

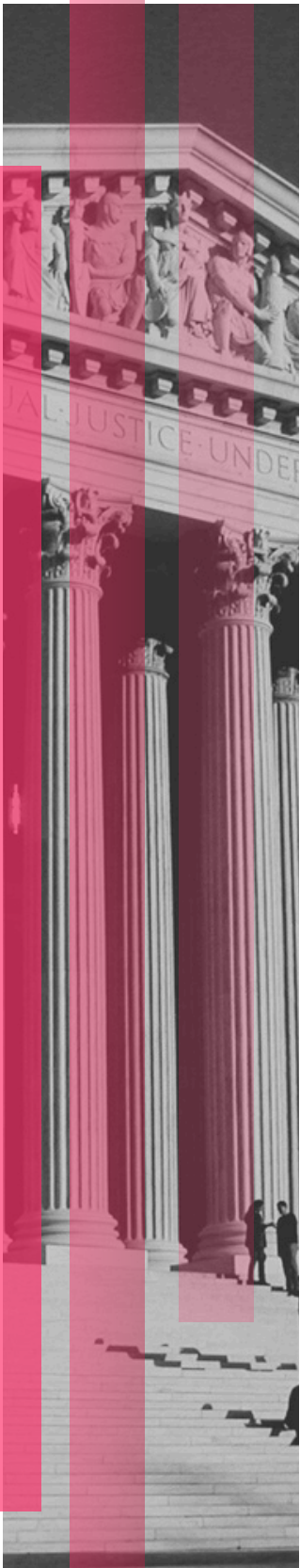
# REPORT

2024

MID-YEAR REVIEW



A report to our supporters, allies, and partners summarizing our work to fight for justice and protect our democracy.



*“With each passing day, we feel the threat to our constitutional democracy growing. From radical court decisions that dismantle essential freedoms and protections, to attacks on the very right to vote, this fight is as important as ever. But we are also as ready as ever to win that fight and reclaim the true dream of freedom and equality that inspires our more perfect union.”*

Alliance for Justice champions, defends, and enhances the promise of our multiracial, constitutional democracy. Our three core programs — Justice, Bolder Advocacy, and Outreach & Membership — make up the foundation of our enduring commitment. These programs work together to clarify the stakes of the battle, and fight for the constitution. This year, with our new strategic plan well into implementation, we are doubling down.

In an historic year for our country and our democracy, Alliance for Justice (AFJ) and Alliance for Justice Action Campaign (AFJ Action Campaign) are doing the critical work to ensure a strong, fair, and representative judiciary and building power in the progressive movements that are fighting to protect our rights and freedoms. We are building the power of grassroots organizations by maximizing their advocacy capacity. And we are keenly focused on strengthening our federal courts by elevating movement lawyers through nominations and pipeline-building strategies before the end of the 118th Congress. That said, regardless of the outcome of the November election, we will press forward to secure a more just future for all.

This report highlights our progress in the implementation of our strategic plan that we launched in 2023. Our work would not be possible without the support, partnership, and allyship of many partners, organizations, donors, foundation supporters, and advisors. Together, we are the Alliance for Justice.

# TAKING BOLDER ADVOCACY TO THE GRASSROOTS

**Civic activism** is necessary to enhance constitutional democracy. Today, nonprofits are the vehicle through which their constituencies weigh in on the policies that shape their lives, bringing the rule of law closer to the communities they serve. Our Bolder Advocacy program works with nonprofits engaged in lobbying, voter registration, ballot measures, and other advocacy efforts. We train and consult with more than 2,000 nonprofit groups nationwide each year, providing guidance and answering thousands of questions on a wide variety of legal topics. Bolder Advocacy's Rules of the Game podcast (found wherever you listen to your podcasts) also provides the nonprofit sector with proactive, innovative, and vital takes on what organizations can do to champion their communities and their causes.

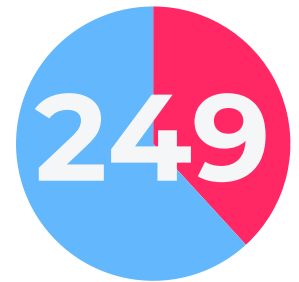
## Q1 IMPACT SNAPSHOT

# 95%

of our workshops were delivered to grassroots organizations and/or organizations within our eight priority issue areas.

The team increased its delivery of technical assistance (TA) by completing **249 TA calls, 40% of which came from grassroots organizations** with the balance coming from organizations that support them.

