



- Connect with the Issues
- Check the Facts
- Take Action
- Donate
- For Nonprofits & Foundations
- For Students

CONNECT WITH THE ISSUES

- Independent Courts & Fair Judges
- Preserving Access to the Courts
- Free Speech Rights of Nonprofits
- Expansion of Executive Power
- Human & Civil Rights & Liberties
- Justice Watch

Support AFJ

Your contribution supports a fair legal system & access to justice.

[Donate Today »](#)

Stay Informed

Receive updates on current initiatives and breaking news.

Submit Email



Be in the Know

AFJ's Justice Watch blog brings you the latest in justice news.

[Read Justice Watch blog»](#)



CONNECT WITH THE ISSUES

Independent Courts & Fair Judges

As Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell stated, "the judiciary may be the most important instrument for social, economic and political change."

The fairness and independence of this most important instrument must be preserved. Fair courts and independent judges help ensure the protection of vital rights and freedoms.

Family and medical leave. A living wage. Clean air. Keeping your medical records private. The right to live together as a family. In addition to high-profile issues like choice and civil rights, the federal courts decide issues that impact the most basic features of our daily lives.

The U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. Circuit Courts of Appeals and the District Courts all exercise tremendous influence over the everyday lives of Americans. Although the Supreme Court has the discretion to review all cases going through the federal system, in practice, the federal appellate courts are the courts of last resort for the vast majority of federal cases. With a much reduced Supreme Court docket — the Court issued only 72 signed opinions in the 2005 term, compared with 107 in 1991-92 and 141 in 1982-83 — the federal courts of appeal have become the final decision-makers on many important, enduring issues.

Ultra-conservatives have a keen understanding of the impact of federal judicial nominations – lifelong appointments – and have actively worked to appoint judges sympathetic to their ideology, and now 10 of the 13 circuits and the Supreme Court are majority Republican appointed.

These conservatives employ a lexicon that masks their true agenda. While leveling charges of "activism" and "legislating from the bench" at those judges with whom they disagree, they tout their own with phrases like "strict constructionist." They say "liberal" judges "legislate from the bench," while conservative judges merely interpret the law. The reality is that the progress of recent decades has been rolled back in recent rulings demonstrating the belief that it is within the purview of the courts to dictate intensely personal decisions, relationships and beliefs. The legacy of decisions restricting rights will impact society long after the balance of power in other branches of government has shifted.

It is not enough to keep these judges off of the bench. We must also work to advance a positive vision of the law, a vision of the law that champions fairness, justice and equality for all.

Overheard...

"It is imperative that we have an independent and impartial judicial branch. The work of Alliance for Justice, and their formation of Hispanics for a Fair Judiciary, is essential to achieving this goal by ensuring that the interests of the nation's Hispanic community are considered during the selection and nominations process."

-Congressman Charles Gonzalez, D-Texas

[Support AFJ»](#)

OUR HISTORY

20 years after the end of his presidency, nearly 100 of Reagan's appointees are still active judges.

DEFEND HARBAS

Secure Justice for All

[LEARN MORE »](#)

STAY INFORMED

Justice Watch Blog

[LEARN MORE »](#)

POLICY AGENDA

- ▶ The Carmelo Rodriguez Military Medical Accountability Act of 2008, H.R.6093
- ▶ Political Campaign Activity on the Internet
- ▶ Scrutiny of Judicial Nominations

[more »](#)

NOMINEES

- ▶ Paul S. Diamond
- ▶ Michael E. O'Neill
- ▶ Richard Honaker

[more »](#)



[Learn more about the nomination process.](#)

