

Black Lifetime Judges Confirmed During the Biden Administration

President Biden has appointed **59 Black judges, including 38 Black women**, who are now serving lifetime appointments on the federal bench. Importantly, more than 40 percent of these judges come to the bench with significant experience protecting and advancing civil and human rights.

This fact sheet only includes Article III (lifetime) confirmations.

- President Biden has appointed more Black lifetime judges than any previous president in a single term. This includes the first Black woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court — Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.
- Since 2021, the Senate has confirmed 14 Black judges to federal appellate courts, including 13 Black women. Before President Biden, only eight Black women had ever served at this level of our federal judiciary.
- President Biden has appointed the first Black lifetime judges to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit (Tiffany Cunningham), U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana (Jerry Edwards, Jr.), U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii (Micah Smith), and U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island (Melissa DuBose).
- In addition to the U.S. Supreme Court, President Biden has appointed the first Black women to serve as lifetime judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit (Arianna Freeman), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit (Dana Douglas), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit (Nancy Abudu), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit (Tiffany Cunningham), U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California (Dena Coggins), U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Indiana (Cristal Brisco), U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland (Lydia Griggsby), U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon (Adrienne Nelson), and U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island (Melissa DuBose).
- More than 40 percent of confirmed Black judges are professionally diverse — having worked as either a civil rights lawyer or public defender (or both) or otherwise dedicated a significant portion of their careers to protecting people's civil and human rights.



Historic firsts

U.S. Supreme Court

Ketanji Brown Jackson, U.S. Supreme Court. Justice Jackson is the first Black woman and first former public defender to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Circuit Courts

Nancy Abudu, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. Judge Abudu is the first Black woman and first Black judge from Georgia to serve on this court.

DeAndrea Benjamin, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. Judge Benjamin is the second woman of color and first Black woman from South Carolina to serve on this court.

Tiffany Cunningham, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. Judge Cunningham is the first Black judge to serve on this court.

Stephanie Dawkins Davis, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. Judge Davis is the second woman of color and first Black woman from Michigan to serve on this court.

Dana Douglas, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Judge Douglas is the first woman of color and first Black woman to serve on this court.

Arianna Freeman, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. Judge Freeman is the first woman of color and first Black woman to serve on this court.

Andre Mathis, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. Judge Mathis is the first Black man from Tennessee to serve on this court.

Tamika Montgomery-Reeves, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. Judge Montgomery-Reeves is the second woman of color and first Black woman from Delaware to serve on this court.

Doris Pryor, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. Judge Pryor is the first Black judge from Indiana to serve on this court.

Holly Thomas, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Judge Thomas is the first Black woman from California to serve on this court.

District Courts

Cristal Brisco, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Indiana. Judge Brisco is the first woman of color and first Black lifetime judge to serve on this court and the second Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on any federal district court in Indiana.

Dena Coggins, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California. Judge Coggins is the first Black woman and first AANHPI woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Melissa DuBose, U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island. Judge DuBose is the first Black judge, first judge of color, and first openly LGBTQ judge to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Jerry Edwards, Jr., U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana. Judge Edwards is the first Black judge, and first judge of color, to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Lydia Griggsby, U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland. Judge Griggsby is the first Black woman, first woman of color, and first Native American judge to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