 Organizations supporting grassroots organizations  Grassroots organizations



### OUR EIGHT ISSUE AREAS

CRIMINAL LEGAL REFORM



DEMOCRACY & VOTING RIGHTS



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



GENDER & REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS



HEALTH & DISABILITY RIGHTS



LABOR & ECONOMIC JUSTICE



LGBTQ+ & HIV RIGHTS



RACIAL JUSTICE & IMMIGRATION RIGHTS



## BOLDER ADVOCACY SUCCESS STORIES

### Bolder Advocacy Empowering Houston in Action

As the threat from the far-right continues to spread, nonprofits like Houston in Action, an AFJ member organization, are equipping themselves for the fights ahead. Houston in Action is a collective impact organization: They facilitate relationships across the government and health sectors, private philanthropy, and community-based organizations (including their member organizations) to invest in Houston, particularly the city's communities of color and low-income residents. Since 2022, the organization has applied its learnings from BA services (our workshops, free technical assistance, and one-on-one office hours) to help its members pursue non-partisan voter engagement and lobbying. The information and services we provide empower the group's members to be more effective and bolder, and to engage more community members while breaking down barriers to civic participation.

*"The more we build power with and for communities of color, the more we become a target. It is important compliance is tight."*

**Juan Cardoza-Oquendo**  
Programs Director, Houston in Action

### Bolder Advocacy Partnering with Faith in Action

Monica Sommerville, director of grants management and compliance and federation coach at Faith in Action, reflects on their partnership with Bolder Advocacy: **"Bolder Advocacy has been my go-to resource for everything."** From state-specific guidelines to understanding the nuances between 501(c)(3)s and 501(c)(4)s, Bolder Advocacy support has been pivotal to the organization's success in maintaining compliance with laws governing nonprofits.


The journey towards compliance isn't just about ticking boxes — it is about fostering a culture of understanding and empowerment within Faith in Action. This shift in mindset has catalyzed a new era of collaboration and effectiveness.

*"Our advocacy clarity has been super helpful in maximizing our impact."*

**Monica Sommerville**  
Director of Grants Management & Compliance and Federation Coach, Faith in Action

## BOLDER ADVOCACY RESOURCES: ESSENTIAL TOOLS FOR OUR PARTNERS

Earlier this year, AFJ released the 5th edition of *The Connection*, a resource for the nonprofit legal community and for advocates to learn how to maximize their impact and stay in legal compliance by creating and operating 501(c)(3)s, 501(c)(4)s, and political organizations. It explains how affiliated organizations can safely share office space and staff, how to form a 501(c)(4), and how and when different types of tax-exempt entities can coordinate and work together.



**500+**

As of the end of April, *The Connection* has been downloaded over 500 times, a testament to the nonprofit sectors' reliance on our expertise and resources.

In anticipation of election season, Bolder Advocacy created a public webinar entitled: ***What Your Nonprofit Needs to Know When Registering Voters and Getting Out the Vote***, designed to address how private and public foundations can engage in and support election season advocacy. This webinar will also support power-building, grassroots nonprofits and ensure they have the information they need to engage in GOTV work, voter registration activities, and engagement efforts.

The **Rules of the Game Podcast**, a production of our Bolder Advocacy attorneys, breaks down complex advocacy laws to better guide nonprofits. It has had 34k+ unique downloads since we introduced the podcast in 2020. Our most popular recent episodes include:

- On January 10 we released our “Ballot Measure Insights” episode with guest speaker, Emma Olson Sharkey from Elias Law Group. In this episode, Emma brought her fresh perspective after successfully guiding clients to victory in the critical 2023 Ohio reproductive rights ballot measure fight. Emma helped shed light on the essential considerations for tax-exempt organizations before taking the plunge into a ballot measure campaign.
- On March 6 we marked our 100th episode of Rules of the Game podcast. This episode, titled “Bold AF,” featured guest speaker Vu Le of **Nonprofit AF**. We were excited to chat with the incomparable Vu Le, who brings his unique blend of insight, humor, and a pinch of provocation to the table, all wrapped up in the perspectives you’ve come to know from his writing.

We have received overwhelmingly positive feedback about our workshops from our post-training surveys. In the first quarter, we received 195 survey responses; 97-98% of respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that our trainers were well-prepared, kept their attention, and explained the material clearly. 94% of respondents also “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their learning objectives were met through the training, and 90% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they felt equipped to achieve their advocacy objectives post-training.

# DOUBLING DOWN ON MEMBERSHIP

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Our alliance of nearly 140 organizations from across the progressive spectrum is at the center of everything we do — without collective action, achieving a just and multiracial democracy will be impossible. Through a strengthened and more engaged membership network, and a greater focus on serving grassroots organizations, AFJ is playing a pivotal support role in building power in our communities.

