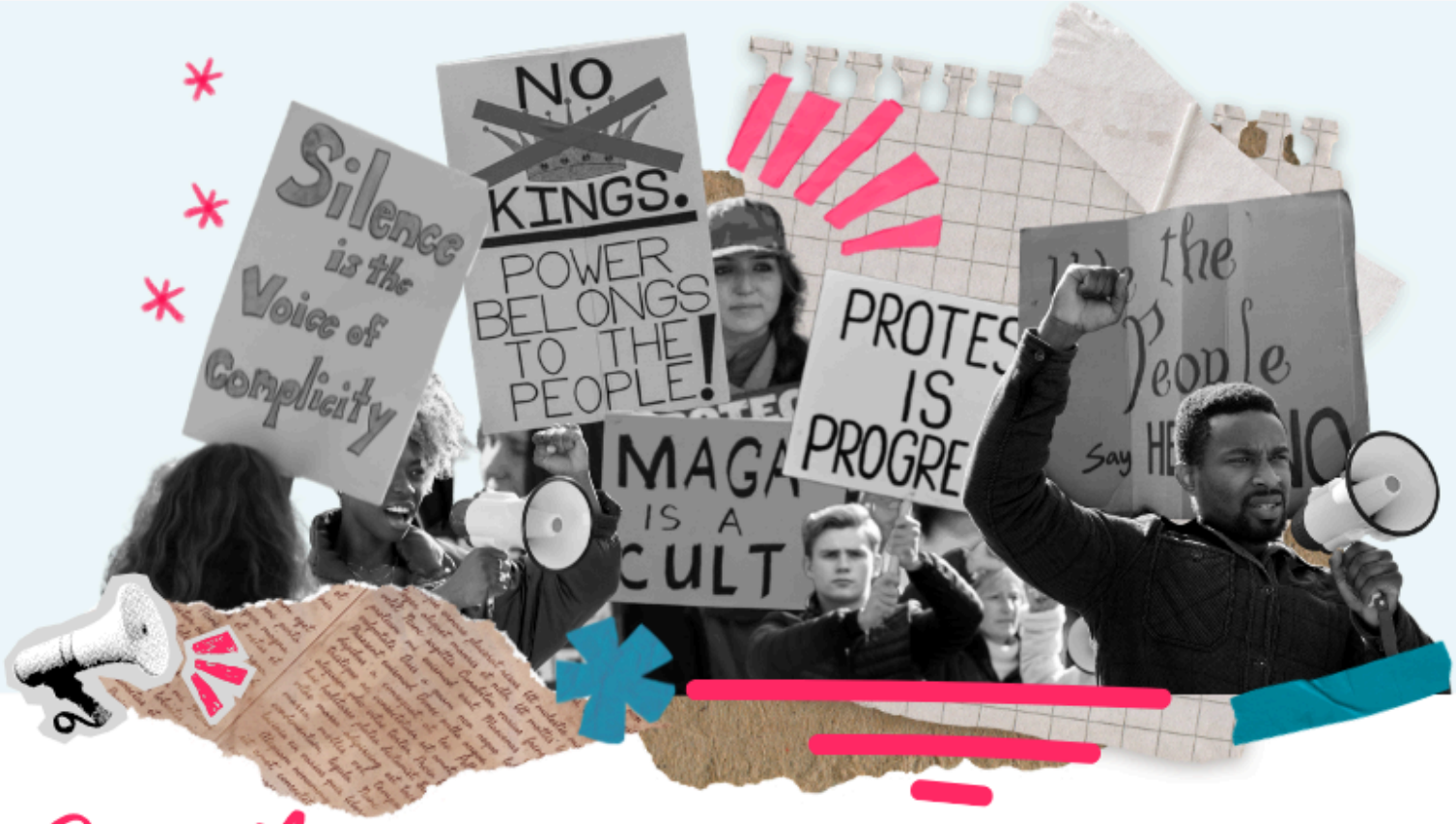
Defending Democracy

Local opposition to data center construction continues to rise, with **two-thirds of Americans opposed** to new centers. These construction proposals and efforts have become central to kitchen-table politics; state supreme courts are increasingly shaping residents' ability to challenge and stymie proposals and AI companies' ability to build more centers.



