

STATE COURT

JUSTICE

PROJECT

ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE
ACTION CAMPAIGN

State of Justice 2024

*State Supreme Courts and the
Future of Democracy*

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Executive Summary

This report delves into the current landscape of state supreme courts throughout the country as they continue to draw ever-increasing levels of attention — and outside spending — while deciding critical cases that are reshaping the nation. In the wake of the ongoing rollback of fundamental rights by the U.S. Supreme Court’s ultra-conservative supermajority, state courts — which hear 95% of all lawsuits filed in the country — play a critical role as the final arbiters of core human rights, with some state supreme courts choosing to protect our rights as others further erode them. In 2024, more than half of the states will have elections or vacancies on their state supreme courts. As state courts hold responsibility for interpreting state constitutions that often grant more protections than the U.S. Constitution, these courts and their decisions will shape the future of reproductive rights, education, labor, the environment, and much more. It is essential that state court benches have judges dedicated to upholding and protecting our fundamental rights.

What follows is an examination of important state supreme court developments from 2023, including elections, appointments, and ethical issues. This report also analyzes the current makeup of state supreme courts in all 50 states and examines the 33 states with state supreme court elections this year. Lastly, the report looks ahead to upcoming vacancies in 2025 and assesses notable state supreme court decisions from the past year, highlighting the wide-ranging and tangible impacts of state judiciaries on every aspect of our democracy.

Alliance for Justice Action Campaign (AFJ Action) promotes a national conversation about the courts’ role in protecting our core constitutional rights and advocates for the election and appointment of highly qualified, demographically and professionally diverse state court judges who uphold equal justice for all. Our shared work of understanding, protecting, and transforming our state courts is as urgent as ever.

Introduction

State courts are the foundation of our nation's judicial system. Hearing over 100 million cases annually and interpreting state constitutions that often grant more expansive protections than the U.S. Constitution, they are the final line of defense for countless human rights.

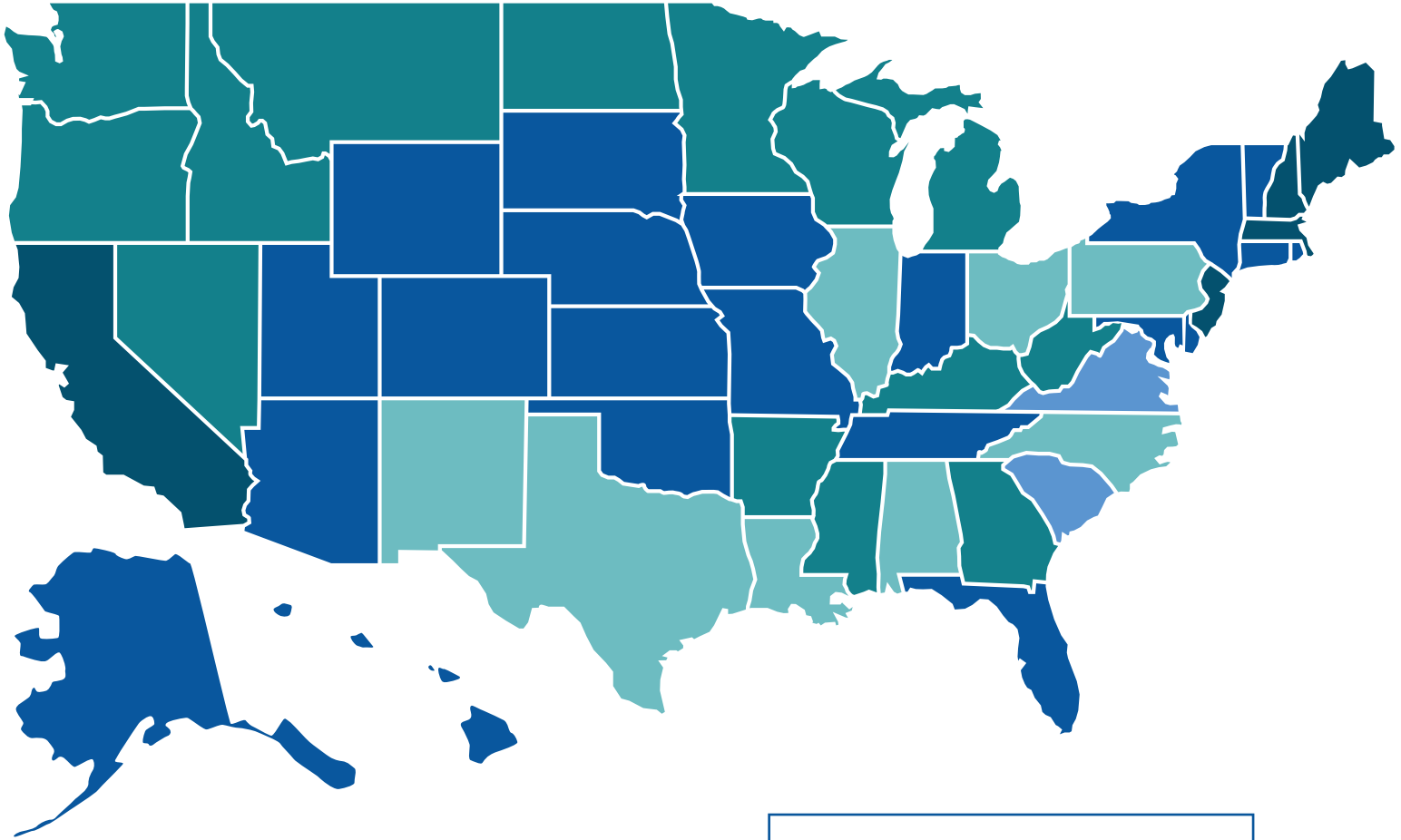
Voters in most states have the opportunity to vote for the justices on their state's highest court, whether in direct elections or in retention elections following appointments. The public also has the opportunity to weigh in and make their voices heard on judicial appointments made by the governor or judicial nominating commission of their state.

2023 saw the most expensive state supreme court race in U.S. history in Wisconsin, with over \$56 million spent on the election. The unprecedented attention and spending on state supreme courts underscore their critical role in protecting our fundamental rights, as demonstrated by multiple legal battles over abortion access making their way through the state courts post-*Dobbs* and by other impactful cases affecting the future of democracy, voting rights, the environment, LGBTQ+ rights, education, and more. In this context, it is essential that our state supreme courts have highly qualified judges committed to upholding the law and protecting the rights of all.

AFJ Action's state courts team continues to expand our efforts to educate voters on the process and importance of selecting qualified diverse judges for our state supreme courts. Alliance for Justice's [State Court Justice Project](#) is an interactive hub detailing the selection method, justice information, and the current makeup of the highest courts in all 50 states. The hub also highlights states with in-depth information on each justice, notable cases from each court, and how to weigh in on specific state supreme court vacancies, whether via election or appointment. The hub is continually growing, with the goal of equipping communities and activists in every state with the knowledge of their state courts.

With dozens of upcoming state supreme court elections alongside important appointments, it is critical that people in every state understand that they have a say over the judges selected for their courts. With our fundamental rights at stake, this work is more pressing than ever.

The State Court Landscape in 2023



The selection of supreme court justices varies from state to state. Eight states elect their supreme courts' judges and justices by partisan election, 14 states by nonpartisan election, 21 states by merit selection, five by gubernatorial appointment, and two by legislative election.

In partisan elections, judicial candidates are listed on the ballot with a political affiliation and are chosen through public elections. Under this model, candidate identifications on the ballot may include, for example, Democrat, Republican, Independent, Green, or Libertarian.

Selection Method

- Partisan Election
- Non-Partisan Election
- Merit Selection
- Gubernatorial Appointment
- Legislative Election

In nonpartisan elections, judicial candidates are not formally affiliated with a political party on the ballot and are chosen through public elections. In some states, such as Michigan, there are partisan primaries or partisan nominating conventions to select the judicial candidates to represent their parties on the general election ballots.

Retention elections are uncontested elections held when a judge's term is about to expire. The judge is put on the ballot with a "yes" or "no" vote to keep their position. A judge up for retention election must meet a certain threshold of "yes" votes to remain in their seat. These thresholds vary by state but are often between 50% and 60%. If a judge loses a retention election, a replacement judge will be chosen using the state's interim appointment method.

Merit selection, also referred to as the Missouri Plan or assisted appointment, is a two-stage process. First, a nominating commission screens applications and interviews prospective candidates. Members of these commissions may be elected by bar associations, governors, legislatures, other elected officials, private citizens, or a combination of these methods. Then, the commission recommends a slate of preferred candidates — typically three to five — to the appointing body, which is usually the governor. A final selection is made by the appointing body from this slate. After the appointment of the individual, they are retained on the bench for subsequent terms by retention elections or by review and renomination by the commission, governor, or legislature.

Gubernatorial appointment, also referred to as governor selection or appointment, is a process by which a state's governor nominates individuals to the bench, and it sometimes involves some form of confirmation to the bench by another body. This selection method is different than merit selection because the governor does not have to choose candidates from a recommended slate, though in some states, like Maine, the governor chooses to partner with a commission to identify and recommend candidates to the confirming body. Once the governor selects their nominee, a legislative or other government body will vote to confirm the nominee.

In legislative elections, the state's legislature elects its justices by a vote. A judicial nominating commission may be utilized to initially vet potential judicial candidates and forward a select number of candidates to the legislative bodies.

Reproductive rights played a significant role in 2023's state supreme court races, and more broadly, state courts throughout the country repeatedly demonstrated their impact in securing or eliminating abortion access in the states over the past year. Supreme courts in states including [Montana](#) and [Oklahoma](#) have protected abortion access, while others — such as [Idaho](#) and [South Carolina](#) — have refused to find the right to abortion protected in their state constitutions. Notably, the South Carolina Supreme Court had originally protected the right to abortion in 2022, but once a new all-male majority took control of the court, they [reversed](#) themselves and greenlit a nearly identical abortion ban in a 4-1 vote. There is still abortion litigation pending in multiple states including [Wisconsin](#).