In the first half of 2024, we were thrilled to welcome the following organizations to our membership:

- Interfaith Alliance
- The Climate & Clean Energy Equity Fund
- Economic Policy Institute
- State Voices
- Seeding Justice
- Northwest Workers Justice Project
- Residents Organizing for Change
- Oregon Center for Public Policy
- Social Welfare Action Alliance
- Transforming Justice Coalition
- Next Up Action Fund
- Oregon Futures Lab Education Fund
- Oregon Rural Action
- Beyond Toxics
- Pueblo Unido
- Pride Foundation
- PFLAG

Our membership team organizes events and trainings for members to elevate the importance and quality of our judges' professional backgrounds and lived experiences. So far this year, we have organized the following events for our members:

- **"Judicial Pathways,"** our Building the Bench program, **partnered with People's Parity Project** to design and present a workshop that covers the nomination process, vacancies, and which nominees to watch out for.
- A Get-out-the-Vote (GOTV) training, in which our Bolder Advocacy team provided an overview of allowable GOTV activities for 501(c)(3) nonprofits and broke down challenges to effective voter engagement.
- The Outreach & Membership team works with the justice team to organize our Judicial Legacies Series, which honors retiring judges and those taking senior status who have championed equal justice throughout their careers. This gathering celebrates the judges who have transformed the legal landscape with their stellar service and commitment to justice.



# MOVEMENT LAWYERS, MOVEMENT JUDGES, MOVEMENT LAW

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Supporting movement law, lawyers, and judges is an essential part of AFJ's strategy to build a judicial system that protects our rights and freedoms. Educating the public about the people who serve as judges and those judges' professional and lived experiences is essential to our success. The following reports make this case:

**Courting Change: 2023 Momentum for Movement Law.** This report shares both the highlights and challenges of last year, including great strides made in the breadth of qualified individuals who were confirmed to the federal bench, while we also experienced great injustices at the hands of the Supreme Court.

**State of Justice 2024: State Supreme Courts and the Future of Democracy** highlights the increasing focus on state court elections and some of the major cases these courts are handling.

**Economic Justice, Judges, and the Law 2024 Addendum** highlights labor-side attorneys nominated and confirmed to the courts since our original report and recent court cases that have impacted workers.

## CHAMPIONING KEY FEDERAL NOMINATIONS



**Judge Nancy Maldonado**, a labor rights champion, and current district judge for the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois (who we supported in 2022), was nominated for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit in February. We **support** her nomination and hope to see her confirmation soon as the first Latinx judge on the Seventh Circuit.

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**Amir Ali** is a veteran civil rights litigator and the son of Egyptian immigrants, and will bring stellar professional credentials and relatable, real-world experience to the court. If confirmed, Ali will be the first Arab American to serve as a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

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**Judge Michelle Court** currently serves on the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles. Before joining the bench, she worked at Bet Tzedek Legal Services, a nonprofit firm focused on poverty law. Bet Tzedek provides free legal services to Angelenos and, in its 50-year history, has made an enormous difference in the Los Angeles community.

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**Judge Anne Hwang**, like Judge Court, serves on the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles. From 2006-2018, Judge Hwang worked in the Office of the Federal Public Defender, Central District of California. Public defenders are drastically underrepresented on our federal courts, meaning that Judge Hwang will bring important professional diversity to the bench.



**Judge Cynthia Valenzuela Dixon** serves on the California State Bar Court, where she rules on attorney misconduct issues. An expert in legal ethics, she previously worked as the Criminal Justice Act Supervising Attorney for the Central District of California. In that role, she supervised the attorneys appointed to represent indigent defendants. Prior to that, she served as Head of National Litigation at the nationally renowned Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (“MALDEF”).



**Stacey Neumann** currently serves as partner and director at the firm Murray, Plumb & Murray. She specializes in complex criminal defense and civil rights litigation. Neumann previously served as staff attorney at the Chittenden County Public Defender’s Office in Vermont, where she represented indigent clients in felony and misdemeanor cases.



**Danna Jackson** is the Tribal Attorney for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. She is an expert in environmental and federal Indian law, with almost three decades of legal experience. Jackson previously worked for the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Senate. If confirmed, she will be the first Native American judge to serve on the District of Montana.

