

How to Fill the Supreme Court With Justices Like Clarence Thomas

June 2026

Chronicles

It's no longer enough to choose candidates for the nation's highest court with perfect résumés who mouth the principles of originalism. They must have shown their courage in fighting for those principles, especially when it has cost them personally.

by Senator Eric Schmitt

GREAT MEN DO NOT AUDITION TO GET PICKED AS the next great man. They are already in the arena. They are already carrying burdens, taking fire, making arguments, and paying prices. Great offices find them because they have shown themselves worthy. That is as true of the Supreme Court as anywhere else in our constitutional order.

The Court bears a heavy responsibility. It "labors under the obligation to succeed," as the legal scholar Alexander Bickel wrote in *The Least Dangerous Branch* (1986). So do the men who would sit on it. The office of Supreme Court justice is too weighty to be treated as the capstone of a perfectly curated career. If a man wants the office badly, that is not a qualification—it may be a warning sign.

The future of Supreme Court selection should not be framed as a choice between judicial independence and constitutional courage. We need both. We need justices who are independent from presidents, parties, editorial boards, and elite social pressure. But we also need justices who will do what the law requires when the case is hard, the question is politically charged, and the consequences are real. The right answer to a timid judiciary is not a political judiciary. It is a judiciary of courageous constitutionalists in the model of Justice Clarence Thomas.



FOR YEARS, CONSERVATIVE LEGAL CIRCLES HAVE rightly emphasized fidelity to the text and original meaning of the Constitution, as well as its separation of governmental powers. Those commitments remain indispensable. A justice should not go beyond those bounds to become a legislator in robes. He is there to interpret the Constitution and laws of the United States according to their original meaning and to remain faithful to those laws when deciding cases. But method, however important, is not enough. A judge may know all the right doctrines, speak all the right language, and still fail to do what the law demands when the pressure is greatest. What is too often missing is "judicial fortitude"—a trait we have too often assumed rather than tested.

In my first Congress on the Senate Judiciary Committee, and with Missouri receiving a record number of federal judicial nominees, I have thought a lot about judicial selection. I care deeply about originalism, textualism, and the proper role of the judiciary. But in Senate Judiciary Committee hearings, I try to probe something harder to script—courage. I want to know whether a nominee has ever defended a legally correct position when the kitchen was hot, when it was unpopular, when standing firm came with real professional or personal cost. That is not always easy to test in a committee hearing, especially when you do not know the nominee well. But it matters because a good judge needs more than intelligence and polish. He needs steadiness. He needs the calm disposition to apply the law fairly and impartially under pressure. He needs the forti-

tude to be a courageous constitutionalist. That is why I value battle-tested lawyers and judges so highly. When I have seen someone up close in major constitutional fights, I do not have to guess whether he has courage. I already know.

My own thinking on judicial selection is inseparable from our broader constitutional fight. The central problem of our time is not merely bad adjudication in isolated cases. It is the slow transfer of legislative, executive, and ultimately judicial power to an unaccountable administrative state with an ideology fundamentally at odds with our American founding. If judges are unwilling to say what the law is—if they defer when they should decide, if they blink when managerial power presses forward—then the separation of powers becomes a slogan rather than a structure. That is why judicial selection is not just about methodology. It is about whether a nominee understands the constitutional moment we are in and has the courage to meet it.

Too often, our selection system has rewarded a different set of traits. It has favored the man who has spent his life positioning himself for the office: picking the right school, the right clerkship, the right judges, the right conferences, the right speeches, the right silences. He knows how to sound like a future justice because he has been auditioning for the role for years. He has learned how to avoid controversy, preserve his viability, reassure the legal guild, and impress the people who make short lists. That may be a recipe for advancement. But it is not the same thing as fitness for the Supreme Court.

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If anything, it indicates the opposite. The office of justice should find the man; the man should not spend his life chasing the ultimate robe. If someone wants to be a justice too badly, that is not a feature of their "internal programming"—it is a bug. A great office should come to a man whose record proves he can bear its burdens, not merely to a man who has structured his life around obtaining its honors. The Supreme Court is not supposed to be the final prize for a perfectly curated legal career. It is supposed to be a place for men of judgment, discipline, and character.

That is why one of the most revealing questions to ask any judicial nominee is one of the simplest: When have you shown courage? Not, "When have you said the right thing

in a hearing?” Not, “When have you published the right article for the right audience?” When have you shown courage? When did you take a legally correct position that was unpopular? When did you stand for constitutional principle and pay a price for it? When did you resist pressure from the press, your peers, the academy, or the broader legal culture? A successful judicial selection process is one that looks across a nominee’s entire body of work and asks when he stood for principles and paid the price. The key question is not whether a nominee can recite the catechism of originalism. The key question is whether he will actually be a courageous constitutionalist when doing so is difficult.

Are you willing to get side eyes at D.C. cocktail parties? Can you endure the quiet shuns that come with doing the right thing, when the more politically palatable option is to take a half measure? Will you use procedural dodges, like declaring a lack of standing, to avoid difficult cases?

Justice Thomas helps clarify why this matters. Courage is not an ornamental virtue added atop legal method. It is the quality that makes the method meaningful when the cost of applying it becomes real. Plenty of lawyers know what the law requires. Plenty of judges can identify the right answer in the abstract. The dividing line is whether they will still hold to it when the press howls, the legal guild panics, and the political class demands retreat. Justice Thomas has long embodied the opposite instinct. He has understood that the right answer does not change because the room gets hostile. “North is still north,” he said in a speech to the Heritage Foundation in 2007. “People can yell at you, north is still north. It doesn’t change fundamental things, and in this business, right is still right, even if you stand by yourself.” That is the spirit we must identify.

Judging is about more than just jurisprudence; it is about exercising judgment, which requires the proper temperament and rock-solid courage. When judicial selection processes have selected candidates with both a constitutionalist jurisprudence and a courageous temperament, they have succeeded. Few justices have embodied that combination more clearly than Justice Thomas.

Courage is not some generic character trait floating above the law. Courage matters because ours is an age where judges will be confronted with lawfare, administrative improvisation, and relentless pressure campaigns against anyone who resists elite orthodoxy. We must remember that sound jurisprudence is never detached from the constitutional order it exists to preserve. Our jurisprudence must preserve and uphold our foundational principles in the context of our constitutional moment.

America First jurisprudence must therefore be one of courageous constitutionalism. It must be a common-sense approach to the law across every legal institution—from the Supreme Court, to state courts, to the Justice Department, to state attorneys general, to private attorneys—that faithfully applies the Constitution’s original meaning, understands the way America’s unique legal tradition protects our core national interests, and rejects procedural cowardice, false moral neutrality, lawfare, and the entrenchment of fundamentally anti-American, progressive legal concepts.

A judge today will face social, political, and professional pressure to back down. The right nominee is the one who

has already shown, in real constitutional fights, that he will not. That is why I have cared so much about ensuring battle-tested lawyers and judges are nominated and confirmed to the federal bench: not because they know how to talk about

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courage, but because I have seen them in action.

Courage is not an abstraction in our legal tradition. The best judges are often formed in real institutions, around real mentors, in offices where they learn early that public service means taking hard stands and living with the consequences.



JUSTICE THOMAS’S PRE-SUPREME COURT CAREER IS a reminder of what judicial selection ought to reward. He was not the product of a lifelong audition for the bench. He started in the Missouri Attorney General’s Office under John Danforth, worked in private practice, served in the Senate, led civil-rights enforcement at the Department of Education, chaired the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and then served on the D.C. Circuit before joining the Supreme Court. Long before he became Justice Thomas, he had already been tested in the institutions where law, politics, bureaucracy, and constitutional conflict meet. He had already shown that he could carry responsibility, withstand pressure, and hold fast in contested terrain. That is the point: He had demonstrated the fortitude necessary to be a courageous constitutionalist.