Beyond the right to abortion, state courts are deciding issues of democracy and access to voting rights. Consider their impact during the 2020 and 2022 election cycles. The Wisconsin Supreme Court [came within one vote](#) of ruling in favor of former President Donald Trump in his effort to overturn the results of the 2020 election in Wisconsin, despite being controlled by Republicans at that time, and court watchers anticipate that Trump's campaign will make similar assertions about the integrity of the 2024 election if he loses there again. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court similarly [defended](#) the commonwealth's certification process in 2020 when conservative legislators attempted to throw out over 2.5 million absentee ballots. In 2022, the court again [safeguarded](#) and expanded access to the ballot by upholding Act 77, a law expanding no-excuse mail-in voting.

State Supreme Court Elections in 2023

State supreme court elections in 2023 had unprecedented outside spending and voter turnout in record numbers. Donors, advocacy groups, and billionaires flooded to Wisconsin and Pennsylvania's supreme court elections with laser-sharp attention.

Wisconsin Supreme Court Election

Partisan control of the Wisconsin Supreme Court flipped for the first time in 15 years in 2023. After the 2021 election, Republicans held a 4–3 majority on the court, but Republican Justice Patience Roggensack announced she would retire rather than seek a third term in 2023. A February primary election narrowed the race to two candidates: former Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Daniel Kelly (R) and Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge Janet Protasiewicz (D). Kelly had lost his seat in 2020 and sought to return to the court. On April 4, 2023, Protasiewicz won the nationally watched race.

Protasiewicz was sworn in to a 10-year term on the Wisconsin Supreme Court on September 1, 2023. Prior to joining Wisconsin's highest court, she was a judge on the Milwaukee County Circuit Court, presiding over homicide, sexual assault, misdemeanor, domestic violence, and drug courts, and eventually overseeing the Family Court division. She served as a Milwaukee County assistant district attorney for over 25 years before joining the Circuit Court in 2014, including arguing successfully before the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

[A challenge to Wisconsin's 19th-century abortion ban](#) is currently being heard in the lower courts, and will likely ultimately be heard by the state supreme court. The court also heard a [challenge to the state's legislative maps](#) that argued the maps violate the fair representation and separation of powers clauses of the state constitution and should be redrawn. In late December, the court agreed with the challenge and ordered the legislature to redraw the maps in time for the 2024 election.

Election Spending:

The race between Protasiewicz and Kelly was the most expensive state supreme court race in U.S. history. WisPolitics [tracked](#) more than \$56 million spent on the supreme court race. The previous national record for a state supreme court race was a 2004 Illinois election that topped \$15 million in spending. The most expensive Wisconsin contest was previously the 2020 campaign, when Kelly lost a bid to retain his seat to liberal opponent Jill Karofsky in a race that saw over \$5 million in outside spending.

Turnout Analysis:

The Wisconsin Supreme Court race generated record turnout in both the primary and general elections. The supreme court primary was the only statewide race on the ballot, but 21% of voters turned out to vote in the election — an [increase](#) of 36% over the last supreme court race in 2020, which also set a turnout record with 16% voter turnout. In previous supreme court primaries, turnout was 12% in 2018 and 13% in 2016. Turnout was up across most of the state but declined in the rural areas of northern and western Wisconsin, a possible contributing factor to Republican candidates garnering only 46% of votes in the race while Democratic candidates received 54% of votes cast.

The general election also broke turnout [records](#) for a spring election in Wisconsin and approached rates normally only seen in November elections, with 36% of registered voters participating in the election. Observers [attributed](#) the increased turnout to greater engagement by college voters. Several state and national organizations focused their efforts on driving turnout on college campuses, knocking on nearly 120,000 doors and making over 250,000 phone calls.

Voters in college wards voted for Protasiewicz in overwhelming numbers. Observers also pointed to the increase in the methods available for voters to cast ballots, including mail and in-person voting, that facilitated turnout amongst young voters. Protasiewicz won 64% of the vote in Eau Claire and La Crosse Counties, which both have University of Wisconsin campuses, and 52% in typically conservative Brown County, where UW–Green Bay is located. Turnout in Eau Claire County was 5.5 times higher in 2023 than in the state supreme court race in 2020. Protasiewicz won 87% of votes in precincts on the UW–Eau Claire campus and 85% of the votes in precincts on the campus of UW–Green Bay. Turnout among Democratic voters was higher on average statewide, but turnout among campus voters exceeded statewide margins on several campuses, including UW–Madison.

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Election

To fill the vacancy on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court left by the death of former Chief Justice Max Baer, Pennsylvania voters elected Democratic candidate Superior Court Judge Daniel McCaffery on November 7, 2023. McCaffery **defeated** Republican candidate and Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas Judge Carolyn Carluccio, gaining **53%** of the vote. His election solidified a 5–2 Democratic supermajority on the commonwealth’s supreme court. Sworn in on January 2, 2024, Justice McCaffery will serve an initial 10-year term. To remain on the bench, he will need to be elected in a subsequent retention election.

Justice Daniel McCaffery



McCaffery began his legal career as an assistant district attorney in Philadelphia County. He remained there for six years, then went into private practice, focusing primarily on commercial litigation. While in private practice, McCaffery also served as the volunteer legal counsel for the local Democratic Party. In 2013, he was elected to the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas. McCaffery was then elected to the statewide superior court in 2019.

Election spending:

While smaller in comparison to Wisconsin’s supreme court election, spending in last year’s Pennsylvania Supreme Court election marked a **new era** for judicial campaigns and outside spending for the Keystone State. Candidates and outside interests spent at least **\$22 million**, making it the second most expensive state supreme court race behind Wisconsin’s just months prior. A large portion of outside spending supporting McCaffery was driven by Planned Parenthood Vote’s seven-figure digital and television ad buys, further emphasizing the importance of the court for abortion access.

Turnout analysis:

McCaffery **won** with the largest margin of victory for any judicial election in 2023, leading by 6.72%. McCaffery’s huge margin of victory is significant, considering that, in the 2021 Pennsylvania Supreme Court election, Republican candidate and current Justice Kevin Brobson won with a margin of just 0.90%. Voter turnout from the 2021 to the 2023 election increased by nearly 10%.

In the election, McCaffery **flipped** three counties essential to his success: Berks, Bucks, and Dauphin Counties. Notably, in Bucks County, McCaffery won by over 10% compared to Brobson winning by 2.3% in 2021. There was much attention on the influence of Philadelphia and its collar counties on the election, but Allegheny County, home to Pittsburgh, played a significant role as well. Experts **attributed** that increased turnout to other municipal offices on the ballot such as Philadelphia's mayoral election and Allegheny County's district attorney and county executive races. Overall, Democratic voters exceeded turnout expectations and proved in this election that voters are paying attention to state courts in the aftermath of our federal courts rolling back our rights.

Notable Supreme Court Appointments in 2023

There were 20 state supreme court vacancies filled by appointment in 2023. Of the vacancies, 11 were appointed by Democratic governors and nine by Republican governors. Governors have effectively remade their state's highest benches in two states: In Florida, Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) **has appointed** five out of seven of justices on the court, and in New Jersey, Gov. Phil Murphy (D) **has nominated** four of the seven justices on that court.

Michigan

Justice Kyra Harris Bolden



Justice **Kyra Harris Bolden** was sworn into the Michigan Supreme Court on January 1, 2023. She was appointed to the court by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D) after running unsuccessfully for a seat on the court in 2022 against incumbent Justice Brian Zahra. She is the first Black woman to sit on the court. Prior to joining the court, Bolden practiced as a criminal defense attorney and a civil litigator and clerked for the Honorable John A. Murphy of the Wayne County Third Circuit Court. She was elected to the Michigan House of Representatives in 2018 and sworn into office in 2019. While serving in the legislature, Bolden sat on the Judiciary Committee, working to enact criminal justice reforms and legislation to protect survivors of sexual violence.

Chief Justice Bridget Mary McCormack announced in mid-September of 2022 that she would retire from the Michigan Supreme Court two years into her second eight-year term. This created Whitmer's first opportunity to appoint a justice to the court. On November 22, Whitmer announced her intention to appoint Rep. Bolden to fill the vacancy. Bolden must run in a special election in November 2024 to fill the remainder of the term, which expires in 2028.

Judge Rowan Wilson



A vacancy was created on New York's highest court when longtime New York Court of Appeals Chief Judge Janet DiFiore resigned in August 2022 amidst allegations of abusing her influence. In New York, nominees for the Court of Appeals are chosen by the governor from a list compiled by the Commission on Judicial Nomination. Gov. Kathy Hochul (D) was forced to nominate a new candidate to become chief judge after the Senate Judiciary Committee and later the full Senate voted to reject the nomination of Hochul's first choice, Presiding Supreme Court Justice Hector LaSalle. Opposition groups and many senators themselves took issue with LaSalle's conservative opinions in cases regarding labor rights, abortion, the environment, and criminal justice. Hochul then nominated Associate Judge Rowan Wilson for the chief judgeship. Wilson has a demonstrated record of commitment to civil rights, worker protections, and access to justice in the penal system. Wilson's elevation to the chief judgeship created an associate judge vacancy on the court, to which Hochul nominated attorney Caitlin J. Halligan. Both nominees were [confirmed](#). Court watchers have since noted a shift away from the more recent conservative rulings from the state's highest court.

[New York Court of Appeals Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson](#) was first nominated and confirmed as an associate judge of the Court of Appeals in 2017, where he served until he was nominated to the chief judgeship in 2023. He had worked as an associate and partner for the previous 31 years at Cravath, Swaine & Moore in New York City, litigating numerous corporate and pro bono matters and serving as trustee for the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the National Center for Law and Economic Justice. He also served for over two decades as chairman of the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, providing community-based public legal representation in Harlem.

Judge Caitlin J. Halligan



Associate Judge of the Court of Appeals Caitlin J. Halligan was nominated and confirmed to the state's highest court in 2023. Prior to joining the court, she worked in private practice at several law firms in New York City, where she was a partner and oversaw the firm's appellate and pro bono practices. She also served as general counsel to the Manhattan district attorney and worked in the New York attorney general's office, including as solicitor general of New York.

