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# With most judges now terminated, SF immigration court experiences more delays

Story by Ryan Curry • 1mo • **3 min read**




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Immigration court proceedings are set to take a lot longer in San Francisco, after the Trump administration fired over half of the judges at the courthouse.

Immigration judges fall under the Department of Justice, so the executive branch has the authority over the positions. The administration fired 12 judges this year, leaving only nine to process the thousands of cases going through the system.

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One of the recently fired judges, Jeremiah Johnson, says he was consoling another coworker who had just been fired when he learned he was also terminated.

"Gave hugs and support for those judges before going to my chambers and finding out I myself had received the termination letter as well," Johnson said. "I had no time to print the notice out before it locked me out of my computer and my face was deleted from the website."

According to Syracuse University's immigration system, TRAC, there are over 3.4 million cases backlogged throughout the country. With fewer judges, Johnson says the number will go up.

"If you came to me for the first time and I am ready to hear your case, I'll find the next available date, which was June 29, 2029, at 1 p.m.," he said. "Each one of those had similar dockets and similar backlogs. Those cases are reassigned to remaining nine immigration judges in court."

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 **Related video:** San Francisco immigration court building to close (KTVU FOX 2 San Francisco)

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It puts stress not only on the judges, but also on immigrants needing assistance and the lawyers helping them. Julie Wiltshire was in the middle of an asylum hearing for her client until the whole thing stopped when the judge in that case learned she had been fired.

"DHS was doing cross-examination," Wiltshire said. "Then she got the email, stopped the hearing, and we had to leave."

According to TRAC, most of the terminated judges had one thing in common: they all had higher-than-average approval ratings for asylum seekers. Lawyers believe the administration fired them to help push their anti-immigration agenda.

"It's targeted at judges who have higher than average asylum approval rates, or judges

who have a history of providing legal services to immigrants," said Isaac Flegel-Mishlove, an attorney with the nonprofit group Centro Legal de la Raza. "While they're leaving alone judges who have complete abysmal grant rates."

The Department of Justice did not respond to our questions about the firings, but they told our media partners at the San Francisco Chronicle earlier this year that the Biden administration had been "forcing immigration courts to implement a de facto amnesty for hundreds of thousands of aliens."

Johnson questions whether what the administration is doing is fair for a normal court proceeding.

"The judge is then fired by the executive or political party, that puts a question mark on the rule of law in people's minds," he said. "That undermines the rule of law both here in the United States and abroad."

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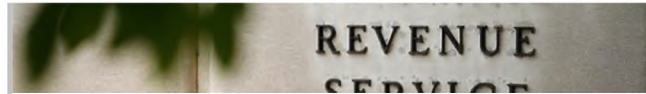




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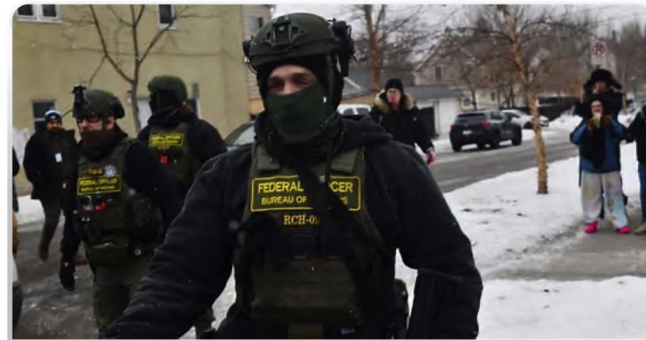
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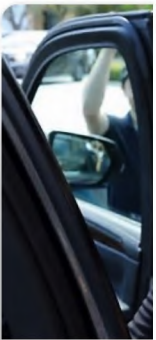
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└ (From left) Pamela Bellinger, Stephanie Aylett, Rosemary Webster, Adelheid Russenberger and Amy Pritchard tried to appeal their case after a judge told jurors to stick to the facts, not their conscience

Jurors could be jailed for finding Extinction Rebellion protesters not guilty because they believe their actions were justified, the Court of Appeal has ruled.

[Five female Extinction Rebellion \(XR\) activists](#) had claimed a judge was wrong to warn a jury against basing their verdict on their conscience instead of the facts. The women claimed the jurors might have felt pressured into convicting them.

However, the [Court of Appeal](#) ruled on Tuesday that the judge was correct to issue the warning.

The judge's admonition came despite the fact that jurors who made their decision based on conscience could only really be caught if boasting about it publicly, posting on the internet, or by one of them complaining to the court.

In a previous case, a juror was convicted after he posted on Facebook that he would find a man accused of sexual activity with a 14-year-old child guilty, regardless of the evidence.

Giving judgment, the Court of Appeal dismissed all the campaigners' appeals and ruled the judge was correct to warn juries that they must make any decision based on the evidence in the case as required by the Juries Act of 1974.



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# Kristi Noem impeachment effort reaches milestone

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A drive to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem has reached 100 co-sponsors.

Democratic Representative Robin Kelly of Illinois formally [introduced three articles of impeachment](#) against Noem on January 14.

On Wednesday, Kelly announced in a news release that 100 co-sponsors had signed her resolution.

*Newsweek* contacted the Department of Homeland Security for comment by email outside normal business hours.





└ Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem speaks with reporters at the White House on January 15 in Washington, D.C.

## Why It Matters

Efforts to remove Noem from office might damage her reputation and standing with her Republican colleagues in a year when voters are heading to the polls for midterm elections. However, given that the GOP has majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, it is unlikely the measure will pass.

## What To Know

The [articles of impeachment against Noem](#) accuse her of obstruction of Congress, violation of public trust and self-dealing. They said she tried to enter a DHS facility used to detain undocumented immigrants unlawfully and directed ICE to make “widespread warrantless arrests, forgo due process, and use violence against United States citizens, lawful residents, and other individuals.”

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