This is the real divide that should structure judicial selection. On one axis is constitutionalist jurisprudence: Does the nominee believe in the Constitution, its text, and its original meaning, as well as our history, constitutional structure, the nation it created, and the limited judicial role? On the other axis is courage: Will he actually apply those principles in hard cases, or will he hide behind narrowness, delay, or procedural escape hatches when the stakes rise?

The ideal Justice scores high on both axes. A judge with courage but bad jurisprudence is dangerous. But a judge with excellent jurisprudence and no courage can be just as disappointing in practice. He name-checks the right concepts, gives the right speeches, but then finds an off-ramp when a hard case arrives. He prioritizes the institution’s comfort over discharging its duty.

Some of the most important decisions of the last decade show what courageous constitutionalism on the Court looks like.

- In *Dobbs v. Jackson (2022)* (2022), the Court rejected the precedent set by *Roe v. Wade* and ended the unconstitutional abortion regime, which had no basis in the text, history, or structure of the Constitution.
- In *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen* (2022), a majority opinion written by Justice Thomas rejected the two-step interest-balancing framework lower courts had used to water down the Second

Amendment and restored the primacy of text, history, and tradition in constitutional adjudication.

- In *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* (2023) (2023), the Court refused to continue to allow colleges and universities to hide racially discriminatory practices behind the bureaucratic language of “diversity, equity, and inclusion.”
- In *West Virginia v. EPA* (2022), *Biden v. Nebraska* (2023), and *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo* (2024), the Court showed a renewed willingness to police the administrative state and insist that agencies cannot discover powers of vast political and economic significance in old and ambiguous text.
- In this year’s *Louisiana v. Callais* decision, the Court made clear that states cannot invoke the Voting Rights Act to justify otherwise unconstitutional racial gerrymandering.

The need for courage is especially great in an era of nationwide injunctions, lawfare, and politically motivated delays imposed by lower courts. In the *Federalist Papers*, Alexander Hamilton described the judiciary as possessing “neither FORCE nor WILL, but merely judgment.” That remains the right constitutional ideal. But in practice, the federal judiciary can exercise enormous power simply by slowing the political branches to a crawl. Delay at the Supreme Court is not neutral when it allows rogue lower-court judges to defeat a lawful presidential mandate. The Supreme Court is not exercising proper restraint when it avoids questions that lower courts have answered aggressively and prematurely. A justice who reflexively

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hides behind the idea of judicial restraint and procedure in order to avoid addressing abuses of the lower courts perverts the meaning of those concepts, and is anything but “apolitical.” He may be helping decide the controversy through delay rather than judgment. This appears to have occurred recently, as liberal justices slow-walked the decisions in *Dobbs* and *Callais* to benefit Democrats, as alleged by Mollie Hemingway in her recent book, *Alito*, and by *The Federalist* in subsequent reporting.

I have firsthand knowledge of the difference between courageous and cowardly jurisprudence from the cases I worked on as Missouri Attorney General. In *Biden v. Nebraska*, Missouri and other states challenged the Biden administration’s attempt to cancel hundreds of billions of dollars in student-loan debt by executive fiat. The Supreme Court agreed that the relevant statute did not authorize the Secretary of Education to rewrite the student-loan program on that scale.

In *Missouri v. Biden* (later renamed *Murthy v. Missouri*), Missouri and Louisiana exposed a vast federal censorship enterprise in which White House officials and multiple

federal agencies pressured major social-media companies to suppress protected speech. The Fifth Circuit agreed that federal officials had likely coerced or significantly encouraged censorship in violation of the First Amendment, even though the Supreme Court ultimately disposed of the case on standing grounds.

And in the COVID mandate cases—including *Biden v. Missouri* (2022) and the broader litigation culminating in *NFIB v. OSHA* (2022)—Missouri and other states forced the courts to confront the basic question of whether federal agencies could seize breathtaking new powers under the cover of a health emergency.

That is why President Trump’s second-term judicial selections matter. He’s been doing an excellent job, despite media commentary to the contrary, which has focused on whether his administration is drawing more heavily from lawyers who fought in Trump’s personal and political legal battles. Critics describe that as a loyalty test. But they fail to grasp the significance of what those lawyers showed in their defense of President Trump during a time when the media and judicial system were focused on his downfall. It’s not a question of personal loyalty; it’s proof of character shown through legal combat. They are battle-tested lawyers who operated under enormous political pressure, defended constitutional structures in hard fights, and withstood elite hostility. That kind of record provides better evidence of judicial courage than a man who spent 25 years cultivating the perfect résumé. We need judges who have shown they are loyal to the law even when it costs them personally.



FOLLOWING THE FALL OF THE OUTDATED POST-WAR consensus, judicial selection will play a central role in determining whether the next era is worthy of the Constitution. We cannot reclaim self-government from the administrative state with judges who speak the language of originalism but lack the courage to enforce it. The point of judicial selection now is not merely to find bright lawyers. It is to find courageous constitutionalists who understand that reclaiming the Constitution from the administrative state is a generational project—and who are willing to do their part in that fight.

What would a better model of Supreme Court justice selection look like?

First, it would preserve the good: originalism, textualism, structural constitutionalism, and judicial independence.

Second, it would broaden the feeder pool. Instead of looking only at the most manicure-ready appellate judge résumés, it would look more seriously at attorneys general, solicitors general, public-interest litigators, executive-branch constitutional lawyers, and judges who have already demonstrated fortitude in hard cases.

Third, it would ask better questions. Not just: “Is he brilliant?” Not just: “Did he go to the ‘right’ school?” Not just: “Is he confirmable?” Not just: “Has he said all the right things?” But: “When did he show courage?” “What did it cost him?” “Did he stand on constitutional principle under pressure?” “Does his record suggest that he seeks duty rather than honor?”

The country deserves justices who did not spend their lives trying to imitate Justice Thomas in their words, but who proved through their actions in hard fights that they possess the courage, discipline, and constitutional seriousness to follow his example.

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That is why the deepest principle here is still the simplest one: the office of justice should find the man. The man should not covet the role. Not ambition for the office, but fit-

ness for the office. Not a life spent auditioning for elevation, but a life spent proving oneself worthy of responsibility. We should recover an older, healthier instinct that great men do not audition to get picked as the next great man. They are already in the arena. They are already laboring under an obligation to succeed. Great offices should find worthy men, not reward lifelong auditioners. The future of the Court belongs to courageous constitutionalists.

Eric Schmitt is serving his first term as a United States Senator from the State of Missouri.

The Unz Review • An Alternative Media Selection

A Collection of Interesting, Important, and Controversial Perspectives Largely Excluded from the American Mainstream Media

McConnell, Graham and Epistemic Nihilism

TED RALL • JULY 17, 2026 • 1,000 WORDS • 4 COMMENTS

Right-wing Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, former Senate majority leader and key senior legislator, went missing for weeks. No one — including President Donald Trump and the governor of his home state — knew whether he was sick, wallowing in depression like a recently MIA congressman from New Jersey, on a wild incognito adventure, alive, dead, kidnapped or in a coma. His office refused to clear up the mystery until July 12, when they released a “proof of life” photo, complete with old-school newspaper, that only aroused further suspicion.

Pressured to explain this bizarre situation, Republicans responded to their constituents and fellow citizens the way leaders of any major political party in the world’s oldest and most powerful representative democracy typically do when honesty and transparency are clearly called for: They plotted a coverup.

