



Dear {{FirstName or 'Friend'}},

All eyes were on Wisconsin this past month. The importance of state courts was broadcast across nearly every news outlet as the partisan balance of the Wisconsin Supreme Court was decided on April 4th. While national attention remained on the [most expensive](#) state supreme court race in history, there were also key developments for New York's Court of Appeals, and Pennsylvania groups are mobilizing ahead of the May 17th primary election.



Victory for Judge Janet!

On April 4, Milwaukee Circuit Court Judge Janet Protasiewicz won the nationally watched race for Wisconsin Supreme Court, helping to flip the balance of the court in favor of progressives for the first time in 15 years. The results of this election prove that voters recognize the importance of the Wisconsin Supreme Court in addressing critical issues such as abortion, gerrymandering, and the outcome of the 2024 election. Currently, a case challenging the state's abortion ban, *Kaul v. Urmanski*, is making its way through the lower state courts and is expected to be heard by the Wisconsin Supreme Court sometime this year. Additionally, legislative district maps drawn by Republican legislators and approved by the court in 2022 are considered some of the most gerrymandered in the country. Groups are now considering challenging them with hopes of establishing fairer maps for the 2024 elections.



CURRENT VACANCIES & ELECTION UPDATES

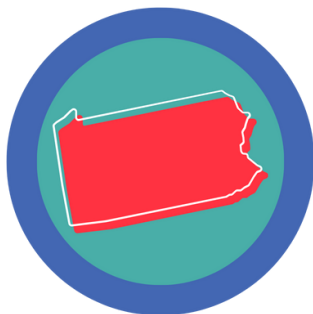


New York Court of Appeals Chief Judge Appointment

Last month, we previewed the short list of candidates Gov. Hochul was considering nominating for Chief Judge on the Court of Appeals, New York's highest court. AFJ Action proudly supported Judge Rowan Wilson for the chief judgeship.

Recognized as one of New York's most progressive judges and strongest defenders of vulnerable New Yorkers, Judge Wilson's record demonstrates his commitment to civil rights and justice, from his dissents pushing back against the Court of Appeals' troubling conservative bloc to his record strengthening worker protections and upholding the rights of those in the criminal legal system.

On Tuesday, April 18, Judge Wilson was [confirmed](#) by the New York Senate in a 40-19 vote, and the following day attorney Caitlin Halligan was also confirmed to the Court of Appeals as Wilson's replacement. AFJ Action joins our coalition partners in celebrating Wilson's confirmation. You can read [AFJ Action's statement on Wilson and Halligan's nominations on our website](#).



May 17th Pennsylvania Primary Election

Pennsylvania's primary election is fast approaching. If you want to vote in Pennsylvania's May 17 Primary Election, make sure you're registered to vote by the deadline: next Monday, May 1.

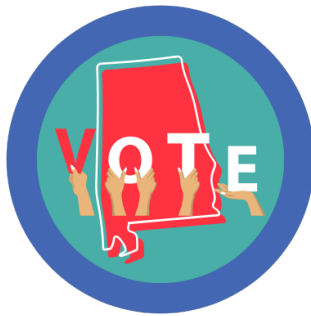
Visit the [New Pennsylvania Project's website](#) to check your registration, find your polling place, apply for an absentee or vote-by-mail ballot, and make a plan to vote!

Their voter hub has everything you need to prepare for the May 17 election. Check it out [here](#).

On May 17, candidates for statewide and municipal elections will be on the ballot – including your state courts. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has a deep impact on the full range of your rights, from the workplace to your representation in Congress. Pennsylvanians – make your voice heard in the May 17th Primary Election!



Election Administration



Alabama

Hanes et al. v. Merrill, et al.

The Alabama Supreme Court upheld a lower court decision dismissing a claim that sought to prohibit the state's use of electronic voting machines. This critical decision protects the use of electronic voting machines in all future elections.

Firearm Restrictions



Arkansas

Corbitt v. Ark. Game & Fish Comm'n

The Arkansas Supreme Court upheld the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's ability and discretion to deny entry to people carrying concealed firearms with Enhanced Concealed Carry Licenses into their offices.

Civil Rights



California

[Disability Rights California v. Newsom](#)

The California Supreme Court rejected a challenge to the new court system set up by the Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Act passed in 2022, which allows family members, clinicians, first responders and others close to individuals suffering from severe mental illness to petition CARE Court to refer these individuals for treatment. Opponents of the CARE Act have characterized it as an affront to the constitutional rights of individuals suffering from mental health issues

Criminal Justice



Mississippi

[In Re: Mississippi Rules of Criminal Procedure](#)

The Mississippi Supreme Court strengthened the rights of defendants in criminal cases by ensuring representation by a public defender through all stages of the case. This establishes critical constitutional protection for individuals navigating the criminal justice system that many counties in the state did not previously enforce.

Police Accountability



Nevada

[Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department v. Las Vegas Review-Journal](#)

When a news organization tried to obtain records on a police officer under investigation, they were denied by the police department, which cited privacy interests. In this unanimous decision, the Nevada Supreme Court found that the police department could not withhold the records under a blanket privacy claim, protecting the right to hold police officers accountable.



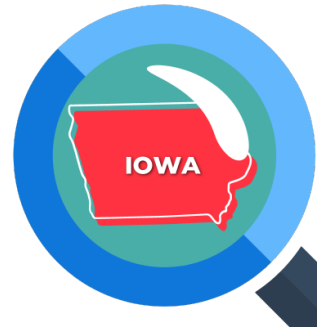
3 apply for Florida Supreme Court seat, including Hillsborough judge and Tampa attorney.

You may recall from last month's update that Gov. DeSantis will appoint a fifth (likely conservative) justice to the Florida Supreme Court. Florida's judicial nominating commission just released the names and backgrounds of the applicants for the vacancy.



Bills to create new Texas courts would likely reverse Democratic gains, restore GOP dominance

Texas lawmakers are trying to usurp the remaining independence of the state's judiciary by creating two new courts—one for lawsuits brought against the state and its agencies and another to hear cases about business transactions of \$10 million or more. This move comes after the 2018 election of a wave of new Democratic judges to the very courts these bills are seeking to bypass.



Will the Iowa Supreme Court allow a 6-week abortion ban? Lawyers make their case

Abortion access is on state supreme court dockets again, this time in Iowa. A 6-week abortion ban is being challenged by reproductive rights advocates and groups. This lawsuit follows a decision from the Iowa Supreme Court last summer ruling that the state constitution does not protect the right to abortion.



[Battle over abortion amendment fought in court](#)

Following the success of Michigan's Reproductive Freedom for All ballot initiatives, advocates in Ohio sought to pursue a similar strategy to protect Ohioan's abortion access. However, anti-abortion groups have challenged the amendment's legality in court, asking the Ohio Supreme Court, which has a conservative majority, to split up the amendment in question. The court's decision will have a profound impact on voters' voices on the amendment and groups' efforts to gather enough signatures for the amendment to even appear on the ballot.



[Ohio Supreme Court to decide case on changing gender on birth certificates](#)

The legal ability of transgender Ohioans to correct their gender markers on their birth certificates has landed in front of the state supreme court. As it currently stands, only some county department health offices will change a person's gender markers on their birth certificates—meaning that not all Ohioans have the same ability to do so.

SIGN OUR PLEDGE

Become a state courts voter today!



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