And finally, after tirelessly writing letters of support and sending them to the Senate Judiciary Committee, drafting reports for others to learn more about our preferred nominees, meeting with Senate offices to show our support for the nominees, and working in coalition with other organizations, we can say with great excitement and joy that we saw the confirmation of Nicole Berner in March as the first openly LGBTQ+ judge on the Fourth Circuit. Judge Berner previously served as general counsel for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and as a litigator for Planned Parenthood.



*We can finally say the words ‘Judge Nicole Berner.’ Berner is a phenomenal lawyer who champions a vision of our Constitution that protects all Americans, not just the wealthy and powerful. Our courts so desperately need more movement lawyers, and namely labor lawyers, like her on the bench.*

*The Senate should now immediately turn to also confirming Adeel Mangi, another incredibly qualified nominee who has been the subject of gross, false attacks. Berner and Mangi are the pinnacle of the kind of judges our courts deserve.*

RAKIM BROOKS

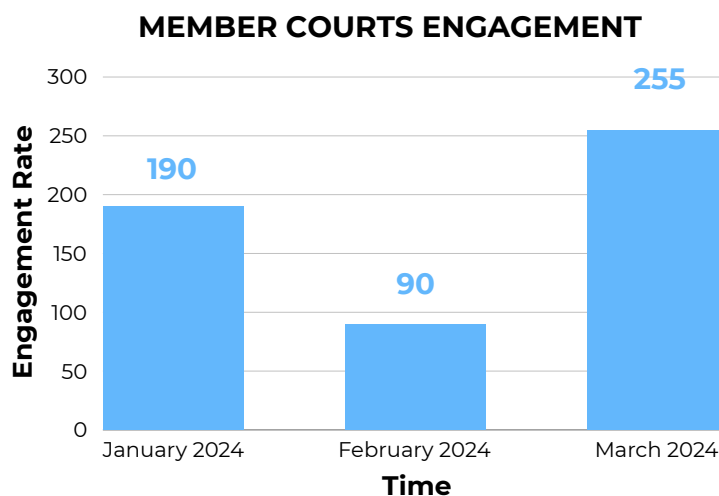


## ACTIVATING OUR MEMBERSHIP: FILLING EVERY SEAT

During the first quarter, AFJ and AFJ Action launched the **Fill Every Seat campaign**, with the purpose of confirming as many movement judges to the federal judiciary as possible before the new Congressional term in January 2025. Via the campaign, we aim to educate supporters on three important strategies:

1. *Filling every judicial vacancy with movement lawyers or movement judges is critical to advancing progressive issues and protecting progressive legislative wins.*
2. *We have a limited window to continue the progress made on confirming movement judges and must act now.*
3. *Progressive allies must integrate advocacy targeting the Senate to confirm judges into their agendas.*

We're providing calls to action to AFJ members and progressive allies to pressure the White House and Senate to fill every seat. We launched an **online toolkit** that members and coalition partners can use to mobilize their bases to easily take action. We also worked with coalition partners and members to carry out themed days of action, where we coordinate social media posts to go up at an agreed upon date and time emphasizing the need to confirm more judges with backgrounds in a specific field that is underrepresented on the judiciary. The campaign was a significant contributor to increased courts engagement from our members during the quarter, as reflected in the chart (pictured right).



In support of our courts work, we activate our members to engage in the key nominations, confirmations, and elections in their states and districts. By leveraging our member relationships, our collective activism in advocating for movement lawyers is more powerful and effective.

## STATE COURTS PROJECT OUTREACH AND ELECTIONS

AFJ Action Campaign builds its profile in the state courts advocacy and organizing spaces through state-specific outreach strategies and convening national partners engaged in state court advocacy.

This year, over 30 states will hold elections for over 80 seats on their supreme courts. The races kicked off in May with the first contest of the year: Georgia's state supreme court race. John Barrow, a former congressman, and former secretary of state for Georgia, challenged incumbent Justice Andrew Pinson, the state's former solicitor general. As Pinson defended the state's abortion ban while serving as solicitor general, reproductive rights were central to the race. AFJ Action Campaign conducted outreach to our lists of voters and supporters in the critical lead-up to election day. However, Pinson won reelection to his seat, defeating Barrow.

While the outcome was not surprising, given the incumbent advantage and the way "judicial ethics" were weaponized to protect Justice Pinson, the race sparked conversations about the importance of state supreme court elections. As the conservative supermajority on the U.S. Supreme Court rules against cherished rights and freedoms, state supreme courts can be an important stopgap — one that voters in many states can directly impact.



Our Justice team provides critical leadership and expertise for the judicial nominations field, including posting blogs on AFJ's website, securing earned media, and partnering with allied organizations on voter education PSAs and 501(c)(3) coalition building.