A really stupid coverup.

If you read GOP accounts on social media platforms like X, you know that Republican- and MAGA-related feeds are coordinated to a ridiculous extent. Whether talking points are distributed to the various politicians and media influencers or they are directly managed from a central right-wing boiler room operation — overseas in many cases — I do not know. The results, however, are clear. Images and words — exactly identical or lightly edited — are spammed out by dozens of accounts at the same time.

Clearly, the word went out to the MAGA-verse: *We need “proof of life” for McConnell.*

As usual, MAGA World slavishly complied.

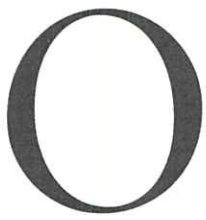
As McConnell, 84 and hospitalized since June 14, faced growing speculation and rumors about his health — including unverified claims that he was in a vegetative or deceased state — Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-S.D.), Senate Majority Whip John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) and conservative commentator and former McConnell aide Scott Jennings issued a laughably coordinated set of public statements (with my emphasis added) on July 6 and 7.

“Leader Thune spoke with Sen. McConnell yesterday by phone,” Thune’s office said. “They had a *lengthy and substantive conversation* that covered a variety of topics, including national security.”

Then Barrasso:

“Senator Barrasso and Senator McConnell had a *lengthy conversation* early this afternoon. Their phone call lasted *roughly 20 minutes*. They caught up about the latest news impacting

Beyond religious education, the Bible provides as much, if not more, of the necessary context behind Western Civilization as would the study of Greek and Roman culture.



On June 26, the Texas State Board of Education adopted reading lists for public schools across the Lone Star State. Apart from the “perhaps unprecedented” (*The New York Times*’ word) fact that it sets a standard body of knowledge for graduates of public schools in one of the largest states in the Union, the Board’s reading list did two other shocking things. First, it mandated that each book be read “in its entirety.” Second, it stipulated excerpts from the Bible at every grade level.

The usual suspects wailed. Reading from the Bible was another breach in the great wall of church-state separation. Reading the classics was subjecting a “diverse” and non-white school population to the thought of dead white European (and American) males. Like Shakespeare and Poe, Stevenson and Lincoln. And, of course, it truncated teacher “autonomy.”

Let me defend the Board’s decision on the Bible. Like it or not, American—and more broadly Western—culture is the product of a Judeo-Christian influence. That culture is incomprehensible apart from recognizing its sources in Athens, Rome, and *Jerusalem*. The culture we know comes from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Jesus Christ—and not Confucius, Allah, and Vishnu. Like it or not, that is a historical fact. One need not be a Jew or a Christian to understand that a thorough grasp of American and Occidental culture presupposes some basic understanding of Judaism and Christianity.

Let me compare. I have lived abroad in many countries, including China. But the culture I least understood was China’s. It wasn’t because it was ancient or because it was communist. It was because its cultural roots lay in religions and philosophies that were alien to me. While I could superficially appreciate aspects of that culture—the aesthetic (“this is pretty”)—its depths remained opaque to me because they presupposed some deeper awareness of Confucius, Lao Tzu, and Buddha that I lacked.

Painters didn’t paint the Fall because they were working on “still life with apple and two gender binary nudes.” The “Good Samaritan” wasn’t the guy who called 911 when you got stuck on the BQE. The “Pilgrims” didn’t get called that because they booked a Massachusetts cruise.

American geography is replete with religious allusions. “Providence” bespoke the divine care a certain Roger Williams felt. Other Puritans, like Robert Treat, decided to expand out of New England to establish a “New Ark” of the covenant in New Jersey. Towns like Zarephath in New Jersey, Ephrata in Pennsylvania, Hebron in Nebraska, and Salem in Massachusetts and Oregon come from the Old Testament. Nor should we forget the diversity of the American colonial experience, expressed in places like Sault Ste. Marie in Michigan, Los Angeles and San Francisco in California, and San Antonio and Cestohowa [sic] in Texas.

No doubt there are people who will be surprised that “For everything there is a season”—on Texas’ reading list—did not originate with the Byrds.

We won’t get into even more complicated ideas, like the various “covenants” that marked Puritan theology and which managed to temper the social contract individualism of the early American founding. Or how a civil rights leader like Martin Luther King—a *Protestant minister*—often peppered his speeches with allusions his biblically literate congregation would have recognized came not from him but the Good Book.

Indeed, the very expression “the Good Book” alludes to the biblical roots of our culture.

A young person exposed to the classics that formed American culture, identity, and thought who lacks a grounding in the Bible will not appreciate where his culture comes from. At best, he might think there are

some nice similes and metaphors to be found there, but concepts like “covenant,” “responsibility,” “pilgrim’s progress,” etc. will largely remain just words to him. He will be alienated from his culture.

I had heard somewhere that students might be expected to read an excerpt from Dante. You can’t understand Dante without the Bible. You can’t understand a lot of literature without the Bible.

Let me draw another analogy. I have been recently translating works by a Polish Jewish-Christian author, Roman Brandstaetter. Brandstaetter is steeped in the Bible. For Polish readers, the allusions he makes are self-evident—Polish culture has still not been secularized in the ways Western culture has (though it’s getting there).

But I find that, in translating Brandstaetter for English-speaking audiences, I must frequently add footnotes to explain or reference allusions, especially biblical allusions, because they are unlikely to be familiar to the average reader. Could the reader plow past them? I guess—but he’d lose a lot of the richness and texture of the author’s writing by just skimming the surface.

Texas is doing its students a great favor by grounding them in the sources from which their culture and country sprang. The biblical passages are excerpts: nobody is making students read the Bible Genesis to Apocalypse. But Texas is also providing another benefit by insisting on reading other works *in toto*.

No, Texas is not sending kids home with 600+ pages of Melville’s *Moby Dick*. But it is requiring a complete reading of some of Shakespeare’s plays and Poe’s “The Raven.” It’s correcting a tendency—which even the *Times* previously admitted—that elementary and secondary students no longer read *whole books*. And, for some young people, picking up a paper book rather than a silver screen may be a whole new experience.

Kudos to Texas for its effort to promote cultural literacy.

