



Federal Bar Association

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE

The Latest on Public Policy and Advocacy Developments

DECEMBER 2025

ADVOCACY UPDATE

On December 12, 2025, President Trump signed into law the Foundation of the Federal Bar Association Charter Amendments Act ([S. 616](#)), successfully concluding a years-long effort to modernize the Foundation's 1954 Congressionally-granted charter. Strategy, leadership, and advocacy from many FBA members including Past Foundation President David Guerry, Past President Ashley Belleau, Past President Glen McMurry, CEO Stacy King, current government relations counsel Dan Renberg and Cissy Jackson, former government relations counsel Bruce Moyer, and all who participated in Capitol Hill days over the past several years contributed to this accomplishment.

As the current Continuing Resolution (CR) approaches its January 30, 2026, expiration date, FBA is engaging in grassroots advocacy urging Congress to prioritize finalizing FY 2026 appropriations legislation for the federal judiciary, to avoid adverse impacts resulting from a repeat shutdown or from further extended operations under prior year spending limits.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Appropriations for the Judiciary

As a reminder, the Trump Administration's FY 2026 budget proposal includes \$9.4 billion in discretionary funding (as requested by the federal judiciary), as well as \$5 million to implement the Daniel Anderl Act state and local government database manager grant program to be administered by the Department of Justice. The FY 2026 fiscal year began on October 1, 2025, but Congress did not pass appropriations legislation by that date. After an extended government shutdown, on November 12, Congress passed and President Trump signed a CR extending the FY 2025 spending levels until January 30, 2026, to give Congress more time to finalize FY 2026 appropriations legislation. Because in FY 2025, Congress enacted a full-year CR rather than appropriations legislation, during the pendency of the current CR, the government has actually been limited to FY 2024 – and in some cases FY 2023 – funding levels. The November 12 CR included three of the 12 annual appropriations bills, but not the two most of most interest to the FBA: the Financial Services and General Government (FSGG) and Commerce, Justice, and Science (CJS) bills. As explained in more detail below, the House and Senate have drafted different versions of these bills, which must be reconciled before final passage.

On July 17, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its FY 2026 CJS spending bill. The Senate version includes \$10 million for the Anderl Act grant program (the same amount provided in the proposed but not enacted FY 2025 appropriations bills). The full House Appropriations Committee approved its CJS bill, including \$5 million for the Anderl Act grant program, on September 10.

On September 3, the House Appropriations Committee approved its FY 2026 FSGG bill, which includes \$8.9 billion in discretionary funding for the judiciary. The legislation would provide \$892 million for court security and \$148 million for the Supreme Court, including \$18 million for the personal protection of the Justices. Defender Services would receive \$1.5 billion, which is \$120 million more than was appropriated for FY 2025 but \$196 million less than requested.

On November 24, the Senate FSGG Subcommittee released its bill text, which would provide just over \$9 billion in discretionary funding for the federal judiciary. This includes \$1.6 billion for Defender Services, \$892 million for court security including purposes authorized by the Anderl Act, and \$166.1 million for the Supreme Court, including \$106.9 million for the security of the building, justices, staff, and visitors.

As noted above, while House and Senate appropriators negotiate additional FY 2026 appropriations legislation, the FBA is working to ensure that robust funding for the judiciary and judicial security is included.

Federal Judgeships Legislation

There are no developments to report regarding legislation to add federal judgeships.

JUDICIARY UPDATE

[Forty](#) of 890 active federal judicial positions, including the United States Court of Federal Claims, the US Court of International Trade, and the United States territorial courts, are currently vacant. Nine more judicial vacancies are [expected](#) through October 5, 2026, with one nominee named in advance.

Current Judicial Vacancies as of December 15, 2025 [According to the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts](#)

	Vacancies	Nominees Pending
Supreme Court	0	0
Courts of Appeal	0	0
District Courts	39	7
US Court of Federal Claims	0	0
US Court of International Trade	1	0
Total	40	7

There are [17 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](#) seven nominees since November 15:

Nominee	Jurisdiction	Nomination Date
Lindsey Ann Freeman	Middle District of North Carolina	December 2, 2025
David A. Bragdon	Middle District of North Carolina	December 2, 2025
Matthew E. Orso	Western District of North Carolina	December 3, 2025
Susan Courtwright Rodriguez	Western District of North Carolina	December 4, 2025
William J. Crain	Eastern District of Louisiana	December 9, 2025
James D. Maxwell	Northern District of Mississippi	December 9, 2025
Robert P. Chamberlin	Northern District of Mississippi	December 9, 2025

Judicial Nominations: Since November 15, President Trump has [submitted](#) five nominations for judicial vacancies:

Nominee	Jurisdiction	Nomination Date
David Clay Fowlkes	Western District of Arkansas	November 18, 2025
Aaron Christian Peterson	District of Alaska	November 18, 2025
Nicholas Jon Ganjei	Southern District of Texas	November 18, 2025
Justin R. Olson	Southern District of Indiana	December 1, 2025
Brian Charles Lea	Western District of Tennessee	December 1, 2025