New Jersey

Justice Michael Noriega



Justice Michael Noriega joined the New Jersey Supreme Court in July 2023 through nomination by Gov. Phil Murphy (D). Noriega was nominated to fill the vacancy left by the retirement of Justice Barry Albin. In New Jersey, judicial nominations must be confirmed by the state senate. During his confirmation hearing, Noriega gained wide **bipartisan support** and was confirmed in a unanimous vote. Noriega is the **third Latinx person** to join the supreme court but is the only sitting Latinx justice. He will serve a seven-year term, and to remain on the bench, Noriega must be renominated by the governor and reconfirmed by the state senate.

Noriega began his legal career as a public defender and is the **first ever** former public defender to serve on the state's highest court. He then practiced law at his own private practice firm for six years until moving to Bramnick, Rodriguez, Grabas, Arnold, and Mangan in Scotch Plains. At both firms, Noriega focused on immigration and criminal law.

Oregon

Justice Aruna Masih



Justice Aruna Masih joined the Oregon Supreme Court in September of 2023 following an appointment by Gov. Tina Kotek (D) to fill the vacancy due to the appointment of former Justice Adrienne Nelson to the federal bench on the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon. With her appointment to the bench, Masih is Oregon's first Indian-American and South Asian justice. To remain on the bench, Masih must run for re-election for a full four-year term later this year.

Masih worked in private practice before joining the bench. She primarily focused on civil rights and labor and employment law on the employee and plaintiffs' side and dedicated her career to [protecting](#) the civil rights of Oregonians.

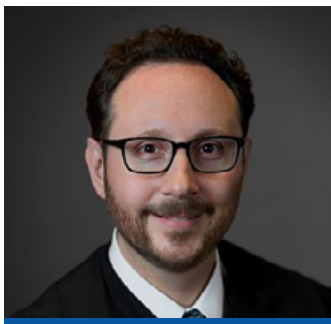
Minnesota

Justice Natalie E. Hudson



After a 13-year tenure, Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie Gildea [announced](#) in June 2023 that she would step down as chief justice that October. Gov. Tim Walz (D) [appointed](#) sitting Associate Justice Natalie Hudson to be the next chief justice. She is the first Black person to serve in the role. To fill the vacancy created by Hudson's elevation, Walz appointed his office's general counsel, Karl Procaccini, to Hudson's seat. Both Hudson and Procaccini must run for re-election in 2024 to remain on the bench for a full six-year term. [Chief Justice Natalie E. Hudson](#) was appointed in 2023 to a term as chief justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court ending in 2025. She first joined the supreme court in 2015 and was re-elected in 2016 and 2022. She previously served on the Minnesota Court of Appeals, in the office of the Minnesota attorney general, as the city attorney for the city of St. Paul, and as assistant dean of student affairs at Hamline University School of Law. She also practiced employment law and general civil litigation and practiced housing law as a staff attorney with Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services. She has served on the Implementation Committee on Multicultural Diversity and Racial Fairness in the Courts, the Minnesota Supreme Court Racial Bias Task Force, and the Minnesota Legal Services Planning Committee.

Justice Karl Procaccini



Associate Justice Karl Procaccini was appointed to the Minnesota Supreme Court in 2023 to a term expiring in 2025. He previously served as general counsel and deputy chief of staff in the Office of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor of Minnesota. He also worked in private practice and taught at the University of St. Thomas School of Law and William Mitchell College of Law.

North Carolina

Justice Allison Riggs



Justice Allison Riggs first joined the North Carolina Supreme Court in 2023 by appointment from Gov. Roy Cooper (D). Riggs was appointed to the North Carolina Supreme Court to fill a vacancy left by the retirement of Justice Michael Morgan, who made an unsuccessful bid for governor of North Carolina in early 2024. To remain on the court, Riggs must be re-elected in a partisan election in November. Before her appointment to the supreme court, Riggs served as a judge on the North Carolina Court of Appeals, where she was appointed in 2022 by Cooper. For 14 years before her appointment to the court of appeals, Riggs was the co-executive director and chief voting rights counsel for the Southern Coalition for Social Justice.

Ethics in the Spotlight

National news about U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas's mortgages, favors, trips, and plane rides courtesy of conservative billionaire Harlan Crow has exposed the deep vulnerabilities of our federal and state judicial ethics laws, commissions, and codes. Thomas's corruption has only increased scrutiny of our judiciary and strengthened calls for renewed ethics laws. These ethical checks are necessary to ensure that our courts are fair and accessible. However, in Wisconsin and North Carolina, these processes and commissions have been weaponized to harm judges that don't fall in line with partisan interests, and in other states, the system has been gamed by partisan actors attempting to push through their agendas with few checks on their power.

Justice Janet Protasiewicz



Following the election of Justice Janet Protasiewicz to the Wisconsin Supreme Court and the subsequent switch of partisan control of that court from conservative to liberal, a case challenging Wisconsin's GOP-drawn congressional maps was filed in state courts. But before Protasiewicz could even hear the case, legislative Republicans **threatened** impeachment against her due to **comments** she made on the campaign trail calling the maps rigged. In response, Protasiewicz **shared a letter** from the Wisconsin Judicial Commission, which stated that complaints filed against her for those remarks had been dismissed.

Despite the dismissal from the commission, conservative legislators did not stop their crusade against her, and Assembly Speaker Robin Vos formed a secret **investigatory panel** of former supreme court justices to advise him on the impeachment criteria needed against Protasiewicz. In response to the panel, watchdog group American Oversight **filed** a lawsuit alleging the investigatory panel violated the state's open meetings law. Subsequently, the former justices who were involved revealed themselves except for former justice Patience Roggensack, whose identity was revealed in the court filings. Despite having been **advised against** an impeachment campaign by the former justices, Vos still **refused** to retreat from his threats.

Ultimately, Vos **backed down** from his impeachment crusade when it failed to gain the support of other legislators, but his withdrawal is probably the result of missing a deadline from which Republicans would benefit. A state law stipulates that if the justice had been removed prior to December 1, 2023, her successor would have had to immediately face a spring 2024 election to maintain their seat, which would have coincided with the state's Republican primary election and benefited the Republican challenger. Because they missed that deadline to remove Protasiewicz from the court, her Democratically-appointed successor would instead not have to stand for election until 2031, thus accomplishing little to change the political balance of the court in the short term.

Justice Anita Earls



Over the summer of 2023, North Carolina Supreme Court Justice Anita Earls, the court's only Black woman, made a statement in an [interview with Law360](#) about the lack of racial diversity in the state's judiciary and the resulting impact that has on implicit biases in the courts. The North Carolina Judicial Standards Commission [opened](#) an investigation against Earls because of her comments, claiming they undermined public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary. Earls then [filed](#) a federal lawsuit against the commission for chilling her First Amendment free speech rights. As a result, dozens of groups and law professors [rallied around](#) and [supported Earls](#) throughout the investigation.

Republican-appointed Judge William Osteen [denied](#) Earls' request for a preliminary injunction against the commission that would have halted the investigation while the lawsuit was pending. Earls then [pursued an appeal](#) of the injunction.

Ultimately, the commission halted its sham campaign against Earls in early 2024. As a result, Earls also withdrew her federal lawsuit. However, the investigation was revealed to be part of a political play by North Carolina's top judicial conservative, Chief Justice Paul Newby, when he made a critical change to the Court of Appeals right before the conclusion of the investigation. On January 1, 2024, Judge Donna Stroud, the former chief judge of the statewide North Carolina Court of Appeals, was swiftly removed from her position and replaced with Chief Judge Chris Dillon. Of note, Dillon most recently served as the chair of the Judicial Standards Commission that launched the ethics crusade against Earls. Stroud believes her removal is also part of a larger political attack because she had been targeted in the 2022 election by conservative Justice Phil Berger Jr. In retaliation for not supporting his former clerk of court. It is becoming clearer under Newby's leadership that judges that do not fall in line with his partisan interests may also have their judicial careers at risk, as outlined in [this blog post](#) by Alliance for Justice.

Notable Recent State Supreme Court Cases

Criminal Justice

Mississippi

In Re: Mississippi Rules of Criminal Procedure (April 13, 2023)

The Mississippi Supreme Court strengthened the rights of defendants in criminal cases by establishing a constitutional right to legal representation through every stage of their trial.

Illinois

Rowe v. Raoul (July 18, 2023)

The Illinois Supreme Court affirmed the constitutionality of a new law that ended cash bail as a condition of pretrial release in the state, allowing the law to take effect.

Michigan

People of Michigan v. James Robert Crumbley (October 3, 2023)

In a historic decision, the Michigan Supreme Court ordered a married couple to stand trial on four counts each of involuntary manslaughter in connection with four murders their son committed during a school shooting. The parents were convicted on all charges in separate trials in [February and March](#) of 2024.

Death Penalty

Alabama

In re: Kenneth Eugene Smith v. State of Alabama (November 1, 2023)

The Alabama Supreme Court gave the state permission to move forward with a novel method known as nitrogen hypoxia in the execution of Kenneth Smith, a death row petitioner who had survived a previous effort by the state to execute him using lethal injection. The state [used nitrogen hypoxia](#) to execute Smith in January of 2024.

North Carolina

North Carolina v. Tucker (December 15, 2023)

The North Carolina Supreme Court denied a death row petitioner's post-conviction motion to vacate his conviction and death sentence, ruling that the evidence of discrimination during his jury selection process that he sought to present was barred because he hadn't presented it in previous appeals.

Democracy and Voting Rights

North Carolina

Harper v. Hall (April 28, 2023)

The North Carolina Supreme Court's new conservative majority overruled its previous decision that had found the state's congressional district map was an unconstitutional partisan gerrymander.

North Carolina

Holmes v. Moore (April 28, 2023)

The North Carolina Supreme Court's new conservative majority overruled its previous decision to block a racially discriminatory voter ID law.

Ohio

State ex rel. DeBlase v. Ohio Ballot Board (June 1, 2023)

The Ohio Supreme Court ordered the state's ballot board to certify a citizen-initiated petition that proposed a constitutional amendment to protect the right to an abortion prior to fetal viability.