Author

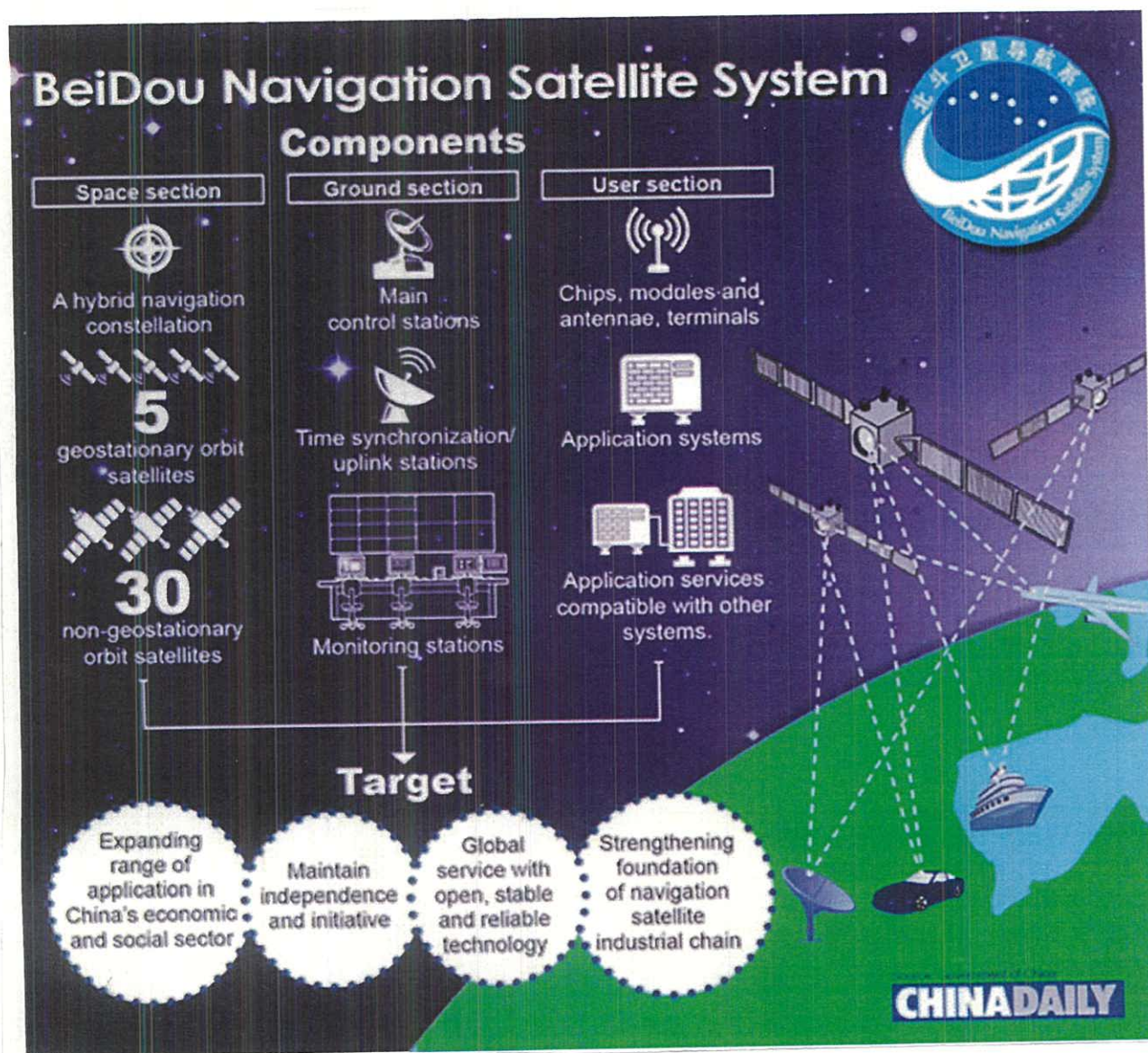
John M. Grondelski

John M. Grondelski (Ph.D., Fordham) is a former associate dean of the School of Theology at Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey. All views expressed herein are his own.



China's Beidou Satellite System Is a Game Changer in Iran's War with the US

JERRY C. JOHNSON • JULY 18, 2026 • 700 WORDS • 13 COMMENTS



Hat tip to Kevin Wamsley of Inside China Business. His recent video explaining the importance of China's *Beidou* satellite navigation system provides a critical insight into the current success of Iran's missile strikes on US and Israeli targets. It is a game changer.

Let me summarize it. During the 12-day war in June 2025, Iranian missiles and drones struggled against sophisticated Israeli and American electronic warfare. GPS jamming and spoofing repeatedly disrupted their guidance systems, limiting their effectiveness during the intense 12-day conflict. Fast-forward to early 2026, and the battlefield dynamics had shifted dramatically. Iran's precision strikes began threading through advanced air defenses, hitting high-value targets across the Gulf with surprising accuracy. Intelligence analysts pointed to one key factor: Iran had ditched GPS for China's *Beidou* satellite navigation system.

The US unwittingly provided the spark that ignited China's quest for the *Beidou*. The story begins in 1993 when a single Chinese container ship, the *Yinhe*, sailing to Iran, the vessel was accused by the CIA of carrying chemicals for weapons production. Middle Eastern ports, under pressure from the US, refused entry and the ship was stranded in the Indian Ocean. The US not only pressured allies but reportedly disabled the ship's GPS access, forcing it to drop anchor for weeks. Inspections in Saudi Arabia eventually cleared the vessel, but China received no apology or compensation.

This humiliation—losing navigation mid-ocean due to reliance on a foreign-controlled system—became a pivotal lesson for Beijing. It accelerated development of an independent satellite navigation network: **Beidou** (BDS).

- **BDS-1** (2000s) provided initial regional coverage.
- **BDS-2** expanded capabilities.
- **BDS-3** (completed around 2020) transformed it into a global powerhouse with dozens of satellites, far more ground stations (especially in the Global South), and superior accuracy in many regions compared to GPS.

Today, Beidou outperforms GPS in coverage and precision across roughly 165 countries, offering a resilient alternative that cannot be unilaterally jammed or spoofed by Western powers.

After the 2025 conflict exposed vulnerabilities in GPS-dependent systems, Iran moved decisively. By late 2025 or early 2026, it integrated *Beidou* into its missile and drone arsenals. Reports from March 2026 already highlighted dramatic improvements: Iranian munitions evaded electronic countermeasures that had worked months earlier.

Key advantages of *Beidou* for Iran include:

- **Resistance to jamming/spoofing** — Advanced frequency-hopping and anti-interference tech.
- **Higher accuracy** — Circular error probable under 5 meters in key regions, enabling precise strikes with fewer munitions.
- **Real-time command** — Secure messaging allows mid-flight adjustments over long distances.

This upgrade has contributed significantly to Iran's ability to penetrate US defenses in the Gulf countries and dramatically improved Iran's ability to strike critical targets, which has undermined confidence in US security guarantees in the Gulf.

The US decision to use GPS as a weapon in 1993 has backfired spectacularly—proof that humiliating China inspired a technological leap that now gives China and its allies a strategic advantage over the US.

Here's my latest *Counter Currents*, which discusses why Turkey is now facing a fork in the road in terms of its national security:

Colonel Wilkerson and I discussed the latest in the Iran war with Nima:

Here is my chat with Ed DeMarche, editor of Trends Journal, regarding the US sending more KC-135s to the Middle East:

Iran Sent Message to JD Vance Warning that Kushner and Witkoff Were "Abusing" Their Inside Access to Negotiations

A senior Iranian official said Tehran privately told Vance the pair were exploiting the negotiations for financial gain. The Trump administration says it never happened.

During the U.S.-Iran talks in Lake Lucerne, Switzerland in late June, Iranian negotiators sent a private message to Vice President JD Vance through an intermediary. The Iranians warned Vance that the continued presence of President Donald Trump's Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner would undermine the chance of turning the June 17 framework into an enduring deal, a senior Iranian official told Drop Site.

The Iranian official spoke to Drop Site on the condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak publicly. In the message, according to the official, Iran conveyed to Vance that the pair were more interested in exploiting insider knowledge of the negotiations to profit in financial markets than they were in reaching a deal. Iranian negotiators also expressed concern about repeated leaks from Kushner to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. (A U.S. official told Axios that since the negotiations began, Witkoff and Kushner "talk almost every day to Netanyahu" and the head of Mossad.)

In the weeks leading up to the signing of the memorandum of understanding, the official said, Iran presented written documentation to mediators of what it characterized as evidence that "individuals close to President Trump" were abusing the Iran war and diplomatic developments to manipulate financial markets. "Even before the Islamabad talks kicked off [in April], we had already sent multiple messages to Trump through the Pakistanis, warning them about [Witkoff's] overall destructive role in the previous negotiation," the Iranian official said.