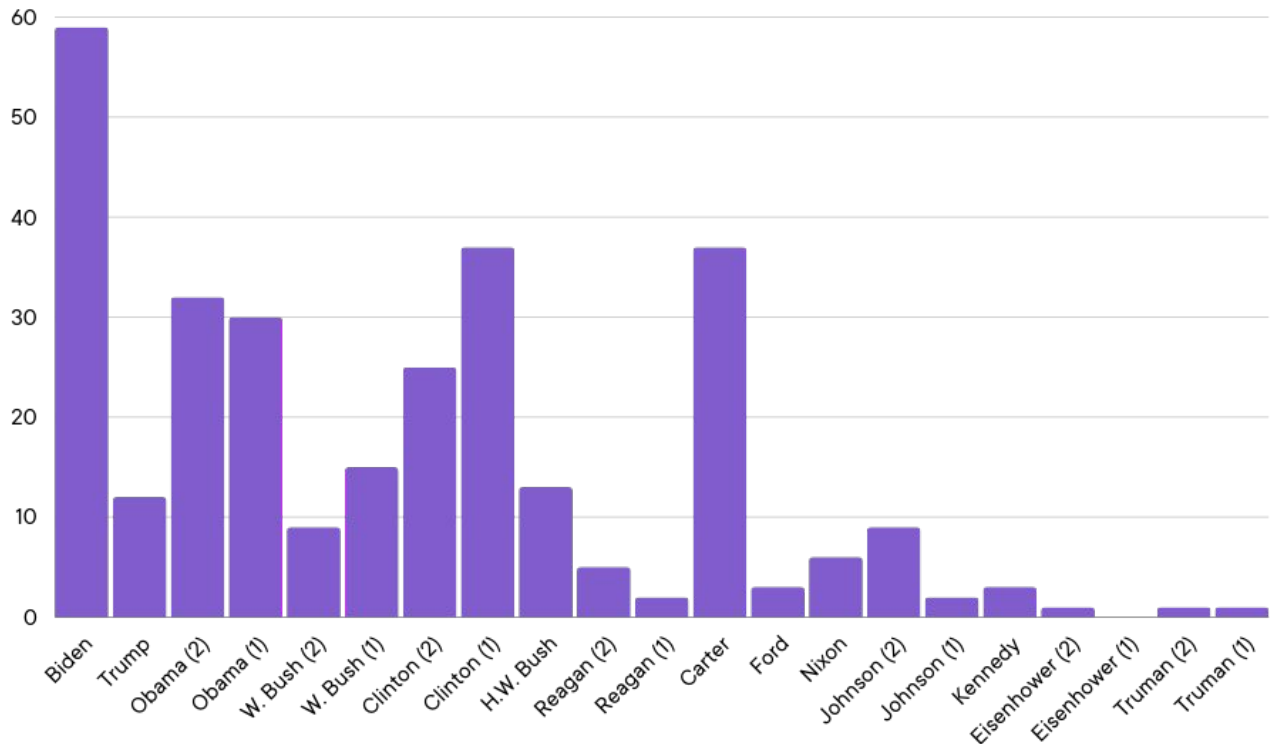
Adrienne Nelson, U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon. Judge Nelson is the first woman of color and first Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Micah Smith, U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii. Judge Smith is the first Black judge to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Jamar Walker, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. Judge Walker is the sixth Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court. He is also the first openly LGBTQ person to serve as a lifetime judge in Virginia and anywhere within the Fourth Circuit.

Jamal Whitehead, U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington. Judge Whitehead is the fourth Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court and the first judicial nominee from the Biden administration known to be living with a disability.

Appointment of Black lifetime judges — by presidential term



President Biden's appointment of 59 Black lifetime judges is the highest in a single term.

During his one term in office, President Carter appointed 37 Black lifetime judges, including an [impressive number](#) of Black civil rights lawyers and other historic and remarkable Black jurists. President Clinton matched that number during his first term as president. Over the course of their two terms in office, President Obama and President Clinton each appointed 62 Black judges.

During the Obama administration, Senate Republicans blocked committee consideration of several Black nominees — including Rebecca Haywood (Third Circuit), Abdul Kallon (Eleventh Circuit), Jennifer May-Parker (Eastern District of North Carolina), Myra Selby (Seventh Circuit), and Patricia Timmons-Goodson (Eastern District of North Carolina) — and Majority Leader McConnell refused to hold votes on (and [skipped over](#)) several Black nominees on the Senate floor, including Donald Beatty (District of South Carolina), Stephanie Finley (Western District of Louisiana), Julien Neals (District of New Jersey), and Edward Stanton III (Western District of Tennessee). Neals was ultimately confirmed in 2021 as the first lifetime confirmation during the Biden administration. Beatty, Finley, Haywood, Kallon, Selby, Stanton, and Timmons-Goodson were all replaced by President Trump with white nominees.

Black Lifetime Judges Confirmed Since 2021

U.S. Supreme Court

[Ketanji Brown Jackson](#), U.S. Supreme Court

- Justice Jackson is the first Black woman and first former public defender to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Circuit Courts

[Nancy Abudu](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit

- Judge Abudu is the first Black woman and first Black judge from Georgia to serve on this court.

DeAndrea Benjamin, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit

- Judge Benjamin is the second woman of color and first Black woman from South Carolina to serve on this court.

[J. Michelle Childs](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit

- Judge Childs is the fourth Black woman to serve on this court.

Tiffany Cunningham, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit

- Judge Cunningham is the first Black judge to serve on this court.

[Stephanie Dawkins Davis](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit

- Judge Davis is the second woman of color and first Black woman from Michigan to serve on this court.

Dana Douglas, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

- Judge Douglas is the first woman of color and first Black woman to serve on this court.

[Arianna Freeman](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit

- Judge Freeman is the first woman of color and first Black woman to serve on this court.

[Ketanji Brown Jackson](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit

- Before her elevation to the U.S. Supreme Court, Justice Jackson was the third Black woman to serve on the D.C. Circuit.

[Candace Jackson-Akiwumi](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit

- Judge Jackson-Akiwumi is the second judge of color and second Black woman to serve on this court.