Ohio

State ex rel. One Person One Vote v. LaRose (June 16, 2023)

The Ohio Supreme Court allowed the state to hold a special election asking voters to consider a legislatively referred ballot question that would raise the threshold for the passage of proposed constitutional amendments to 60% instead of a simple majority of 50% plus one. The proposal [was defeated](#) at the ballot box.

Minnesota

Grove, et al. v. Simon (October 13, 2023)

The Minnesota Supreme Court dismissed a lawsuit that asked the court to bar former President Donald Trump from that state's ballots as a candidate for president in 2024, citing the U.S. Constitution's Insurrection Act.

Missouri

State of Missouri ex rel. Basinger v. Ashcroft (November 21, 2023)

The Missouri Supreme Court refused to allow the secretary of state to approve language for an initiative petition to protect abortion rights in the state's constitution because the ballot summaries contained impermissible politically partisan language.

New York

Hoffmann v. New York State Independent Redistricting Commission (December 12, 2023)

The New York Court of Appeals ordered the state's Independent Redistricting Commission to redraw its congressional district map after finding that the current map violates the rights of New York voters because it was not drawn by the commission.

Colorado

Anderson v. Griswold (December 19, 2023)

The Colorado Supreme Court ruled that former President Donald Trump is ineligible to appear on primary ballots as a presidential candidate because he helped incite an insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. The [ruling was overturned](#) by the U.S. Supreme Court after an appeal from the Trump campaign.

Wisconsin

Clarke v. Wisconsin Election Commission (December 22, 2023)

The Wisconsin Supreme Court ordered the state legislature to draw new apportionment maps in time for use in the 2024 election cycle for its state Assembly and Senate districts because some of the districts in the current maps are non-contiguous in violation of the state constitution.

Education

Washington

Wahkiakum School District v. State of Washington (September 7, 2023)

The Washington Supreme Court ruled against a rural school district seeking additional funding from the state to supplement the cost of construction and building maintenance.

Maryland

Bradford v. Maryland State Board of Education (October 24, 2023)

The Maryland Supreme Court declined to hear a lawsuit challenging the funding scheme for Baltimore city schools before it can be heard by the Appellate Court of Maryland.

Wisconsin

Underwood v. Vos (December 13, 2023)

The Wisconsin Supreme Court declined to hear a lawsuit that sought to have the state's taxpayer-financed system for funding independent charter schools and school voucher programs declared unconstitutional.

Environment

Hawaii

City and County of Honolulu, et. al v. Sunoco LP, et. al (October 31, 2023)

The Hawaii Supreme Court allowed the City and County of Honolulu to proceed with a lawsuit against numerous fossil fuel companies, which alleges that the companies have engaged in deceptive marketing practices to hide the impacts of climate change and seeks to hold them financially liable. The companies [have appealed](#) the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Executive Power & Civil Liberties

New Hampshire

ACLU of New Hampshire v. New Hampshire Division of State Police (November 29, 2023)

The New Hampshire Supreme Court ordered the Division of State Police to release the personnel file of a trooper who was fired after he lied repeatedly about his use of illegal search methods and caused an innocent woman to spend two weeks in jail.

Gun Safety

Illinois

Caulkins v. Pritzker (August 11, 2023)

The Illinois Supreme Court upheld a statewide ban on assault-style firearms that was passed by the legislature in response to a mass shooting in an effort to address the gun violence epidemic.

Immigration

Texas

Renewed Emergency Order Regarding Indigent Defense and the Border Security State of Disaster (June 30, 2023)

The Texas Supreme Court ordered the Texas Indigent Defense Commission to provide counsel to represent migrants arrested and charged with jailable misdemeanors if they are arrested in a county designated a federal “state of disaster” regarding border security.

LGBTQ+ Americans

Texas

Loe v. Texas (August 31, 2023)

The Texas Supreme Court reversed a lower court’s stay on a bill that would prohibit transgender minors from receiving gender-affirming care and would revoke the license of any health care provider prescribing gender-affirming care to minors.

Persons With Disabilities

California

Disability Rights California v. Newsom (April 19, 2023)

The California Supreme Court rejected a challenge to a new court system that allows family members, clinicians, first responders, and others close to individuals suffering from severe mental illness to petition for treatment referral on their behalf.

Reproductive Rights

North Dakota

Wrigley v. Romanick (March 16, 2023)

The North Dakota Supreme Court upheld a lower court's block on the state's abortion ban while a lawsuit challenging the ban's constitutionality is heard in lower courts.

Montana

Weems v. Montana (May 12, 2023)

The Montana Supreme Court issued a ruling that will allow nurse practitioners and clinicians to continue providing abortion care to patients after legislation was enacted to limit the practice to medical doctors.

Oklahoma

Oklahoma Call for Reproductive Justice v. State of Oklahoma (May 31, 2023)

The Oklahoma Supreme Court overturned two new statutes that prohibited physicians from performing abortions with limited exceptions and created a bounty law to allow citizens to sue physicians who provide abortion care.

South Carolina

Planned Parenthood South Atlantic, et al. v. State of South Carolina, et al. (August 31, 2023)

The South Carolina Supreme Court upheld the state's six-week abortion ban, finding that an unborn fetus has a right to life that may outweigh the privacy and autonomy rights of its mother.

Georgia

State of Georgia v. Sistersong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective et al.
(October 24, 2023)

The Georgia Supreme Court reinstated the state's controversial heartbeat bill that prohibits abortions after six weeks' gestation.

Ohio

Preterm-Cleveland v. Yost (December 15, 2023)

The Ohio Supreme Court dismissed a challenge to a stay on the state's near-total abortion ban, acknowledging that the passage of a ballot initiative to enshrine abortion in the state constitution made the ban illegal.

Workers

Alaska

State of Alaska v. Alaska State Employees Association (May 26, 2023)

The Alaska Supreme Court ruled that an administrative order restricting methods used by public employee unions to collect member dues violated both state law and the state's collective bargaining agreements with the unions. The U.S. Supreme Court [declined to hear](#) a challenge to the ruling.

Pending State Supreme Court Decisions in 2024

Democracy and Voting Rights

Pennsylvania

Krasner v. Ward

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court will decide whether the conduct alleged in articles of impeachment filed by Republican state legislators against the progressive Philadelphia district attorney actually constitute misconduct in office, and whether statewide officials can impeach locally elected officials.

Environment

Montana

Held, et al. v. State, et al.

The Montana Supreme Court ordered state agencies to analyze climate impacts in their permitting decisions while it considers state officials' appeal in a case brought on behalf of Montana children for alleged failure to maintain a healthy environment in Montana for present and future generations.

Executive Power & Civil Liberties

Washington

Potter v. City of Lacey

The Washington State Supreme Court heard arguments in a case alleging that a Washington city violated the state constitution when it enacted a law allowing it to force vehicle-sheltered people to leave the city limits.

New Mexico

Williams, et al. v. City of Albuquerque

The New Mexico Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a suit challenging how and when the city of Albuquerque is allowed to clear encampments of unhoused people.

LGBTQ+ Americans

Colorado

Masterpiece Cake Shop, Inc. v. Scardina

The Colorado Supreme Court will hear a case involving the Christian baker who won a [partial victory](#) before the U.S. Supreme Court in 2018 and is now being sued for refusing to make a cake to celebrate a transgender woman's transition under the same statute.

Ohio

In Re: Application for Correction of Birth Record of Hailey Emmeline Adelaide

In accordance with a federal court order, the Ohio Supreme Court heard oral arguments to determine the procedure the state will use to allow transgender residents to amend gender markers on their birth certificates.

Reproductive Rights

Iowa

Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, et al. v. Kim Reynolds, et al.

The Iowa attorney general filed an appeal asking the Iowa Supreme Court to reinstate its six-week abortion ban, which was overturned by a lower court judge.

Texas

Zurawski v. State of Texas

The Texas Supreme Court is being asked to clarify vague language in the state's abortion ban that prevents medical professionals from providing life-saving care to pregnant patients during medical emergencies.

Arizona

Planned Parenthood et al vs. Kristin Mayes

The Arizona Supreme Court is set to decide which of the state's abortion bans to enforce: an 1864 total ban predating statehood or a 15-week ban passed in 2022.