The outreach to Vance came after these previous efforts to raise Tehran's concerns about Witkoff and Kushner with the White House, the official said—given that messages passed to mediators are delivered broadly to the full U.S. team including Kushner, who is a private citizen with no official government role.

"We transmitted data and assessments through an exclusive channel to Mr. Vance," said the senior Iranian official, who has direct knowledge of the effort. Iranian negotiators, he said, communicated to Vance that they believed Witkoff and Kushner were "abusing" the diplomatic process, "effectively disrupting the overall negotiating atmosphere."

Drop Site was not able to independently confirm the intermediary actually delivered the message, though the Iranian official said Tehran was confident Vance had received it. The official declined to offer specifics. In response to a request for comment sent to the vice president's office, a U.S. official denied Iran's claims. "A message of this nature was never conveyed to the Vice President or his team," the official told Drop Site. "Additionally, any insinuation that the other members of the president's trusted negotiating team are operating under motives other than serving the president and delivering on his mission is false."



Kushner and Witkoff did not respond to requests for comment, but a White House spokesperson denied Iran's claims and denounced Drop Site. "No such message was ever transmitted to the United States. It's sad that Drop Site News 'reporters' are so filled with hate for America and devoid of respect for themselves that they have become full-throated propagandists for the Iranian regime," said White House spokesperson Anna Kelly.

A source close to Vance told Drop Site the Iranians had made no secret of their objections to the presence of Witkoff and Kushner in the negotiations.

Since the Iran war began, many financial analysts have described a pattern where speculative bets are placed or unusually large positions are taken in key markets related to the conflict and diplomatic events, including consistent announcements from Trump made just prior to the Monday openings of U.S. trading. This has led to widespread public speculation that people with access to inside information are manipulating markets in oil futures, energy stocks, and prediction markets.

In June, Iran calculated profits from such alleged manipulation had reached \$9 billion and formally requested, in writing, that Iran should share in the proceeds. "We have conveyed through intermediaries that \$4.5 billion of this sum should also be allocated to the Iranian side," the Iranian official said. "The exchanged texts will ultimately become part of the historical record."

Iran met for indirect diplomatic talks on February 6 in Oman and February 26 in Switzerland before the war began on February 28. "During our negotiation rounds in Oman, it had become completely clear to us that this person [Witkoff] had zero connection to diplomacy or actually advancing the talks," the official added, saying that Witkoff had entirely misrepresented Iran's positions on a range of issues, including what terms it was willing to offer the U.S. on the fate of its highly enriched uranium. Witkoff's "mistaken impressions from the negotiations got passed on to Trump," he charged.

The official cautioned that Iran was not naive in believing that Vance would subvert Trump's positions, but assessed that the vice president brings a more sober, professional, and realistic perspective to the negotiations. "Sending this exact message directly to Vance was done with the full approval of our negotiating team," he said. He declined to "confirm or deny anything about other messages being exchanged" between Vance and Iranian officials.

A source close to Vance, however, said the vice president is broadly looking for partners on the Iranian side. "JD is doing the job of what you're supposed to do with diplomacy, which is find people within the other side who are more willing to dialogue, and that's been a real key thing," the U.S. source told Drop Site. "And to be honest, it's diplomacy 101, when you go in and you assess the team, you always try to get as many people on the other team as possible, like you don't want it to be one on one. You want it to be like 12 on 12."

The Iranians also want to see an expansion of the size of the negotiating delegations, particularly technical experts and Iran country experts from the U.S. "We have also

informed [Vance] that an expansion of our negotiating team would provide a suitable opportunity for him to adjust the composition of his own delegation," said the senior Iran official.

"That being said, our assessment is that he is cautiously adding select members of his... team with expertise on the Middle East and Iran file, while facing significant constraints in making rapid changes to his team."

The Iranian official dismissed the suggestion Vance would be able to succeed in cultivating an Iranian source on the negotiating team. "The Iranian side has a small, stable team at the high levels, and the scope of their decisions is very clearly defined," the Iranian official said.

The Iranian official said that during the diplomatic talks in Oman and Switzerland before the war, Witkoff and Kushner showed up with no subject area or nuclear experts and appeared oblivious to the technical aspects of negotiating the nuclear issue. During these talks, he said, Iranian negotiators presented an outline of their existing stockpile of enriched uranium and assessed that their "unbelievable level of flexibility" formed the basis for what Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on February 25 could be a "historic opportunity to strike an unprecedented agreement."

Witkoff subsequently portrayed Iran's disclosure of its highly enriched uranium stockpile as a threat to build multiple nuclear weapons. "The Iranian negotiators said to us, directly, with, you know, no shame, that they controlled 460 kilograms of 60%, and they're aware that that could make 11 nuclear bombs, and that was the beginning of their negotiating stance," Witkoff said on Fox News on March 3, while defending the decision to attack Iran in the middle of negotiations.

While the Western press routinely characterize the Iranian negotiating team as in disarray, it has been the American side that has been hardest to read, as Trump has periodically disrupted talks with explicit death threats against negotiators, or promised widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure in Iran, after having agreed in the memorandum of understanding to stop leveling such threats.

Just as the talks between Iran and Vance began in Lucerne, Trump appeared to threaten the lives of Iran's negotiators, telling FOX News that if Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz again, "You won't have a country. You won't even make it back to your f***ing country." In response, Iran's delegation staged a walkout of the talks.

"Trump's [statements] during Vance's negotiations with the Iranian delegation in Pakistan and Switzerland [were] clearly intended to undermine Vance's position in the talks," said the Iranian official. "In practice, it ended up weakening his standing with the mediators as well."

The Iranians decided to pursue a direct channel to Vance after the MOU was signed, in part persuaded by mediators that the vice president had a genuine interest in reaching a lasting agreement and that he represented the long-term interests of the U.S. government. Trump, mediators told Iran, appeared driven primarily by his day-to-day feelings as to how the war or the ceasefire reflected on his image. Iran is aware of

the political reality that Vance is jockeying for the Republican nomination to succeed Trump, giving him more of an incentive to reach a durable resolution.

"The mediators firmly maintain that President Trump's personal preferences and his disruptive interventions in the peace process are actions that undermine the peace efforts," said the Iranian official. "The mediators are making a distinction between Vance's representation and Trump's own positions. They're saying that Trump personally has an interest in keeping the image of the war going, while the U.S. establishment, represented by Vance, wants to bring the war to a conclusion."

Robert Malley, a former Middle East official under both President Barack Obama and Joe Biden who was also a top U.S. negotiator of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, said it is strategically sound for the Iranians to work to establish direct communication with Vance, but such a channel can only mean so much.

"Vance may be more authoritative than Kushner and Witkoff, but that hardly makes him authoritative," Malley told Drop Site. "If today's President Trump cannot speak for tomorrow's, then how could JD Vance?"

Still, he said, there's little harm in trying. "It makes perfect sense for the Iranians to try to establish a separate channel to Vice President Vance: He is the most senior U.S. official ever to have met with representatives of the Islamic Republic; he is known to have been skeptical of the war; a diplomatic breakthrough with Tehran would strengthen his political standing; and he is far more dependable than any of the available alternatives—namely, Kushner and Witkoff," he said. "However hard the vice president may try to persuade the Iranians that his word matters more than the president's latest outburst, they would probably be wiser to bet on the outburst rather than the word."

The future of any deal between Iran and the U.S. is very much in doubt. Trump formally informed Congress on July 10 that the U.S. is officially engaged in combat operations against Iran and he publicly declared the ceasefire dead. He has also suggested that diplomatic talks will continue. On Tuesday, Trump said that after new U.S. attacks there would not be "anybody left" in Iran.

