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Contact: Jamie Horwitz  
202-549-4921, [jhdcpr@starpower.net](mailto:jhdcpr@starpower.net)

## **Immigration Courts Become Increasingly Dysfunctional as 14 More Judges are Fired Without Cause**

**The National Association of Immigration Judges, an IFPTE affiliate, can confirm that 14 immigration judges and as many as 18 received termination notices over the weekend. Since January 20, the union reports that 128 judges have been fired, taken an early-out offer or been involuntarily transferred. This does not include judges who have retired or chosen to leave for jobs in the private sector.**

**WASHINGTON** – The National Association of Immigration Judges (NAIJ) has confirmed that at least 14 immigration judges and as many as 18 were fired without cause since September 19. The union is still trying to verify the full number of judges fired since the end of the business day Friday. Judges located in the states of California, Connecticut, Maryland, Florida, New York and Washington received termination notices.

The removal of these judges is one more move to dismantle the immigration adjudication system. Since January 20, an unprecedented 128 immigration judges have been fired, taken an early-out offer (what has been referred to as the “Fork in the Road” letter), or been involuntarily transferred. The average immigration judge hears at least 700 cases per year. Some judges who were fired heard even higher numbers of cases. The firing of these judges has added tens of thousands of cases to a backlog of [3.4 million cases](#).

“The dismissal of more immigration judges is an illogical and costly setback for the nation’s immigration courts,” said IFPTE President Matt Biggs (NAIJ is an IFPTE affiliate.)

“At a time when the backlog has reached historic levels and the administration has made immigration enforcement a central issue, the removal of experienced judges is hypocritical, undermines the law, wastes taxpayer dollars, and further delays justice for citizens and immigrants alike.”

Recruitment, training, and the placement of immigration judges requires substantial taxpayer investment. Removing judges after expending those resources leaves the public paying for growing inefficiency. For example, detention levels are rising and with it the cost to taxpayers, approximately \$250 per day per

detainee. The cost to taxpayers for 100,000 delayed immigration cases as detainees await a hearing is approximately \$25 million per day.

Since January, more than 82 immigration judges, including Associate Chief Immigration Judges (ACIJs), have been fired, another 46 judges have taken early-out offers to resign. These numbers do not include Board of Immigration Appeals judges or immigration judges who have chosen to voluntarily leave for jobs elsewhere or retire. It is anticipated that a large number of judges will retire before January 1, 2026.

“Focusing solely on the speed of deportations spends taxpayer money without producing meaningful benefits to society. Americans deserve an immigration system that prioritizes quality, fairness and adherence to the law, not one that is politically driven,” said Ashley Tabaddor, a former NAIJ president.

These actions also run contrary to the intentions of Congress, which appropriated funding to increase the number of permanent immigration judges to 800 permanent positions. Funding to increase the number of judges was included in the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act” signed by President Trump in July. “Instead of hiring well-trained judges for permanent positions, we’re firing them. This is going the wrong way,” said Biggs. “Immigration law is complex. Fewer experienced judges mean slower case processing, longer wait times, more appeals, and an ever-expanding backlog.”

Immigration courts in Chicago; San Francisco; Concord, Calif., Chelmsford, Mass., and Aurora, Colo. have been especially hard hit by canceled hearings due to the removal of judges. [The Chelmsford court has gone from 18 judges in January to five today.](#)

The dismissals in recent days, like others since January, are not based on misconduct or poor performance, instead, they appear to be politically motivated. A late-August [memo from the Executive Office for Immigration Review \(EOIR\)](#) indicated that judges hired between 2021 and 2024 were targeted for removal. “Firing judges for political reasons is wrong and erodes respect for the rule of law,” said Biggs.

**The National Association of Immigration Judges (NAIJ), founded in 1971, is a voluntary organization formed with the objectives of promoting independence and enhancing the professionalism, dignity, and efficiency of the Immigration Court. The union is an affiliate of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE) which represents 90,000 highly skilled workers in both the public and private sectors. The union is an affiliate of the AFL-CIO. More information can be found at [www.IFPTE.org](http://www.IFPTE.org).**

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