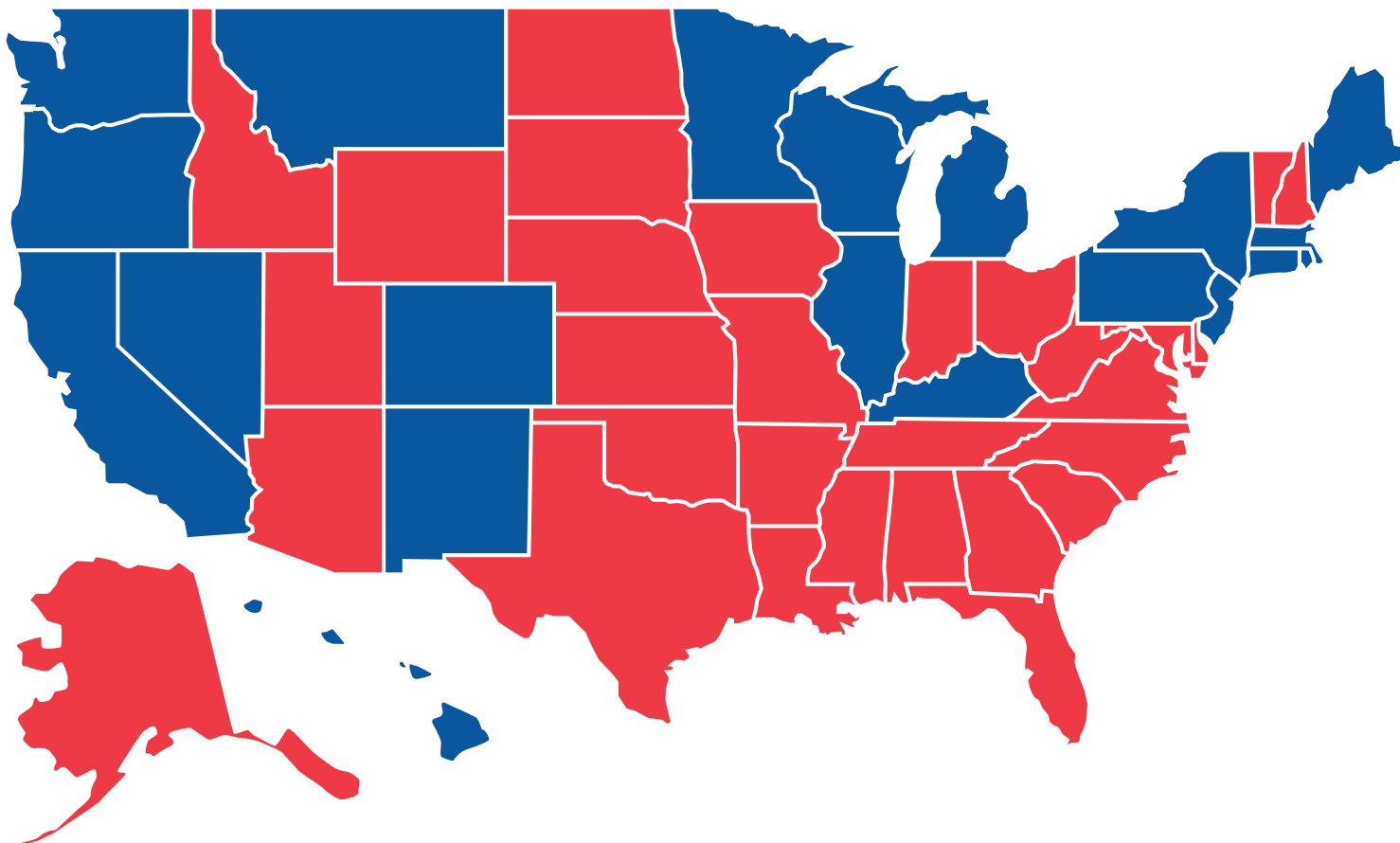
New Mexico

State of New Mexico v. Board of County Commissioners for Lea County

The New Mexico Supreme Court will hear a case brought by the state's attorney general challenging local county ordinances that restrict residents' ability to receive abortion-related materials in the mail and asking the court to find that the right to an abortion is protected by the state's constitution.

State Supreme Courts in 2024 and Beyond

Makeup and Control of State Supreme Courts



**Currently,
30 state supreme courts are held by Republicans
and 20 are controlled by Democrats.**

For the 33 states holding supreme court elections in 2024, on the following pages is an outline of each state by election method, with details about the justices whose seats are up for election in 2024.

2024 Elections and Vacancies

Partisan Elections in 2024

Alabama

Tom Parker (R)

Must Retire
(Open Contest for seat)



Justice Tom Parker was elected to the Alabama Supreme Court in 2004. He began his career as the founding executive director of what is now the Alabama Policy Institute, a conservative think tank associated with the anti-LGBTQ+ organization Focus on the Family. Parker previously worked in private practice focusing on constitutional litigation. In 2004, Parker was elected as an associate justice of the state's highest court and was subsequently re-elected in 2010 and 2016. He then successfully ran for chief justice in 2018. Parker is not seeking re-election. There is an open contest for his seat.

Tommy Bryan (R)



Justice Tommy Bryan was elected to the Alabama Supreme Court in 2012. Bryan was elected to the Court of Civil Appeals in 2005 as a Republican. He remained there until his election to the state's highest court.

Sarah Stewart (R)



Justice Sarah Stewart was elected to the Alabama Supreme Court in 2018. Prior to joining the bench, she spent her career in private practice. She was appointed to the 13th Judicial Circuit in 2006 by Gov. Bob Riley (R), overseeing civil and criminal cases, and remained there until her election to the Supreme Court.

William Sellers (R)



Justice William Sellers was appointed to the Alabama Supreme Court by Gov. Kay Ivey (R) in 2017. Prior to joining the bench, he worked in private practice on business, finance, and tax litigation matters.

Jay Mitchell (R)



Justice Jay Mitchell was elected to the Alabama Supreme Court in 2018. He previously worked in private practice.

Illinois

Illinois elects its supreme court justices by judicial districts, meaning each justice represents and is elected by voters residing in a geographic district.

Joy Cunningham (D)



Justice Joy Cunningham was appointed to the Illinois Supreme Court in 2022. Prior to her career on the bench, Cunningham worked in private practice and in health systems administration. She was a judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County before joining the state's highest court.

Lisa Holder White (R)



Justice Lisa Holder White joined the Illinois Supreme Court in 2013 following her appointment by the court. She previously served as an Illinois Appellate Court judge, a circuit court judge, and an associate judge in the Sixth Judicial Circuit. She previously worked as a prosecutor, a public defender, and in private practice.

Louisiana

Louisiana elects its supreme court justices by judicial districts, meaning each justice represents and is elected by voters residing in a geographic district.

Scott Crichton (R)

Must Retire



Justice Scott Crichton was elected to the Louisiana Supreme Court in 2015. He began his legal career as assistant district attorney for Caddo Parish and simultaneously practiced civil litigation. He later became a judge on the First Judicial District Court in 2005 and remained there until his election to the supreme court.

North Carolina

Allison Riggs (D)



Justice Allison Riggs was appointed to the North Carolina Supreme Court in 2023 by Gov. Roy Cooper (D). She spent her legal career as a civil rights attorney, as co-executive director and chief voting rights counsel for the Southern Coalition for Social Justice. In 2022, she was appointed to the court of appeals by Cooper and remained there until joining the supreme court a year later.

Ohio

Michael Donnelly (D)



Justice Michael Donnelly was elected to the Ohio Supreme Court in 2018. He began his career as an assistant Cuyahoga County prosecutor. Donnelly then left to work in private practice. In 2004, he was elected as a judge of Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas and served in that capacity until his election to the supreme court.

Melody Stewart (D)



Justice Melody Stewart was elected to the Ohio Supreme Court in 2018. Before her service on the bench, she worked as a civil defense litigator and an assistant law director for the cities of Cleveland and East Cleveland. Stewart was elected as a judge on the Eighth District Court of Appeals and served there until her election to the Supreme Court.

Joe Deters (R)



In 2022, Justice Joe Deters was appointed to the supreme court by Gov. Mike DeWine (R) in 2023. He was previously elected as Ohio Treasurer. Prior to joining the court, Deters served as the prosecutor in Hamilton County where he established the first drug court in Ohio.

Texas Supreme Court

In Texas, the Supreme Court is the court of last resort for civil appeals.

Jimmy Blacklock (R)



Gov. Greg Abbott (R) appointed Justice Jimmy Blacklock to the Texas Supreme Court in 2018. He worked in the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice under the George W. Bush administration. He then worked in private practice until serving as Abbott's general counsel and in the attorney general's office.

John Devine (R)



Justice John Devine was first elected to the Texas Supreme Court in 2012. Devine was elected as a judge of the 190th State District Court in Harris County and then in 2002 was appointed special judge for the Harris County justice of the peace courts and served there until 2011. Since 2002, Devine has maintained a private litigation practice.

Jane Bland (R)



Justice Jane Bland was appointed to the Texas Supreme Court in 2019 by Gov. Greg Abbott (R). She previously served as a justice on the First Court of Appeals and as a state district court judge. She also worked in private practice.

Texas Court of Criminal Appeals

In Texas, the Court of Criminal Appeals is the court of last resort for criminal appeals.

Sharon Keller (R) (Open Contest for seat)



Presiding Judge Sharon Keller was first elected to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals in 1994 and was the first woman join the court. She was first elected presiding judge of the court in 2000 and has been re-elected to lead the court three times. Before becoming a judge, she was an assistant district attorney in the Dallas County district attorney's office. She was defeated in a primary election for a sixth term in March of this year, and there will be an open contest for the seat.

Michelle Slaughter (R) (Open Contest for seat)



Judge Michelle Slaughter was elected to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals in 2018. She was previously a judge of the Galveston County District Court and worked in private practice before becoming a judge. She lost a primary election for a second term on the court in March of this year, and there will be an open contest for the seat.

Barbara Hervey (R)

(Open Contest for seat)



Judge [Barbara Hervey](#) was elected to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals in 2000. Before becoming a judge, she served as an assistant district attorney in the Bexar County district attorney's Office and taught Texas Criminal Procedure as an adjunct professor at St. Mary's School of Law. She was defeated in a primary election for a fifth term in March of this year, and there will be an open contest for the seat.

Non-Partisan Elections in 2024

Arkansas

John Dan Kemp (R)

(Chief Justice)

Must Retire

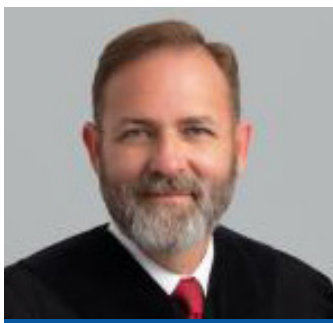
(Open Contest for seat)



Chief Justice [John Dan Kemp](#) was elected to the Arkansas Supreme Court in 2016. He previously served as a judge on the Mountain View Municipal Court, Calico Rock City Court, and as a judge for the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit. Kemp is retiring from the Arkansas Supreme Court due to reaching the mandatory retirement age. There is an open contest for his seat on the court.

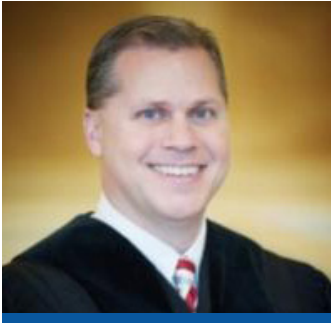
Cody Hiland (R)

(Open Contest for seat)



Justice [Cody Hiland](#) was appointed to the Arkansas Supreme Court in 2023 by Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders (R). He was previously a U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas and a prosecuting attorney for the 20th Judicial District of Arkansas. He is ineligible to run for election to Seat 2 on the Arkansas Supreme Court because the state constitution prohibits an appointee to fill an interim vacancy to run for election to succeed themselves, so there will be an open race to fill the seat.