From Iran's perspective, it's a familiar pattern of the U.S. constructing a mirage of negotiations between attacks. "Under the current circumstances, the U.S. side needs to reassess its understanding of the situation on the ground. They seem determined to test their chances of using force in relation to the Strait of Hormuz," said the Iranian official. "Our view is that once they fail again over the Strait of Hormuz, they'll almost certainly come back to the negotiating table. But by then, the negotiations definitely won't be as straightforward for them as they once were."



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HOLY PLACES

The Lowly Pea

Anthony Esolen

“We are men of the world,” said the official, huffing. “Keep your mysticism to yourself, and his too, no matter what little experiments he did. Ours is the age of science.” Some men, half embarrassed, were busy tilting a large granite monument from its base, so that it could rest, none too secure, on the tines of a forklift. The machine took it then, lurching at every bump, to the back of the Augustinian monastery—Saint Thomas, in the city of Brno, in what is now called the Czech Republic, then the Soviet puppet state of Czechoslovakia.

The year was 1950, and the monks were being expelled. It mattered little to the Communists that the previous abbot, Alfons Zadrál, had been executed by the Nazis in 1945 for opposing their designs; just as little, evidently, that the man whose memorial they were hiding from easy sight, Gregor Mendel, was hailed as the Newton of genetics. The memorial is a simple one. Mendel appears as a young monk of good cheer, with tall pea-plants to his right and left. His right hand rests on one of the plants; his left hand is open, facing forward. On the base we read his name and his dates, 1822–1884. In low relief are sculpted a man and woman on their knees, naked, like Adam and Eve, facing each other with their right arms extended, holding hands. That’s fitting, I think, because Mendel’s work has everything to do with the union of male and female, and the characteristics of their children.

The memorial, you’ll be glad to hear, is now prominent, the abbey has been returned to the Augustinians, the grounds feature a museum in Mendel’s honor, and a garden full of flowers shows the beauty of the natural world, beauty that inspired the monk, because it is the work of God. You’ll also be glad to hear that Father Lukas Martinek, the current abbot, but a year older than I am, was a student of civil engineering when he decided to study theology in secret, for which offense against modernity and the wave of the future he could have been thrown in prison.

■ INFINITE RICHES IN A LITTLE ROOM ■

When Gregor Mendel was conducting his long, patient, painstaking experiments on pea plants and other humble creatures, carefully tending them and logging their characteristics, hybridizing one with another in distinct generations, the work of Charles Darwin was all the rage in scientific circles. But Mendel was dissatisfied. I won’t get into the details, except to say that, just as in quantum mechanics, what is at issue is a dilemma between the discrete and the continuous. People may remember the name of Darwin’s ground-shaking work, *The Origin of Species*, but the tendency in Darwin was to deny that species, as such, really exist; the lion shades into the pussycat; things proceed by tiny incremental changes. If you cross a tall pea plant with a short one, you might expect the offspring to fall somewhere in between. But they do not. The offspring will *always be tall*. But if you then cross those offspring with one another, some will be tall and some will be short, at the precise ratio of 3:1, and the tall will be as tall as the grandparents, and the short just as short.

Mendel didn’t work only with pea plants, and he didn’t look only at height; he chose seven clear characteristics of the pea, breeding and cross-breeding them by *many thousands*, often using a single grain of pollen which he isolated and studied under a microscope, disproving Darwin’s belief that one grain was insufficient for fertilization; then he meticulously logged the results. What I have noted above shows the action of dominant and recessive genes in pairs. To get a short pea plant—or to have blue eyes, if you’re a human

being—you need *both* genes marked for the recessive trait; like flipping a coin twice and needing two tails.

One of Mendel’s greatest admirers, William Bateson, the biologist who coined the term “genetics,” called in 1894 for experiments in breeding to distinguish between traits that revert to the mean and those that are discontinuous, experiments that would take years to conduct. Only in 1900 did he learn that Mendel had already done what he asked for. Nobody in Mendel’s time paid close attention to his work, the results of which he had published in 1866 in Brno’s scientific journal. But Gregor Mendel wasn’t out for fame. “My time will come,” he said, shortly before his death. And it has come. We now know that the seed of life contains untold mysteries, the working and interworking of genes, specific, discrete, in ways that boggle the mind. How much information is contained in the world’s biggest library? Less than what is contained in a single living cell.

■ AS FIRM AS STEEL ■

Father Mendel was a man who had his priorities in order. He was a priest of God first and last, and *therefore* was taken up with the study of God’s work in nature. I find his personality to be quite attractive. We can imagine him in the abbey gardens, tending his thousands of pea plants, or—though the results of these experiments have been lost—keeping his bees, hive after hive, with queen bees of varieties from all over the world. For fourteen years, before he became the abbot of Saint Thomas, he taught physics in the *Realschule* in Brno—and can you imagine what those teenage boys got from such a teacher? He was devoted to the work, and by all accounts he got the boys to take up the subject with a will. Then, in 1868, he was made the abbot of Saint Thomas, and if he thought that was going to give him a little free time to continue with his scientific work, he was mistaken. It wasn’t just the duties of the abbot that got in the way. It was the government, the Austrian empire, that before the war with Bismarck’s Prussia in 1866 was markedly and fervently in accord with the Church, producing quite a bounteous harvest of learning and art and religious institutions. But after Austria’s defeat, the ideologically secular rose in power, and time and again, the Church was hedged round with laws that took away her immemorial rights—in education, for example, even in the schools she herself had founded—and set about her all kinds of hedges to keep her influence in check. One particularly obnoxious law laid a tax on monasteries like that of Saint Thomas. So the prelate Mendel had to fight for the Church’s rights, and for justice, against the imperial government.

Thus were the last years of his life taken up with conflict and bitterness.

You may know that one of the wickedest men of modern times, Joseph Stalin, gave himself that surname, as if he were his own baptizer: it means “steel.” We can see why. He let no mere human consideration obstruct his path to dominance in the Soviet state, and to what he expected would be that state’s domination of the world to come. That was supposed to be *political* evolution, inevitable. In 1950, when the men removed that memorial to Mendel, it did seem as if Stalinism would endure for a long time. But that self-proclaimed man of steel died in 1953, and in 1991 his communist utopia collapsed of its own incompetence and despair. But Gregor Mendel showed the firmness of conviction—what we often find in the history of the Church, when otherwise gentle and humble men, armed with the simple knowledge that right is right and wrong is wrong, confront the vast machinery of government, or the fury of the mob, or the customs of darkness in a pagan world. Mendel did not give in. He preferred that the monastery should have its goods seized by force, rather than compromise on a principle of justice. He was right. The law was repealed; but by then his body had returned to the dust.

If you go to Brno, by all means visit the beautiful monastery and its chapel, and the gardens roundabout, and look to the tower of the cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, rising beyond. The Mendel Museum is filled with information prominently displayed, though the architecture is spare and cold; and the monument to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Mendel's birth, set in Mendel Square, supposed to represent pea plants, looks like an invasion force of gigantic metal aliens, so cold and unfeeling and inhuman as to deny any connection between what the scientist studied

and what the man of God believed and prayed. The artist would have done better to heed what Mendel himself said on Easter, in one of the two sermons we have a record of, that it was well for us that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene as a gardener, to show us that the natural and the supernatural must unite, to produce in us true life, and that in abundance. They did so in Father Mendel. May they do so in the Czech Republic of today, and in us all!

(Anthony Esolen is translator of *Augustine's Confessions* (TAN), translator and editor of *Dante's Divine Comedy* (Random House), and author of four volumes of essays, *How the Church Has Changed the World* (MAGNIFICAT).

