

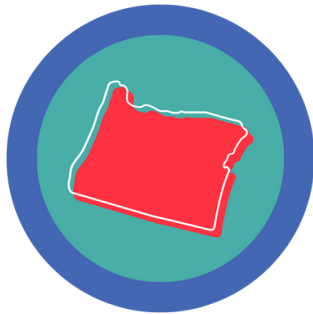


Dear {{FirstName or 'Friend'}},

This June marks one year since the US Supreme Court issued the *Dobbs* decision, overturning the fundamental freedom of bodily autonomy for millions of people. The assault on abortion access continues with over 360 anti-abortion and restrictive bills introduced across state legislatures in 2023 alone. As a result, 20 states have banned or severely restricted abortion access. While some states such as South Carolina have unequivocally protected the right to abortion in their constitutions, others like Kentucky have enforced near-total abortion bans.

State courts, especially state supreme courts, have acted as a critical last line of defense for abortion access. There are currently 40 active state court cases challenging these bans across 22 different states.

Every person has the opportunity to shape their own state supreme court. Pennsylvania has an election this November to fill the seat of the late Chief Justice Baer. Next year, 32 states will hold an election for their highest court. Learn more about how justices in your state are selected and when the next election is for your supreme court through AFJ's [State Court Justice Project](#).

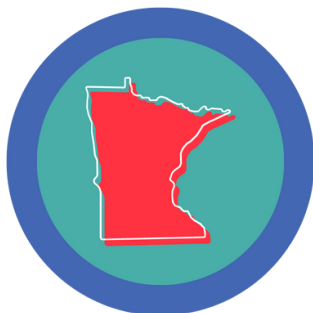


Oregon Governor Announces Finalists for Supreme Court

Following the confirmation of former Oregon Supreme Court Justice Adrienne Nelson to the US District Court for the District of Oregon, Governor Tina Kotek opened applications to find Nelson’s replacement in April.

Nelson’s departure leaves a critical gap on the state’s highest court given her experience as a public defender and public interest attorney prior to joining the bench. Her nomination was also a historic first—Nelson was the first Black judge appointed to the Oregon Supreme Court.

This month, Governor Kotek **released** the names of the thirteen finalists for the high court vacancy. The slate includes multiple candidates that bring direct experience fighting for civil rights and protecting individuals’ freedoms. It is critical that Governor Kotek appoint an attorney that will honor Judge Nelson’s legacy on the state bench.



Minnesota Chief Justice to Retire

Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie Gildea has announced that she will step down from the bench this fall after more than a decade of serving as the court’s chief justice.

Of the seven total seats on the Minnesota Supreme Court, six are filled by justices who previously served as prosecutors, including outgoing Chief Justice Gildea. With this upcoming vacancy, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz has an opportunity to appoint a

justice who will bring much needed diversity of professional experience to the state's court of last resort.



Criminal Procedure



Oregon

Public Defender of Marion County v. Guajardo-McClinton

The Oregon Supreme Court issued a preliminary ruling that a judge wrongly forced a public defender to take on a new client. The ruling comes amidst the crisis in the state's public defense system that has seen public defenders argue that their workloads are so excessive that they are violating their clients' constitutional right to effective legal counsel.



Maryland

Abruquah v. State of Maryland

The Maryland Supreme Court ruled as part of an appeal in a murder case that firearms experts will no longer be permitted to testify that a specific gun fired a specific bullet. With this ruling, the state will become one of the first jurisdictions in the country to recognize shortcomings in this longstanding forensics practice, the reliability of which has been called into question by scientists, academics, and others who study the discipline.

Executive Authority



Florida
[Warren v. DeSantis](#)

The Florida Supreme Court dismissed a lawsuit filed by a state attorney who was fired by Gov. Ron DeSantis after pledging not to prosecute those who seek or perform abortions or provide gender-affirming treatments to transgender people in defiance of measures recently signed into law by DeSantis.

Firearms Restrictions



Georgia
[Knox v. State of Georgia](#)

The Georgia Supreme Court upheld a lower court ruling affirming the constitutionality of a 2017 law allowing people to openly carry firearms on college campuses in the state, including in classes and buildings that also contain resident student housing.

Reproductive Rights



Ohio
[State ex rel. DeBlase v. Ohio Ballot Board](#)

The Ohio Supreme Court unanimously denied an effort to strike down the Ohio Ballot Board's decision to certify a citizen-initiated petition proposing a constitutional amendment protecting the right to an abortion until fetal viability. The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot in November.