Shawn Womack (R)



Justice Shawn Womack was first elected to the Arkansas Supreme Court in 2016. He started his career working as a legislative aide to U.S. Sen. Tim Hutchinson (R) and then went on to serve in the Arkansas House of Representative and the Arkansas State Senate, while also maintaining a private practice. He left the state senate to be a judge on the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit where he remained until his election to the supreme court.

Georgia

Michael Boggs (R)



In 2018, Chief Justice Michael Boggs was appointed by Gov. Nathan Deal (R) to the Supreme Court of Georgia. He was previously a member of the Georgia General Assembly, where he served until his election to the superior court in 2004. Boggs was also elected to the Court of Appeals of Georgia.

Andrew Pinson (R)



Justice Andrew Pinson was appointed to the Supreme Court of Georgia in 2022 by Gov. Brian Kemp (R). He was appointed solicitor general of Georgia in 2018 after working in the office of Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr. He previously worked in private practice.

Nels S.D. Peterson (R)



Presiding Justice Nels S.D. Peterson was appointed to the supreme court in 2017 by Gov. Nathan Deal (R). He previously worked as executive counsel and deputy executive counsel to Gov. Sonny Perdue (R) before working in the attorney general's office as counsel for legal policy and then serving as Georgia's first solicitor general. He was also a judge of the Georgia Court of Appeals.

John Ellington (R)



In 2018, Georgia voters elected [Justice John Ellington](#) to the state supreme court. Ellington began his career in private practice. He was then appointed as State Court Judge of Treutlen County and remained there until his appointment to the statewide Court of Appeals. He left that bench upon his election to the supreme court.

Idaho

G. Richard Bevan (R)



[Chief Justice Bevan](#) was appointed to the Idaho Supreme Court in 2017 by Gov. C.L. Otter (R). He worked in private practice until becoming the Twin Falls County prosecutor. He was first appointed to the district court bench by Gov. Dirk Kempthorne (R) in 2003 where he remained until his elevation to the supreme court.

Kentucky

Kentucky elects its supreme court justices by judicial districts, meaning each justice represents and is elected by voters residing in a geographic district.

Laurance VanMeter (R)



[Chief Justice Laurance VanMeter](#) was elected to the Kentucky Supreme Court in 2016, representing the Fifth Appellate District. He was previously a judge of the Kentucky Court of Appeals and the Fayette Circuit Court, and also served as a district court judge. He worked in private practice before joining the bench.

Michigan

David Viviano (R) (Open Contest for seat)



Justice [David Viviano](#) was appointed to the Michigan Supreme Court in 2013 by Gov. Rick Snyder (R). He previously served as chief judge of the Macomb County Circuit Court and Probate Court, and as city attorney for Center Line. He also worked in private practice. Viviano is not seeking re-election in 2024, and there will be an open contest for his seat.

Kyra Harris Bolden (D)



Justice [Kyra Harris Bolden](#) was appointed to the Michigan Supreme Court in 2023 by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D). After law school, she worked as a criminal defense attorney and clerked in Wayne County's Third Circuit Court under the Honorable John A. Murphy. She previously served as a state representative in the Michigan House of Representatives where she worked on legislation involving criminal justice reform and protections for survivors of sexual violence.

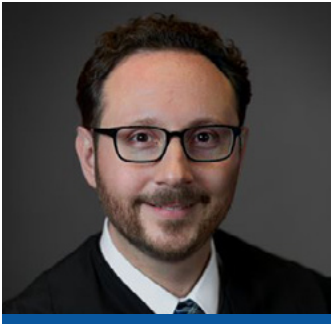
Minnesota

Natalie Hudson (D)



Chief Justice [Natalie Hudson](#) joined the Minnesota Supreme Court in 2015 following her appointment by Gov. Mark Dayton (D) in 2015. She was subsequently re-elected to the bench in 2016 and 2022. In 2023, Gov. Tim Walz (D) elevated her to chief justice of the court. Prior to joining the supreme court, Hudson served as judge on the Minnesota Court of Appeals. She began her legal career as a housing law and staff attorney with Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services before entering into private practice. She worked in the Office of the Minnesota Attorney General before her appointment to the court of appeals.

Karl Procaccini (D)



Justice Karl Procaccini was appointed to the Minnesota Supreme Court in 2023 by Gov. Tim Walz (D). Procaccini began his legal career working in private practice. He served as general counsel and deputy chief of staff in the Office of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor before his appointment to the bench.

Anne McKeig (D)



In 2016, Gov. Mark Dayton (D) appointed Justice Anne McKeig to the Minnesota Supreme Court. McKeig began her career as assistant Hennepin County attorney in the child protection division. She then served on the Hennepin County bench by appointment from Gov. Tim Pawlenty (R). She is the first Native American to serve on the Minnesota Supreme Court.

Mississippi

Jim Kitchens (D)



Presiding Justice Kitchens was elected to the Mississippi Supreme Court in 2008. He began his career in private practice and then served as district attorney for Copiah, Lincoln, Pike and Walthall Counties until his election to the 26th Circuit Court District of Mississippi in 2002.

Robert Chamberlin (R)



Justice Robert Chamberlin was first elected to the Mississippi Supreme Court in 2016. He previously served as a circuit judge of the 17th Circuit District and a member of the Mississippi Senate. He also served as municipal court judge for the city of Hernando and worked as municipal prosecutor for the city of Horn Lake.

Dawn Beam (R)



Justice Dawn Beam was appointed in 2016 to the Mississippi Supreme Court by Gov. Phil Bryant (R). Beam worked in private practice and as a child support attorney for the Mississippi Department of Human Services. She then served as prosecutor for Lamar County and chancellor of the Tenth Chancery District. In both roles, she focused on family law and child crime victims.

Jimmy Maxwell (R)



Justice Jimmy Maxwell was appointed to the Mississippi Supreme Court in 2016 by Gov. Phil Bryant (R). Maxwell began his career practicing civil law before serving as assistant U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Mississippi where he tried public corruption, white collar fraud, money laundering, drug trafficking, immigration, and gang-related crimes. Then he was appointed by Gov. Haley Barbour (R) to the Mississippi Court of Appeals where he served until his elevation to the supreme court.

Montana

Mike McGrath (D)

(Open Contest for seat)



Chief Justice Mike McGrath was first elected to the Montana Supreme Court in 2008. He served as Montana attorney general before his election to the supreme court. He was previously an assistant Montana attorney general and the Lewis and Clark County attorney. He is not seeking re-election to the court, and there will be an election to fill his seat.

Dirk Sandefur (D)

(Open Contest for seat)



Justice Dirk Sandefur was first elected to the Montana Supreme Court in 2016. He was previously a state district judge in the Montana Eighth Judicial District. He worked in private practice, as a contract felony public defender, and as a deputy county attorney in the Cascade County attorney's office before joining the bench. He is not seeking re-election to the court and there will be an election to fill his seat.

Nevada

Lidia Stiglich (D)



Justice Lidia Stiglich was appointed to the Nevada Supreme Court in 2016 by Gov. Brian Sandoval (R). She previously served as a district court judge in Department Eight of the Second Judicial District Court. Prior to joining the bench, she worked in private practice.

Elissa Cadish (D)



Chief Justice Elissa Cadish was elected to the Nevada Supreme Court in 2018. She was appointed as a judge on the Eighth Judicial District Court for Clark County in 2007 by Gov. Jim Gibbons (R). She previously worked in private practice.

Patricia Lee (D)



Justice Patricia Lee was appointed to the Nevada Supreme Court in 2022 by Gov. Steve Sisolak (D). She previously worked in private practice. She also chaired the Nevada Crime Commission and worked as a volunteer attorney for the Children's Attorney Project.

Oregon

Meagan Flynn (D)



Chief Justice Meagan Flynn was appointed to the Oregon Supreme Court by Gov. Kate Brown (D). Before joining the supreme court, Flynn served on the Oregon Court of Appeals. She worked in private practice before joining the bench.

Rebecca Duncan (D)



Justice [Rebecca Duncan](#) was appointed to the Oregon Supreme Court in 2017 by Gov. Kate Brown (D). She served on the Oregon Court of Appeals before her appointment to the supreme court. Duncan began her legal career working as a public defender in Washington and Multnomah Counties and later worked at the Office of Public Defense Services.

Bronson James (D)



Justice [Bronson James](#) was appointed to the court in late 2022 by Gov. Kate Brown (D) and took office in 2023. James started his legal career at the Metropolitan Public Defender and later served as the appellate division chief of the Office of Public Defense Services. He also ran his own practice focused on criminal defense and immigration and civil rights litigation.

Stephen Bushong (D)



Justice [Stephen Bushong](#) was appointed to the Oregon Supreme Court in 2022 by Gov. Kate Brown (D). Bushong first served as a clerk for a federal judge before working in private practice and later at the Oregon Department of Justice. Bushong also served as a circuit court judge in Multnomah County where he remained until his elevation to the supreme court.

Aruna Masih (D)



Justice [Aruna Masih](#) joined the Oregon Supreme Court in 2023 by appointment by Gov. Tina Kotek (D). She previously worked in private practice. She handled matters including civil law, including civil rights, employment, labor, professional licensure, contract, pension, elections, and constitutional law.

Washington

Susan Owens (D)

Must Retire
(Open Contest for seat)



Justice Susan Owens was first elected to the Washington Supreme Court in 2000. She previously served as district court judge in Western Clallam County, the Quileute Tribe's chief judge, and chief judge of the Lower Elwha S'Klallam Tribe. Owens will reach the state's mandatory retirement age this year and must step down from the bench at the end of this term. Her replacement will be elected this year.

Steven González (D)



Justice Steven González was appointed to the Washington Supreme Court in 2012 by Gov. Christine Gregoire (D). Prior to his service on the bench, González worked as a domestic violence prosecutor for the city of Seattle and in private practice. González also served as an assistant U.S. attorney for the Western District of Washington. He then served as trial judge on the King County Superior Court, hearing criminal, civil, juvenile, and family law cases until his appointment to the Supreme Court.

