

May 15, 2025

FACTSHEET: First Slate of Judicial Nominations

What to Know About Trump's Extremist Judicial Appointments

During his first term, Trump and his allies helped fulfill a decades-long goal of the [far-right legal movement](#) by stacking our federal courts, including the Supreme Court, with judges who not only issued rulings that severely restricted American's rights but also empowered the political interests of the MAGA movement. Now that they are back in power, it appears that Trump and his allies plan to continue filling the federal bench with—as the below demonstrates—individuals who have a record of advancing extreme policies that would never pass muster at the ballot box.

In early May, the White House officially announced the first slate of five Article III judicial nominees. Their confirmation hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee is [now scheduled](#) for **June 4**, and if they are advanced out of that committee, we would expect confirmation votes before the full Senate in **mid- to late-July**.

Nominees:

Whitney Hermandorfer (6th Cir.):

- Hermandorfer is currently the Director of the Strategic Litigation Unit in the Tennessee Attorney General's office. Her previous work includes working for the law firm Williams & Connolly LLP and clerking for Justice Samuel Alito, Justice Amy Coney Barrett, then-Judge Brett Kavanaugh (D.C. Circuit), and Judge Richard Leon (D.C. District). She graduated from George Washington University Law School in 2015.

- In late March of this year, Hermandorfer **served as counsel of record** for Tennessee in a brief submitted to the Supreme Court supporting a position Trump is advancing as part of his bid to end birthright citizenship.
- She **defended** Tennessee’s near-total ban on abortion, which lacks exceptions for rape or incest.
- Hermandorfer is nominated to the Tennessee-based Sixth Circuit seat that will be vacated by Judge Jane Stranch upon the confirmation of Hermandorfer. Judge Stranch announced her intent to take senior status in January 2024, but the Democratic-led Senate **failed to confirm** President Biden’s nominee for the seat, labor lawyer Karla Campbell.

Joshua Divine (E.D. Mo./W.D. Mo.):

- Divine is currently the Solicitor General for Missouri, a role he has held since 2023. His previous roles include Chief Counsel to Republican Senator Josh Hawley and Deputy Solicitor General of Missouri, and he clerked for Justice Clarence Thomas and Judge William Pryor (11th Cir.). He graduated from Yale Law School in 2016.
- As Missouri’s Solicitor General, Divine **led Missouri’s efforts** with other Republican led attorneys generals’ offices in Kansas and Idaho seeking to vacate the FDA’s approval of the drug mifepristone.
- And, contrary to the will of the people in his state, Divine **has also litigated** to resist changes to Missouri’s anti-abortion laws as a result of the recent abortion rights amendment to Missouri’s constitution, **adopted by ballot measure in 2024**.
- During the 2024 election, Divine filed a **lawsuit** seeking to allow Missouri to interfere in New York’s prosecution of Donald Trump for state law crimes in New York. The Supreme Court **rejected** this argument without comment.
- Divine is nominated to the joint Eastern and Western District of Missouri seat that was vacated by Judge Rodney Sippel, who assumed senior status on 1/28/2023.

Maria Lanahan (E.D. Mo.):

- Lanahan is currently the Principal Deputy Solicitor General in the Missouri Attorney General’s Office, a role she has held since January 2025. She previously worked for Charter Communications and law firm Thompson Coburn LLP, and clerked for Judge Raymond Gruender (8th Cir.) and Michigan Supreme Court Justice Brian K. Zahra. She graduated from the University of Chicago Law School in 2013.
- In her role as state deputy solicitor general, Lanahan **defended Missouri’s near-total abortion ban** and assisted Divine in the mifepristone case.

- Lanahan is nominated for the Eastern District of Missouri vacancy created by Judge Ronnie White retiring on 7/31/2024.

Zachary Bluestone (E.D. Mo.):

- Bluestone is currently the Appellate Chief and a violent crimes prosecutor in the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Missouri. Bluestone was previously deputy solicitor general under then-AG and now-Senator Eric Schmitt and served as a clerk for Judge Raymond Gruender (8th Cir.). He graduated from Harvard Law School in 2016.
- Bluestone is nominated for the Eastern District of Missouri vacancy created by Judge John Ross taking senior status on 6/9/2023.

Cristian Stevens (E.D. Mo.):

- Stevens is currently a judge on the Missouri Eastern District Court of Appeals, a role he has held since 2021. Previous roles include Deputy Attorney General of the Criminal Division in the Missouri Attorney General's Office and United States Attorney in the Eastern District of Missouri, and Stevens served as a clerk for Pasco Bowman II (8th Cir.). He graduated from the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law in 1998.
- Stevens is nominated for the Eastern District of Missouri vacancy created via Judge Audrey Fleissig taking senior status on 4/14/2023.

As their biographies reveal, all five nominees worked for state attorneys general who have **used their offices** to advance the MAGA agenda. Additionally, all five nominees have been nominated to seats that are being vacated by a judge who was appointed by either President Obama or President Clinton – further increasing the risk of ideological imbalance.

Even after Trump's first term ended, the loyalist judges he installed were doing his bidding from the bench—protecting his **political interests** and **pushing dangerous, unpopular policies** on the American people. They have facilitated right-wing attacks on abortion access, commonsense gun control, critical environmental and public health protections, and free and fair elections. If this first slate is any indication of what is to come, the judicial nominees during Trump's second term are going to be even more tailored to fit this extreme, partisan mold.