



Republicans Pushing to Impeach “Partisan” Judges

House Republicans are threatening to impeach federal judges who have ruled against key Trump administration policies. They argue that these judges have overstepped their constitutional role and are acting as political activists. The initiative specifically targets two judges appointed by President Barack Obama. Both have blocked executive actions related to federal financial controls and executive authority.

Representative Crane vs. Judge Engelmayer

Representative Eli Crane (R-Ariz.) is leading a Republican effort to impeach U.S. District Judge Paul Engelmayer of the Southern District of New York. The initiative followed the [judge’s ruling](#) against the Trump administration’s attempt to access Treasury Department financial records.



AP Images
Eli Crane

The ruling determined that the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), led by Elon Musk, could not access sensitive Treasury payment systems due to concerns about privacy, data security, and the potential risk of leaks.

The emergency court order was sought by Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes and 18 other states. They [argued](#) that DOGE’s initiative violated the privacy rights of American citizens and unlawfully expanded executive power.

Announcing his move to impeach Judge Engelmayer, Crane argued that it was necessary to counter what he [described](#) as “[obvious] judicial overreach.”

He argued that “partisan” federal judges are obstructing the executive branch’s authority to “fix” the “irreparable harm” done by “the left.” That is why, he argued, such judges represent a “threat to democracy.”

□

I’m drafting articles of impeachment for US District Judge Paul Engelmayer.

Partisan judges abusing their positions is a threat to democracy.

The left has done “irreparable harm” to this country. President Trump and his team at [@DOGE](#) are trying to fix it.

— Rep. Eli Crane (@RepEliCrane) [February 11, 2025](#)



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on February 17, 2025

Crane's main allegation against Judge Paul Engelmayer is not just that he "[doesn't like Trump](#)" — a problematic framing for judicial impeachment — but that the judge "abused his position to help Democrats."

Crane escalated his accusations on X, [claiming](#) that "activist judges are out of control." He further [argued](#):

If a federal judge is obsessed with propelling the agenda of their political party, they are probably in the wrong profession.

Representative Clyde vs. Judge McConnell

Similarly, Representative Andrew Clyde (R-Ga.) is preparing an impeachment resolution against U.S. District Judge John McConnell, Jr. of Rhode Island.

This action follows Judge McConnell's January 31 [ruling](#) that blocked the Trump administration's [attempt to freeze](#) billions in federal funding related to "foreign aid, nongovernmental organizations, DEI, woke gender ideology, and the green new deal."

McConnell determined that the administration lacked legal authority for such a suspension. He stated that the executive branch had overstepped its constitutional powers. The ruling emphasized that the executive branch cannot unilaterally suspend congressionally appropriated funds, highlighting a violation of the separation of powers.

In response, Representative Clyde accused Judge McConnell of partisanship and of "weaponizing our judicial system" to "stop" President Trump.

I'm drafting articles of impeachment for U.S. District Judge John McConnell Jr.

He's a partisan activist weaponizing our judicial system to stop President Trump's funding freeze on woke and wasteful government spending.

We must end this abusive overreach. Stay tuned. <https://t.co/ARp7KBjK9u>

— Rep. Andrew Clyde (@Rep_Clyde) [February 12, 2025](#)

The Trump administration appealed McConnell's decision. However, the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals [denied](#) the request to reinstate the funding freeze. The court argued that the administration failed to demonstrate specific harm from lifting the freeze.

Musk Amplifies Calls for Impeachment

Elon Musk is intensifying the calls for judicial impeachment. In his official role, the world's richest man plans to "moderniz[e] Federal technology and software." This mission, in practice, entails [embedding AI](#) within government operations to enhance their "efficiency."

Following rulings that blocked DOGE's access to Treasury Department payment systems, Musk called for an "immediate wave of judicial impeachments."

There needs to be an immediate wave of judicial impeachments, not just one <https://t.co/3guKf3BBOK>



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on February 17, 2025

— Elon Musk (@elonmusk) [February 12, 2025](#)

In a particularly peculiar attempt to justify his calls, Musk [held a poll on X](#), asking his followers whether the judges should be removed. Not surprisingly, the majority voted “Yes,” prompting Musk to triumphantly [declare](#), “VOX POPULI, VOX DEI. The people have spoken. Impeach the CORRUPT judges!!”

Legal Framework and Historical Context

The U.S. Constitution provides the basis for impeaching federal judges under [Article II, Section 4](#). This article states that officials can be removed from office upon impeachment for, and conviction of, “Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.”

Impeachment of federal judges has historically been rare, and reserved for serious misconduct or criminal behavior. The first federal judge to be removed from office was [John Pickering](#) in 1804. He was found to be insane and frequently intoxicated on the bench, rendering him unfit to serve. As of 2017, [only 15](#) federal judges have been impeached, with eight removed from office.

Notable cases include [Judge Robert W. Archbald](#), who was removed in 1913 for leveraging his judicial position to secure financial favors, and [Judge Harry E. Claiborne](#), impeached in 1986 after being convicted of tax fraud. The most recent case involved [Judge G. Thomas Porteous](#), removed in 2010 for corruption and perjury.

These cases underscore that impeachment has traditionally been based on clear ethical violations and criminal activity, not policy disagreements. This is a stark contrast to current efforts apparently targeting judges over their rulings.

The Impeachment Process

The impeachment of a federal judge follows the same constitutional process as that of a president. It begins in the House of Representatives, where articles of impeachment are introduced and investigated, typically by the Judiciary Committee. If a simple majority of the House approves the charges, the case moves to the Senate, which holds a trial. Conviction and removal from office require a two-thirds majority vote in the Senate.

Implications and Concerns

The push to impeach judges in response to unfavorable rulings has sparked a broader discussion about the separation of powers and the judiciary’s role in checking executive authority.

Critics warn that using impeachment as a tool to remove judges based on their decisions, rather than misconduct, could erode judicial independence, pressuring courts to rule in favor of those in power to avoid political retaliation. This shift risks destabilizing the balance of power and undermining the judiciary’s function as an impartial arbiter of the law.

If an administration disagrees with a judge’s ruling, the proper legal recourse is to appeal the decision through the judicial system, allowing higher courts — including the Supreme Court — to determine its validity. Legislative action may also be an option. Congress has the authority to craft new laws that address the legal questions at hand.

As the situation develops, it remains to be seen whether these impeachment efforts will gain traction — and at what cost to the integrity of the judicial system.



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