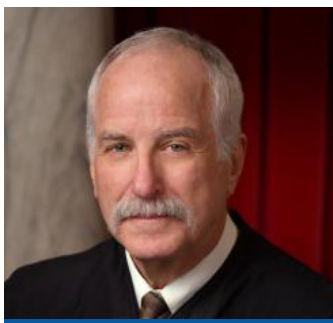
Sheryl McCloud (D)



Justice Sheryl McCloud was elected to the Washington Supreme Court in 2012. She previously served as a staff attorney for the Seattle-King County Public Defender Association and ran the law office of Sheryl Gordon McCloud.

West Virginia

John Hutchison (R)



Justice John Hutchison was appointed to the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals in 2018 by Gov. Justice (R). He began his legal career in private practice and then opened the Nationwide Insurance West Virginia Trial Division Office. He was appointed to the Tenth Judicial Circuit in 1995 by Gov. Gaston Caperton (D). Hutchison will not be seeking re-election to the court. His replacement will be chosen in the upcoming May election.

Haley Bunn (R)



Justice Haley Bunn was appointed to the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia in 2022 by Gov. Jim Justice (R). Bunn began her career in private practice working in corporate civil defense litigation. She then served as assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia, prosecuting drug distribution cases. She left that position in 2019 and returned to private practice until her appointment to the bench.

Retention Elections in 2024

Alaska

Jennifer Stuart Henderson (R)



Justice Jennifer Stuart Henderson was appointed to the Alaska Supreme Court in 2021 by Gov. Mike Dunleavy (R). She previously served as a district court and superior court judge. She also worked at the Anchorage district attorney's office and in private practice.

Dario Borghesan (R)



Justice Dario Borghesan was appointed to the Alaska Supreme Court in 2020 by Gov. Mike Dunleavy (R). He previously served as the chief assistant attorney general of the Opinions, Appeals & Ethics Section of the Alaska Department of Law.

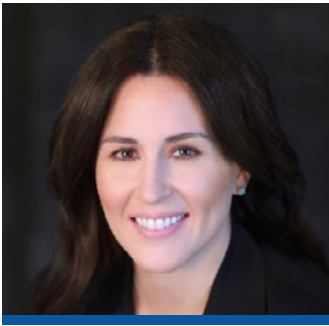
Arizona

Clint Bolick (R)



Justice [Clint Bolick](#) was appointed to the Arizona Supreme Court in 2016 by Gov. Doug Ducey (R). He previously served as vice president for litigation at the Goldwater Institute and as co-founder and vice president for litigation at the Institute for Justice. He also worked at the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, and the Landmark Center for Civil Rights.

Kathryn Hackett King (R)



Justice [Kathryn Hackett King](#) was appointed to the Arizona Supreme Court by Gov. Doug Ducey (R) in 2021. She previously worked in private practice and later worked as deputy general counsel for Ducey.

Colorado

Brian Boatright (R)



Chief Justice [Brian Boatright](#) was appointed to the Colorado Supreme Court in 2011 by Gov. John Hickenlooper (D). He became chief justice in 2021. He previously served as a district court judge in the First Judicial District of Colorado. He also served as a deputy district attorney in Jefferson and Gilpin Counties.

Monica Marquez (D)



Justice [Monica Márquez](#) was appointed to the Colorado Supreme Court by Gov. Bill Ritter, Jr. (D) in 2010. She previously served as deputy attorney general at the Colorado attorney general's office and assistant solicitor general and assistant attorney general in both the Public Officials Unit and the Criminal Appellate Section. She also worked in private practice.

Maria Berkenkotter (D)



Justice Maria Berkenkotter was appointed to the Colorado Supreme Court in 2020 by Gov. Jared Polis (D). She previously served as chief judge of the Twentieth Judicial District and ran the antitrust, consumer protection, and tobacco litigation units of the Colorado attorney general's office. She also worked in private practice.

Florida

Renatha Francis (R)



Justice Renatha Francis was appointed to the Supreme Court of Florida by Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) in 2022. She previously served as a judge of the 15th Judicial Circuit Court in Palm Beach County and the circuit and county courts in the 11th Judicial Circuit of Miami-Dade. Prior to joining the bench, she worked in private practice.

Meredith Sasso (R)



Justice Meredith Sasso was appointed to the Supreme Court of Florida in 2023 by Gov. Ron DeSantis (R). She previously served on the bench for the Fifth, and later Sixth, District Courts of Appeal and as chief deputy general counsel to Florida Gov. Rick Scott (R). She also worked in private practice.

Indiana

Loretta Rush (R)



Chief Justice Loretta Rush was appointed to the Indiana Supreme Court in 2012 by Gov. Mitch Daniels (R). She previously served as a Tippecanoe Superior Court 3 judge. Before joining the bench, she practiced civil litigation.

Mark Massa (R)



Justice [Mark Massa](#) was appointed to the Indiana Supreme Court by Gov. Mitch Daniels (R) in 2012. He previously served as executive director of the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute. He also worked as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Southern District of Indiana, as general counsel to Daniels, and in the Marion County prosecutor's office.

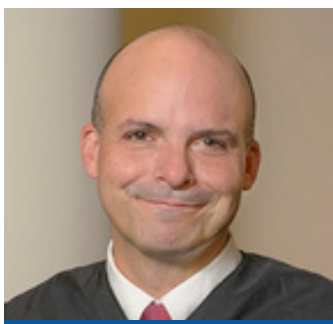
Derek Molter (R)



Justice [Derek Molter](#) was appointed to the Indiana Supreme Court by Gov. Eric Holcomb (R) in 2022. He previously served on the Indiana Court of Appeals. Prior to joining the bench, he worked in private practice.

Iowa

David May (R)



Justice [David May](#) was appointed to the Iowa Supreme Court in 2022 by Gov. Kim Reynolds (R). He previously served on the Iowa Court of Appeals and as a district judge in Judicial Election District 5C. He worked in private practice before joining the bench.

Maryland

Matthew Fader (R)



Chief Justice [Matthew Fader](#) was appointed to the Maryland Supreme Court in 2022 by Gov. Larry Hogan (R). He was previously a judge and later chief judge of the Maryland Court of Special Appeals. He also worked as chief of litigation in the Civil Litigation Division of the Office of Attorney General and as a trial attorney in the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Division. He also worked in private practice.

Shirley M. Watts (D)



Justice Shirley M. Watts was appointed to the Maryland Supreme Court in 2013 by Gov. Martin O'Malley (D). She previously served as a judge of the Court of Special Appeals, an associate judge for the Baltimore City Circuit Court, and a federal administrative law judge. She worked as a federal public defender for the District of Maryland and an assistant state's attorney in the juvenile, misdemeanor and felony trial divisions before joining the bench.

Angela Eaves (R)



Justice Angela Eaves was appointed to the Maryland Supreme Court by Gov. Larry Hogan (R). She was previously an administrative judge, an associate judge for the Harford County Circuit Court, and a judge of the Maryland District Court for Harford County. Prior to joining the bench, she worked as a staff attorney for the Maryland Legal Aid Bureau.

Missouri

Ginger Gooch (R)



Justice Ginger Gooch was appointed to the Missouri Supreme Court by Gov. Mike Parsons (R) in 2023. She previously served as a judge of the Missouri Court of Appeals. She worked in private practice before joining the bench.

Kelly Broniec (R)



Justice Kelly Broniec was appointed to the Missouri Supreme Court in 2023 by Gov. Mike Parsons (R). She was previously an Eastern Missouri District Court of Appeals judge and a Montgomery County Circuit Court judge. She worked as a prosecutor before she joined the bench.

Nebraska

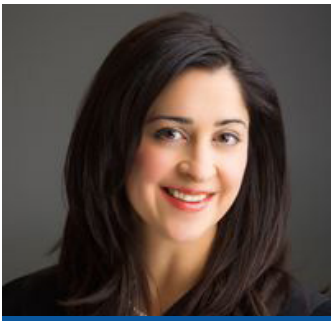
Stephanie Stacy (R)



Justice [Stephanie Stacy](#) was appointed to the Nebraska Supreme Court in 2015 by Gov. Pete Ricketts (R). She previously served as a judge on the District Court, 3rd Judicial District. Before joining the bench, she worked in private practice.

New Mexico

Briana Zamora (D)



Justice [Briana Zamora](#) was appointed to the New Mexico Supreme Court in 2021 by Gov. Michele Lujan Grisham (D). She previously served on the Bernalillo County District Court and Metropolitan Court. She also worked in private practice and in public service as an assistant state attorney general and assistant district attorney.

Oklahoma Supreme Court

In Oklahoma, the Supreme Court is the court of last resort for civil appeals.

James Edmondson (D)



Justice [James Edmondson](#) was appointed to the Oklahoma Supreme Court by Gov. Brad Henry (D) in 2003. He previously served as a district judge and was an acting U.S. attorney and an assistant U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Oklahoma. He also worked in private practice and as Muskogee County's assistant district attorney.

Yvonne Kauger (D)



Justice Yvonne Kauger was appointed to the Oklahoma Supreme Court in 1984 by Gov. George Nigh (D). She was previously a staff attorney for the Oklahoma Supreme Court and worked in private practice.

Noma Gurich (R)



Justice Noma Gurich was appointed to the Oklahoma Supreme Court by Gov. Brad Henry (D) in 2011. She previously served as a judge on the Oklahoma Workers' Compensation Court and as a district court judge, and worked in private practice before joining the bench.

Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals

In Oklahoma, the Court of Criminal Appeals is the court of last resort for criminal appeals.

Scott Rowland



Presiding Judge Scott Rowland was appointed to the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals by Gov. Mary Fallin (R) in 2017. He served as an assistant attorney general for the state of Oklahoma, general counsel to the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, and as an assistant district attorney in the Oklahoma County district attorney's office before becoming a judge.