Supreme Court To Review Parents' Challenge To Law Regarding Notification Of Gender Transitions

July 9, 2026

By TYLER ARNOLD

THE WANDERER

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EWTN News) — The U.S. Supreme Court will hear a lawsuit from parents who are challenging a Washington State law that prevents youth shelters from immediately notifying parents when minors who run away from home are seeking gender transitions.

Under the law, adopted in 2023, shelters that house runaway youth cannot immediately tell parents when a child is “seeking or receiving” gender transition medical services. It allows the state to refer the child for “behavioral health services” but does not change parental consent laws generally required for hormone therapy or surgeries.

The law directs shelters to notify the Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families when housing a runaway child who is seeking gender transition services and “offer services designed to resolve the conflict” between the child and the parents before the parents will be notified and before the department works toward family reunification.

The legal challenge comes from parents whose children exhibit gender dysphoria. Lower courts ruled the parents did not have standing to sue because their children are not currently in a youth shelter, but the Supreme Court has agreed to review that decision.

In the lawsuit, five sets of parents express concern their child might run away and seek gender transition services. The parents argue the law violates their 14th Amendment right to direct the upbringing of

their children. The Supreme Court has affirmed this right as protected under the amendment for more than a century.

“This statute allows shelters and homes to keep children at locations without their parents’ knowledge and refer those children for health interventions without their parents’ knowledge or approval,” the lawsuit states. “It does not require children to be returned on any particular timetable or under any particular conditions.”

It also argues that the law restricts some of the parents’ First Amendment rights to the free exercise of religion, including at least one set of parents who are practicing Catholics.

The original lawsuit cites the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC): “Those plaintiffs . . . adhere to the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church when it teaches, ‘By creating the human being man and woman, God gives personal dignity to the one and the other. Each of them, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity’ (CCC, n. 2293).”

The parents are joined in the lawsuit by two advocacy groups: International Partners for Ethical Care and Advocates Protecting Children.

A spokesman for International Partners for Ethical Care told EWTN News the organization is “heartened that the Supreme Court will finally hear a case that addresses the rights of all parents to protect their children from harmful medical interventions.”

“We hope this case will not be cast as a religious liberties issue but as a safeguarding issue for parents and children of any or no faith,” the spokesman said. “Parents should not have to live in fear of the state taking custody of their children if they disagree with a deceptive ideology and dangerous treatments.”

Mike Faulk, deputy communications director for Washington Attorney General Nick Brown, told EWTN News the lower courts found that the families did not show how they were “likely to be injured by the law” and “we will be prepared to successfully defend it at the Supreme Court.”

“This law was passed to give runaway youth and their families access to reunification and behavioral health services,” he said. “The law makes clear that the Department of Children, Youth, and Families must make good faith attempts to contact families with a goal of reunification.”

The law has received opposition from the Washington Catholic Conference, which represents the bishops of the state’s three dioceses. It criticized the bill in a 2023 newsletter when the bill was being considered, saying the social teachings of the Catholic Church affirm “the family is the most central social institution, and it must be supported and strengthened.”

“[This bill] undermines families,” the statement added. “In line with the bishops’ legislative priorities to protect children and families and respect life, the [conference] opposes [the bill].”

By **Andrew P. Napolitano**

July 16, 2026

Can Trump Sue Himself?

The question recently asked by a federal judge in Miami — can the president sue an entity in the executive branch of the federal government and benefit from the resolution of that lawsuit? — seems to beg the question.

How could anyone sue an entity he controls and derive a benefit from the amicable resolution of such a lawsuit at the expense of others who are not parties to the lawsuit?

Here is the backstory.

During President Donald Trump's first term in office, an IRS employee unlawfully released the tax returns of hundreds of thousands of taxpayers, among which was Trump's. The employee pleaded guilty to this crime and served a lawfully appropriate portion of his five-year sentence.

Trump was furious at the revelation, as anyone would be who reasonably expected federal employees to comply with the laws they are sworn, and legally obliged, to uphold.

All those whose rights have been violated by the criminal acts of a government employee have a cause of action against the government seeking to compensate them for the demonstrable harm the government employee caused them.

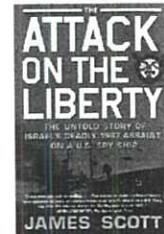
Congress and the federal courts have insulated the federal government from liability for the consequences of its ordinary, rational, good-faith enforcement of federal laws — but not from the harm caused by the crimes committed by its employees.

Much of this immunity has unleashed extreme violence on its victims — the recent murders of fishermen on the high seas by the Department of Defense unlawfully purporting to engage in domestic law enforcement and the on-street murders of innocents by ICE agents in American cities purporting to enforce immigration laws come to mind.

The government killings of innocent persons are objectively criminal, but due to the Department of (Political) Justice dragging its feet on the revelations of its investigations and excluding state prosecutors and investigators, we await a judicial determination.

In the case of Trump suing the IRS — an entity that he controls, and which is represented by the DOJ that he also controls — we wait no longer.

Earlier this week, the U.S. District Court in Miami excoriated both Trump's present personal lawyers and his former lawyers who now run the DOJ for engaging in a false cause of action.



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What is a false cause of action?

State courts are courts of general jurisdiction. They can hear any matters that in which the litigants have minimum contacts with the state. Many state courts can hear claims under federal law, and all can hear claims under the U.S. Constitution. Some state courts can even render judicial opinions of legislative or executive behavior in the abstract — before and without any complainant alleging harm.

But federal courts are courts of limited jurisdiction. They can only hear cases that arise under the Constitution and federal laws, or where expressly authorized by Congress or where there is diversity of citizenship — meaning, a cause of action between citizens of different states where more than \$75,000 is in dispute.

But the trigger for *all* cases in federal courts is the existence of a case or controversy. The Case or Controversy Clause of the Constitution was insisted upon by James Madison so as to limit the power of federal judges to the resolution of real, genuine disputes; prevent the courts from becoming a super legislature; and prohibit the use of federal courts for collusive litigation wherein both sides secretly seek the same result.

When both sides seek or purport to negotiate for the same result — here the liberty of the plaintiff Donald Trump to file any tax returns he wishes without fear of audit, and the defendant who works for the plaintiff agrees — there is no real case or controversy because there is no adversity, the lawyers involved acted in bad faith, and their agreement to resolve the case is a nullity.

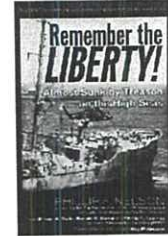
To avoid the Constitution's case or controversy requirements, Trump's lawyers — his personal lawyers who filed the lawsuit against the IRS and his former personal lawyers now running the DOJ — entered into a settlement agreement before the DOJ filed an answer to Trump's complaint.

Under the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, if parties to federal litigation reach an amicable resolution — a settlement — before the defendant files any responsive pleadings, the court has no role to play, except in the case of a manifest injustice.

Trump's complaint demanded \$10 billion in damages from the IRS. His DOJ lawyers agreed to give his personal lawyers a fund of \$1.776 billion from the federal Treasury to disburse to Trump's supporters at Trump's personal discretion; and his IRS lawyers agreed that neither Donald Trump personally nor his family or closely held corporations could ever be audited by the IRS.

The \$1.776 billion was not expressly authorized by Congress. Theoretically, it came from a fund used by the DOJ to settle legitimate — not collusive — litigation in which bona fide, demonstrably provable claims were made or monetary judgments were judicially entered against the federal government.

According to the DOJ, none of the \$1.776 billion has been spent and the fund is now dormant.