Oklahoma
[Oklahoma Call for Reproductive Justice v. State of Oklahoma](#)

The Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled that two bills passed by the state's legislature to limit abortion access in the state are unconstitutional. The bills prohibited physicians from performing abortions at any point in a pregnancy with limited exception and created a provision for private citizens to take legal action against physicians found to have performed an abortion in violation of this law.

Voting Rights & Democracy



Ohio

State ex rel. One Person One Vote v. LaRose

The Republican-controlled Ohio Supreme Court ruled in a 4-3 party line decision that the state can hold a special election in August to pose to voters a legislatively referred ballot question that, if passed, would make it more difficult to amend the state constitution. The proposal would change the threshold for passage of proposed constitutional amendments to 60% instead of a simple majority of 50% plus one.

State ex rel. One Person One Vote v. Ohio Ballot Board

In a related case, the same 4-3 Republican majority on the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the Ohio Ballot Board must rewrite some of the ballot language for the proposed amendment in the August election that would make it more difficult to amend the state's constitution, ordering the board to correct an error in the proposed amendment's description and amend language in its title.

Workers' Rights



Alaska

State of Alaska v. Alaska State Employees Association

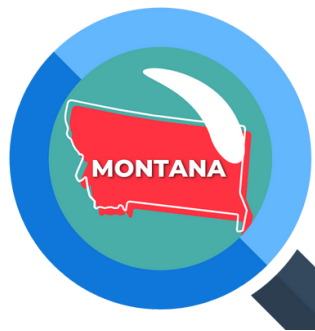
In a victory for the state's public employee unions, the Alaska Supreme Court unanimously ruled that an administrative order restricting methods used by public employee unions to collect member dues violated both state law and the state's collective bargaining agreements with the unions, finding the state liable for damages and the unions' attorney fees.





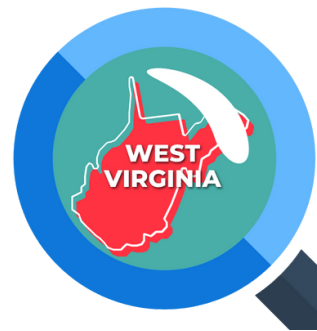
[Noriega has the votes to win Senate confirmation to Supreme Court](#)

Last month, AFJ Action applauded the historic nomination of immigration attorney Michael Noriega to the NJ Supreme Court. Noriega is exceptionally qualified for the bench, as further underscored by the outpouring of bipartisan support.



[State files notices of appeal in abortion cases with Montana Supreme Court](#)

Following a lower court decision blocking anti-abortion bills, the Montana Department of Justice is appealing to the state supreme court.



[West Virginia Supreme Court judge announces retirement plans](#)

Justice John Hutchison will not seek re-election to the West Virginia Supreme Court. Justice Hutchison was first appointed to the court in 2018.



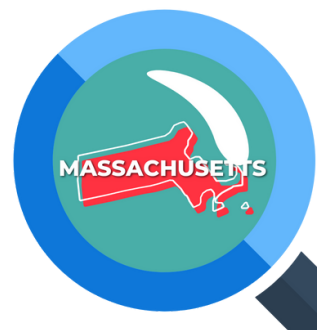
[Michigan Supreme Court will rule on tactic that weakened minimum wage, sick leave initiatives](#)

The Michigan Supreme Court will hear a case challenging Republican legislators' "adopt-and-amend" tactic. In 2018, the conservative controlled legislature circumvented the citizen-led ballot initiative process by passing two bills based on what those ballot initiatives would've been. This move prevented the initiatives from appearing on the ballot since they were already state policy. But in creating the laws in the legislature,



[Missouri's 2nd Black state Supreme Court judge to retire in August](#)

Judge George Draper, first appointed to the state supreme court in 2011, will retire when reaching the mandatory retirement age in August 2023. The governor will have the opportunity to appoint a new judge to the court. The appointment is made from a slate of three individuals sent to the Governor by the Judicial Nominating Commission—a body of lawyers, citizens, and a judge. After the initial appointment, the judge must be retained in retention elections every 12 years.



[Judge's surprise retirement gives Healey high court pick](#)

Justice Elspeth Cypher will retire in January 2024. Governor Maura Healey will appoint Cypher's successor to the court. First, individuals may apply to be considered. Then they'll be evaluated by a nominating commission, which will make recommendations to the governor. The governor will nominate someone from those recommendations. Finally, the nominee must be confirmed by the Governor's Council—an eight-member elected body from districts across the state. The

legislators were able to defang both measures, significantly weakening both measures from their original intent.

Nominations may be made to the commission until July 21.

Lieutenant Governor also serves on the Council.

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