William Musseman



Judge William Musseman was appointed to the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals by Gov. Kevin Stitt (R) in 2022. He was previously a special judge, district judge, and presiding judge of Oklahoma's 14th Judicial District. Before joining the bench, he was a special assistant U.S. attorney and also served as an assistant district attorney in the Tulsa County district attorney's office, including as director of the major crimes team.

David Lewis



Judge David Lewis was appointed to the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals by Gov. Brad Henry (D) in 2005, and served as presiding judge of the court from 2013 to 2014 and in 2020. He previously served as a district judge and a special judge and worked in private practice and as a Comanche County prosecutor before joining the bench.

South Dakota

Scott Myren (R)



Justice Scott Myren was appointed to the South Dakota Supreme Court by Gov. Kristi Noem (R) in 2020. He previously served as presiding judge for the Fifth Judicial Circuit, as administrative law judge for the Office of Administrative Hearings, and as magistrate judge for the Sixth Judicial Circuit. Prior to joining the bench, he worked as a staff attorney at the South Dakota Supreme Court and in private practice.

Tennessee

Dwight Tarwater (R)



Justice Dwight Tarwater was appointed to the Tennessee Supreme Court in 2023 by Gov. Bill Lee (R). He previously served as general counsel to Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam (R) and worked in private practice.

Utah

Matthew Durrant (R)



Chief Justice Matthew Durrant was appointed to the Utah Supreme Court by Gov. Michael O. Leavitt (R) in 2000. He became chief justice of the court in 2012. He previously served as a trial judge in the Third Judicial District and worked in private practice before joining the bench.

Wyoming

John Fenn (R)



Justice [John Fenn](#) was appointed to the Wyoming Supreme Court in 2021 by Gov. Mark Gordon (R). He previously served as a district judge in the Wyoming Fourth Judicial District. He worked in private practice before joining the bench.

Kate Fox (R)



Chief Justice [Kate Fox](#) was appointed to the Wyoming Supreme Court as an associate justice in 2014 by Gov. Matthew Mead (R). She became chief justice of the court in 2021. Prior to joining the bench, she worked in private practice.

Other Vacancies or Potential Changes to State Supreme Courts in 2024

Maryland

Michele Hotten (R)

(Must Retire)



Justice [Michele Hotten](#) previously served as a judge on the Court of Special Appeals and an associate judge on Prince George's County Circuit Court. After law school she worked in private practice and as an assistant state's attorney in Prince George's County. She must retire from the court before her 70th birthday on April 20, 2024.

Minnesota

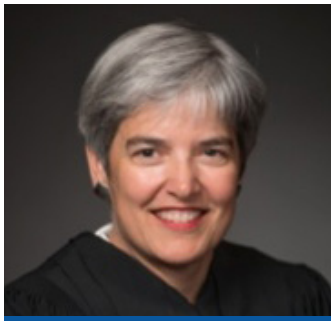
Barry Anderson (R)

(Must Retire)



Justice [Barry Anderson](#) was appointed to the Minnesota Supreme Court by Gov. Tim Pawlenty (R) in 2004. He was previously a judge of the Minnesota Court of Appeals. He worked in private practice before joining the bench. He must retire from the court before October 24, 2024, his 70th birthday, and Gov. Tim Walz (D) will appoint his replacement.

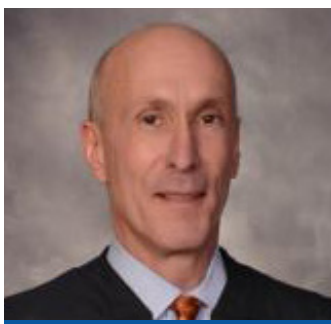
Margaret Chutich (D)



Gov. Mark Dayton (D) appointed Justice [Margaret Chutich](#) to the supreme court in 2016. Chutich began her career as a federal law clerk before going into private practice. She then also worked in the Minnesota attorney general's office and as an assistant U.S. attorney for the District of Minnesota. She announced in January of this year that she would retire from the court on July 31. Gov. Tim Walz (D) will appoint her replacement.

New Jersey

Lee Solomon (R)



Justice [Lee Solomon](#) was appointed to the New Jersey Supreme Court by Gov. Chris Christie (R) in 2014. He was previously a judge of the Camden County Superior Court in the family, criminal, and civil divisions. Before joining the bench, he led the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities and was a deputy U.S. attorney and Camden County prosecutor. He must retire from the court before his 70th birthday on August 17th, 2024.

South Carolina

Donald Beatty (D)



Chief Justice Donald W. Beatty joined the South Carolina Supreme Court in 2003 after being elected by the state legislature. He became chief justice of the court in 2017. He previously served as a judge of the South Carolina Court of Appeals and as a circuit court judge, and was a legal aid attorney and a South Carolina state legislator before joining the bench. He must retire before he reaches the state's mandatory retirement age of 72 on April 29, 2024.

Texas

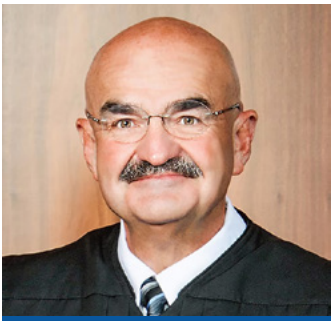
Nathan Hecht (R)



Chief Justice Nathan Hecht was appointed to the Texas Supreme Court in 1988 by Gov. Bill Clements (R). He was appointed chief justice of the court in 2013 by Gov. Rick Perry (R). He was previously a judge of the Texas Court of Appeals and the Dallas County District Court, and worked in private practice prior to joining the bench. He must retire from the court in 2024 before he reaches his 75th birthday on August 15, 2024.

Wyoming

Keith Kautz (R)



Justice Keith Kautz was appointed to the Wyoming Supreme Court by Gov. Matthew Mead (R) in 2015. He previously served as a district judge in the Eighth Judicial District of Wyoming and worked in private practice before joining the bench. Kautz announced he would retire from the court in late 2023, and Gov. Mark Gordon (R) nominated Robert Jarosh to fill the vacancy. Justice Jarosh was sworn in on March 27, 2024, following a career in private practice in Wyoming. His most recent practice focused on employer-side defense. To remain on the bench, he must stand for retention election in 2026.

Robert Jarosh (R)



2025 Elections and Vacancies

Partisan Elections in 2025

Wisconsin

Ann Walsh Bradley (D)



Ann Walsh Bradley was first elected to the Wisconsin Supreme Court in 1995 and was subsequently re-elected in 2005 and 2015. Bradley began her legal career in private practice. She first joined the bench in 1985 when she became a Marathon County Circuit Court judge. She remained there until her election to the supreme court.

Retention Elections in 2025

Pennsylvania

Christine Donohue (D)



Christine Donohue was first elected to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 2015. She began her legal career in private practice, first focusing on personal injury law and later complex commercial litigation. In 2007, Donohue ran for election to the superior court and won. She served on that bench until her election to the supreme court.

David Wecht (D)



David Wecht was elected to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 2015. He worked in private practice before joining the bench. He was first appointed to the Court of Common Pleas for Allegheny County and remained on that bench until his election to the superior court, where he served until beginning his tenure on the supreme court.

Kevin Dougherty (D)



Kevin Dougherty joined the Pennsylvania Supreme Court following his election in 2015. He served as an assistant district attorney in Philadelphia County before entering private practice, where he also served as a special master for the Philadelphia Family Court Truancy Program. Dougherty was appointed as a judge of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas in 2001 where he was later retained by voters. He remained there until his election to the supreme court.

Other Vacancies or Potential Changes to State Supreme Courts in 2025

Alaska

Peter Maassen (R)



Peter Maassen was appointed to the Alaska Supreme Court by Gov. Sean Parnell (R) in 2012. He remained in private practice for seven years before moving to Washington, D.C. to work for the office of the general counsel for the U.S. Department of Commerce. He returned to Alaska and continued his private practice until his appointment to the supreme court in 2012. Maassen will have to step down from the bench upon reaching the mandatory retirement age of 70 in January 2025.

Connecticut

Gregory D'Auria (D)



Gregory D'Auria was appointed to the Connecticut Supreme Court in 2017 by Gov. Dannel Malloy (D). He previously worked in the attorney general's office as an assistant attorney general, as an attorney general for litigation, and later led the special litigation and charities unit. In 2011, he became Connecticut's first solicitor general, where he remained until his nomination to the Supreme Court. D'Auria's term will expire in March 2025. To remain on the bench, he will need to be re-nominated by the governor and re-confirmed by the Connecticut General Assembly.

Raheem Mullins (D)



Raheem Mullins joined the Connecticut Supreme Court after his appointment by Gov. Dannel Malloy (D) in 2017 and is the youngest person to be appointed to the court. He previously worked as an assistant attorney general in the Child Protection Division of the Connecticut attorney general's office. He later served as assistant state's attorney for the appellate bureau until his appointment to the bench. Mullins's term will expire in October 2025. To remain on the bench, he will need to be re-nominated by the governor and re-confirmed by the Connecticut General Assembly.

Wyoming

Kate Fox (R)



Chief Justice Kate Fox joined the Wyoming Supreme Court in 2015 following her appointment to the court by Gov. Matthew Mead (R). She previously worked in private practice overseeing cases dealing with employment law, litigation, administrative law, natural resources law, and water law. Fox will reach the mandatory retirement age of 70 in 2025. Should she run for retention election 2024 and win, Gov. Mark Gordon (R) will select her successor from a slate provided to him by the Judicial Nominating Commission. That successor will have to stand for retention election in the next general election at least one year from the time of appointment.

Conclusion

There is essential collective work to do to ensure that our state courts genuinely reflect the communities they serve and uphold our most fundamental rights. With dozens of state supreme court elections in 2024, important vacancies to be filled via appointments on state supreme courts throughout the country, and critical cases coming before each of these courts, people in every state need to understand who sits on their courts and how they get there. AFJ Action will continue its work educating advocates, stakeholders, and voters on the importance of state courts and the need for exceptionally qualified demographically and professionally diverse state courts, and we will partner closely with communities throughout the country. The future of our democracy and our fundamental rights depends on it.

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