## REPORTS AND RESOURCES



In the first quarter of this year, AFJ's state courts team released **Faces of Justice Volume 1**, the **first in a series** of reports highlighting demographic and professional diversity of the judges on every state supreme court. In our ongoing blog series, we published a **post** exploring efforts by the North Carolina Supreme Court's conservative majority to exert its judicial oversight authority to impose a conservative agenda across the state, and a **post** explaining how the recent convictions of a Michigan couple whose son committed a mass school shooting lay the groundwork for new gun violence prevention avenues in state courts. Our state courts team also filmed a short **video** on the **Alabama Supreme Court IVF decision** with Andrea Huggenvik, social justice program specialist at YWCA Greater Green Bay.

In Minnesota, the team is advocating for AFJ's preferred appointees to fill two impending vacancies on the Minnesota Supreme Court. AFJ has been elevating former federal public defender and current **Minnesota Court of Appeals Judge Keala Ede** for consideration to the state's high court or for a federal district judgeship for some time; Judge Ede was recently announced as a finalist for a seat on the Minnesota Supreme Court.

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

When Alliance for Justice shows up in progressive spaces and gatherings, our vision, expertise, and resources reach much larger audiences, and our alliance is strengthened. In January, AFJ was well represented at our member organization, the National LGBTQ+ Task Force's Creating Change conference, an annual gathering of thousands of LGBTQ+ people and allies. Vice President of Strategy, Keith Thirion, and Senior Aron Counsel and Senior Fellow, Rebecca Buckwalter-Poza, organized a session on building a pipeline of LGBTQ+ judges and the importance of the courts for LGBTQ+ equality. Keith also hosted a session on building unlikely alliances across issue areas, featuring lessons learned from AFJ's decades in building coalitions for judicial nominations.

In April, Natalie Ossenfort, program director of Bolder Advocacy, presented on a panel at the Funders Committee for Civic Participation (FCCP) conference, titled: "Investing in Power-Building: Best Practices for 501(c)(3) Giving in Election Years (A How-To Guide)." She spoke on this panel with our partners, Tides and New Left Accelerator. They discussed how and why movement organizations are multi-entity and leverage

501(c)(4)s and other legal entities in addition to their 501(c)(3)s to increase impact, build power, and win key policy battles. Later that month, Bolder Advocacy’s bilingual counsel, Monika Graham, presented on a panel at ABFE’s (A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities) annual Harambe conference. The workshop was titled: “Transcending Election Traditions: Using c3 Dollars to Support Racial Justice & Build Political Power.” The panel discussed how funders can legally and effectively support these organizers in building and safeguarding public education and a multiracial democracy.

### HOLDING COURT SERIES

On January 23 we held a session with Joel Anderson, host of the podcast, **Slow Burn: Becoming Justice Thomas**. In Slow Burn, Joel does a deep dive into Justice Thomas’s biography — from his roots in Georgia to his time as a college campus radical to his professional endeavors leading up to his time at the Supreme Court. Rakim joined Joel for a conversation on Justice Thomas and what Joel learned through his reporting. [\(Watch here\)](#)

The series continued February 21, when Rakim hosted a conversation with Dr. Juliet Hooker, Professor at Brown University, and author of the new book, **Black Grief/White Grievance: The Politics of Loss**. They discussed how Black grief and white grievance have shaped our nation and what it means for our future.



### DEMOCRACY DOCKET

Last year, Democracy Docket (a leading digital news platform dedicated to information, analysis, and opinion about voting rights and elections in the courts) launched a new contributor program, and Rakim became a monthly columnist for the platform. Rakim continues to write about issues relating to our state and federal courts as well as reforms to our judicial systems. His most widely read op-eds include:

- WHERE ARE THE JUDGES WHO KNOW HOW TO FIGHT FOR WORKERS?**
- THE JUSTICES MUST CHOOSE: TRUMP OR THE CONSTITUTION**
- ALABAMA’S IVF RULING IS EXACTLY WHAT CONSERVATIVES HAVE BEEN PROMISING FOR YEARS**
- SUPREME COURT MIFEPRISTONE CASE FORECASTS DECISIONS WORSE THAN DOBBS**

### AFJ IN THE NEWS

NOMINATIONS  
*National Law Journal*  
*Reuters*

SCOTUS  
*Wall Street Journal*  
*Reuters*

POTUS  
*National Review*

ETHICS  
*Southern Poverty Law Center*



# REPORT

2024 MID-YEAR REVIEW

 **ALLIANCE  
FOR  
JUSTICE**

 **AFJ  
ACTION**