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The federal court to which the case was nominally assigned would have none of this. In a blistering ruling, the court found that there was no case or controversy here because there was no true adversity between the parties. The DOJ lawyers and the IRS lawyers were all seeking to please their boss, who is the plaintiff in the case.

The court found that the lawyers involved in this subterfuge, the lawyers who handled this case and crafted its purported resolution, did not act in good faith. Thus, Trump's present personal lawyers and his DOJ and IRS lawyers have been referred to their state licensing authorities for disciplinary proceedings.

Lawyers in litigation have a duty of zealous advocacy and unimpeachable loyalty to their clients. They cannot secretly or openly aid their client's adversary. If they are morally or personally or legally conflicted, they must withdraw from the case.

What about Trump's legally legitimate claim against the IRS for the criminal revelation of his personal tax returns? Had he sued as a private citizen and asked the court to shelve his case until he leaves office, he'd have had a real claim. Now, that claim is gone.

What a legal mess. Trump effectively sued himself and lost! And he grievously jeopardized the legal careers of those who sought to please him. No Trump pardon can help these lawyers. They are now at the not-so-tender mercies of the state entities that issued their licenses to practice law.

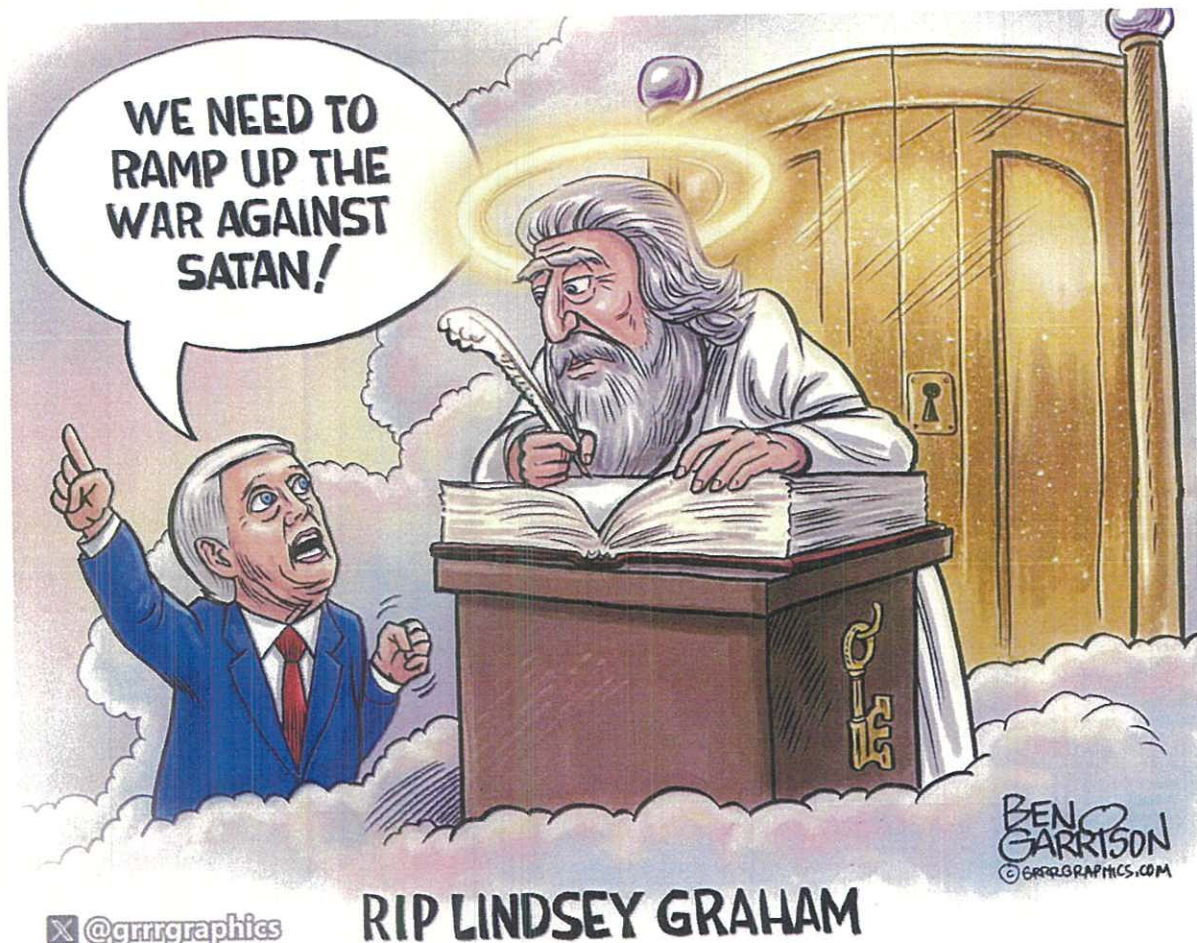


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Congressional Ratification of President Trump's Corporatism

RON PAUL • JULY 13, 2026 •

Despite regularly denouncing the rising socialist menace, President Trump has been pursuing a policy arguably just as, if not more, dangerous to liberty and prosperity as anything proposed by Zohran Mamdani or Bernie Sanders: using government funds to purchase partial ownership of private companies.

The Trump administration has obtained ownership interests of approximately 27 billion dollars in 30 companies since January of 2025. While President Trump and his defenders claim making these “investments” will benefit the American people, the truth is this policy will harm most Americans. The policy distorts the capital markets by incentivizing investors to support these companies because the investors believe government's ownership interest creates a de facto government guarantee of a stock's value. For example, after the government announced it would acquire ten percent ownership in chip manufacture Intel, the company's stock price had a big increase.

When investors allocate their resources to companies because government is supporting those companies, capital is deprived to businesses that can thrive by pleasing consumers instead of politicians. This reduces economic growth, harming consumers and workers. It also incentivizes other businesses to seek government investment instead of developing ways to better serve consumers.

Government “investment” in private companies means government control. So, the “beneficiaries” of government support will be forced to make decisions based on political considerations rather than based on what will maximize profits. This will have negative effects on the companies and the entire economy.

Given how many Republicans have been critical of the rise of an openly socialist wing of the Democratic party, it would be reasonable to expect congressional Republicans to push back against President Trump's use of taxpayer funds to take ownership interests in private companies. However, not only are most Republicans not speaking out against this policy, but Senate Republicans have included a provision in the fiscal year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) authorizing this policy.

The provision in question creates a “Defense Equity Investment Account” that the Pentagon can use to invest as much as 500 million dollars in private companies that produce batteries, as well as critical minerals, materials, and chemicals. The bill allows the Defense Department to take an ownership interest in companies in exchange for the Defense Department's investment. This provision is claimed to be justified because it ensures the military-industrial complex has reliable supplies. Therefore, anyone who raises concerns about this expansion of the Pentagon's influence over private businesses will be told that this is a limited grant of authority done for national security purposes.

History shows that new infringements on liberty often start as limited measures presented as supporting national security and then expand over time. Any Republicans who vote for an NDAA with this provision are endorsing the principle of government funding, and control, of private businesses. Once they have embraced the principle, it will be difficult for them to oppose future legislation expanding government “investment” in private businesses.

President Trump's policy of using government funds to invest in private companies in exchange for partial government ownership of the companies is not pure socialism. Instead, it is corporatism. Corporatism is where power remains nominally in private hands but the government gains significant control. If the final version of the NDAA gives congressional authorization to President Trump's corporatist policy, the country will have taken a major step down the road to serfdom and Republicans will have lost what little credibility they had left as supporters of the free market and limited government.