In the last month alone, state supreme courts in Montana, New Mexico, and Ohio issued decisions impacting citizen-led local ballot measures and efforts to block data center construction. The Ohio Supreme Court ordered a special election for a referendum to block new data center construction, and the New Mexico Supreme Court upheld a stay blocking a data center's air quality permit, thus halting further construction. State supreme courts have long overseen environmental reviews, permit processes, and voter referendums. Now, as data center construction rapidly expands, state supreme courts will be central to reviewing future centers and how residents can challenge them.

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

Legal Defense Fund



Rachel Rossi

AFJ & AFJ Action



Yasmin Cader

ACLU



Juan Proaño

League of United Latin American Citizens



Steve Vladeck

Georgetown University Law Center

There is still time to join us in-person TOMORROW, Wednesday, September 30 at 6:30PM ET at the Eaton Hotel in Washington, D.C. for our fifth annual Holding Court: Supreme Court Term Preview.

Register here!

We are honored that ***Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse*** will be delivering opening remarks. Sen. Whitehouse serves as a senior member on the Judiciary Committee and is the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Federal Courts, Oversight, Agency Action and Federal Rights.

We will also hear from **Janai Nelson,** President and Director-Counsel of the Legal Defense Fund; **Yasmin Cader,** Deputy Executive Director for Program, Strategy, and Culture at the ACLU; **Juan Proaño,** Chief Executive Officer at the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC); and **Steve Vladeck,** Agnes Williams Sesquicentennial Professor of Federal Courts at Georgetown University Law Center. The event will be emceed by AFJ and AFJ Action President **Rachel Rossi.**

There will be a reception at 6:30PM with food and refreshments. The speaking program will start at 7:15PM. We will turn to audience questions at the end of the program.

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 →

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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

Nonprofit Voter Registration is Nonpartisan, Not Apolitical

Public charities do not have to choose between following the rules and showing up for their communities. They can educate. They can organize. They can help people register to vote. They can talk about the issues at the heart of their missions.

Read the blog here →



August 4 2026

National Law Journal: Committee Questions Texas U.S. District Judge Nominees

In a Sept. 8 letter sent to Senate Judiciary Committee chair Chuck Grassley and Durbin, AFJ urged Grassley and Durbin to reject Coker's nomination.

Read the complete piece here →

MEET THE BOARD

Peter S. Hyun



Peter S. Hyun is one of AFJ's *favorite* type of supporters — **a Board member and sustaining donor.** Peter brings a unique background to us, including servIng in all three branches of the federal government and New York State government. Let's learn a little more about why Peter chose to become such an important part of AFJ's family.

What inspired you to join the Board?

I've known and worked closely with AFJ President Rachel Rossi for many years now, and there is no one more committed to justice. She is someone I hold in very high regard for her values and leadership. So, when she invited me to learn more about AFJ's work, and the people who are doing the work, I was deeply impressed and wanted to be a part of it.

If you were to recommend AFJ to colleagues or friends, what information would you likely share?

I would share that AFJ is an organization that is all about people. I would encourage people to get to know AFJ's leadership and its staff and learn about all of the partnerships and communities that the organization seeks to work alongside and represent. It is truly remarkable.

As a board member who supports AFJ as a monthly donor, what made you want to invest in AFJ, and why now?

So many organizations do such important justice-related work. And AFJ stands at the crossroads of much of that justice-related work, with a membership of organizations that serve people across the country. As I've become more deeply familiar with AFJ's leadership and staff, I have observed how they are people committed to using every resource to be as impactful as possible. I was inspired to invest in them and that commitment.

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**.

Alliance for Justice
11 Dupont Circle NW
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036
United States