[Eunice Lee](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit

- Judge Lee is the second Black woman to serve on this court.

Andre Mathis, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit

- Judge Mathis is the first Black man from Tennessee to serve on this court.

Tamika Montgomery-Reeves, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit

- Judge Montgomery-Reeves is the second woman of color and first Black woman from Delaware to serve on this court.

Doris Pryor, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit

- Judge Pryor is the first Black judge from Indiana to serve on this court.

[Holly Thomas](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

- Judge Thomas is the first Black woman from California to serve on this court.

District Courts

Jacquelyn Austin, U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina

- Judge Austin is the third Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court and the only Black woman currently serving in a lifetime position on this court.

Jerry Blackwell, U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota

- Judge Blackwell is the second Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Cristal Brisco, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Indiana

- Judge Brisco is the first woman of color and first Black lifetime judge to serve on this court and the second Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on any federal district court in Indiana.

Victoria Calvert, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia

- Judge Calvert is the second Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

[Jessica Clarke](#), U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York

- Judge Clarke is the sixth Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

[Jia Cobb](#), U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia

- Judge Cobb is the fourth Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Dena Coggins, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California

- Judge Coggins is the first Black woman and first AANHPI woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

S. Kato Crews, U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado

- Judge Crews is the third Black judge to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

[Jeffrey Cummings](#), U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois

- Judge Cummings is the seventh Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Jeremy Daniel, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois

- Judge Daniel is the sixth Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Melissa DuBose, U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island

- Judge DuBose is the first Black judge, first judge of color, and first openly LGBTQ judge to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Jerry Edwards, Jr., U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana

- Judge Edwards is the first Black judge, and first judge of color, to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Charles Fleming, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio

- Judge Fleming is the third Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Maame Ewusi-Mensah Frimpong, U.S. District Court for the Central District of California

- Judge Frimpong is the third Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Sherilyn Garnett, U.S. District Court for the Central District of California

- Judge Garnett is the fourth Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.



Patricia Giles, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia

- Judge Giles is the second Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Jonathan Grey, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan

- Judge Grey is the fifth Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Lydia Griggsby, U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland

- Judge Griggsby is the first Black woman, first woman of color, and first Native American judge to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

[**Kelly Hodge**](#), U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania

- Judge Hodge is the fourth Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Jeffery Hopkins, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio

- Judge Hopkins is the third Black judge to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

LaShonda Hunt, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois

- Judge Hunt is the seventh Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Lindsay Jenkins, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois

- Judge Jenkins is the sixth Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Angel Kelley, U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts

- Judge Kelley is the second Black woman, and second Asian American judge, to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Matthew Maddox, U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland

- Judge Maddox is the eighth Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Brandy McMillion, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan

- Judge McMillion is the sixth Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Orelia Merchant, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York

- Judge Merchant is the fourth Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

[**Natasha Merle**](#), U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York

- Judge Merle is the fifth Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Julien Neals, U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey

- Judge Neals is the fourth Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.



[Adrienne Nelson](#), U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon

- Judge Nelson is the first woman of color and first Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Vernon Oliver, U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut

- Judge Oliver is the fourth Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Darrel Papillion, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana

- Judge Papillion is the fourth Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

[Mia Perez](#), U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania

- Judge Perez is the third Black woman, second Latina, and first Asian American judge to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

[Kai Scott](#), U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania

- Judge Scott is the fifth Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Jamel Semper, U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey

- Judge Semper is the fifth Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

James Simmons, Jr., U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California

- Judge Simmons is the fourth Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Fred Slaughter, U.S. District Court for the Central District of California

- Judge Slaughter is the sixth Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Micah Smith, U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii

- Judge Smith is the first Black judge to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Julie Sneed, U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida

- Judge Sneed is the third Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Trina Thompson, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California

- Judge Thompson is the third Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Jamar Walker, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia

- Judge Walker is the sixth Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court. He is also the first openly LGBTQ person to serve as a lifetime judge in Virginia and anywhere within the Fourth Circuit.

[Jamal Whitehead](#), U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington

- Judge Whitehead is the fourth Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court and the first judicial nominee from the Biden administration known to be living with a disability.

Gregory Williams, U.S. District Court for the District of Delaware

- Judge Williams is the second Black judge and second judge of color to serve as a lifetime judge on this court. He is the only judge of color currently serving as a lifetime judge on the court.

Karen McGlashan Williams, U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey

- Judge Williams is the third Black woman to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Omar Williams, U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut

- Judge Williams is the third Black man to serve as a lifetime judge on this court.

Data as of May 22, 2024.

For questions, contact Patrick McNeil at mcneil@civilrights.org.