



Federal Bar Association

# GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE

The Latest on Public Policy and Advocacy Developments

MARCH 2025

## ADVOCACY UPDATE

Registration for Capitol Hill Day 2025 is now closed. We are looking forward to another record year, with more than 130 participants registered! The day will begin with a continental breakfast in the Capitol Visitors' Center. This year's special guest speaker is Senator Todd Young (R-IN), one of the lead sponsors of the JUDGES Act. After breakfast, FBA members will fan out in small groups to engage in approximately 100 meetings with Members of Congress. If you are planning to join us on March 27, please review the recording of our February 13 introductory webinar (if you haven't done so already), and plan to join our second preparatory webinar at 3 pm ET on March 24. Finally, for a fun perspective on the CHD experience from a past participant, check out [this video](#).

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

### *Appropriations for the Judiciary*

The President has signed a Continuing Resolution carrying forward Fiscal Year 2024 spending levels through September 30, 2025. As has been widely reported, the CR includes some notable reductions to 2024 spending levels, including a significant cut to DC Defender Services, but the remainder of the courts' budgets appears to be held at 2024 levels. Unfortunately, the CR contains no explicit funding for Anderl Act implementation but FBA can urge DOJ to allocate funds for this purpose using the funds the CR conveyed generally. Additionally, we note that because the CR does not provide the level of detail about Congressional intent that normally is provided either in appropriations legislative text or accompanying report language, we could see some changes from FY 2024 in terms of programs funded or amounts provided to programs within line items.

With FY 2025 appropriations in the rearview mirror, we are now looking toward the release of the Fiscal Year 2026 President's Budget Request (PB), which should be presented to Congress within the next several weeks. We will review and report the requests for the Judiciary as soon as the PB is made public. The President and Republican Congressional leadership have announced their intention to make further significant cuts to federal spending; consequently, FBA advocacy in support of the Judiciary's budget will be extremely important in the coming weeks and months.

### *Federal Judgeships Legislation*

On February 27, 2025, Congressman Darrell Issa (R-CA) re-introduced the JUDGES Act ([H.R. 1702](#)), adding 66 federal district court seats across the country. As of March 17, six Members have cosponsored, including two Democrats from California. The bill is very similar to the bill that President Biden vetoed last December, except it no longer includes the language about Utah court locations (passed in separate legislation last year), and it includes a change to the Oklahoma judgeships, namely 1 temporary judgeship would be created in 2025 (as in S. 4199) and 1 permanent judgeship would be authorized in each of the years 2029 and 2033 (instead of 2 more temporary seats in 2025). The legislation would be effective upon the date of enactment. The House Judiciary Committee reported the bill favorably on March 5, and it is now awaiting Floor consideration. The following day, House Judiciary Courts Subcommittee Ranking Member Hank Johnson (D-GA), along with Reps. Jerry Nadler (D-NY) and Jamie Raskin (D-MD), introduced a competing judgeships bill ([H.R. 1929](#)), which provides for the authorizations to begin in 2029, rather than upon enactment.

The Judicial Conference released its biennial report and recommendations regarding the need for additional judgeships on March 11, 2025, and the recommendations are slightly different than those set forth in the Conference’s 2023 report. We understand that Senator Young is working to incorporate these updated recommendations into the JUDGES Act, and we expect he will re-introduce the bill as soon as the revisions are complete. He will be working to convince a Senate Democrat like Sen. Coons to become the lead Democratic cosponsor. We expect the House bills will also be adjusted accordingly.

*Foundation Charter Amendments Act*

Senators John Kennedy (R-LA) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) have reintroduced the Charter Amendments bill ([S. 2694](#)). We are continuing to work with members of their staffs to address the concerns that led to Senator Cotton’s hold on the bill last Congress.

**JUDICIARY UPDATE**

[Forty-four](#) of 890 active federal judicial positions, including the United States Court of Federal Claims and the United States territorial courts, are currently vacant. Eleven more judicial vacancies are [expected](#) through February 1, 2026, with zero nominees named in advance.

**Current Judicial Vacancies as of Mar. 14, 2025**  
[According to the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts](#)

	<b>Vacancies</b>	<b>Nominees Pending</b>
Supreme Court	0	0
Courts of Appeal	3	0
District Courts	41	0
US Court of Federal Claims	0	0
US Court of International Trade	0	0
Total	44	0

There are [twenty judicial vacancy emergencies](#), based on caseload and/or the length of the vacancy, according to the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts.

**Judicial Confirmations:** The current Congress has confirmed no nominees.

**Judicial Nominations:** President Trump has submitted no new nominations for judicial vacancies.