



## **U.S. Congressional Recess August 2024**

### **NCJFCJ MEMBER MEETINGS AT HOME WITH YOUR SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVE**

Dear NCJFCJ Members,

Please join your fellow NCJFCJ members in contacting Members of Congress and elected officials during the August congressional recess. Reaching out while Members of Congress are home for their in-district work period helps to educate them about the work of the NCJFCJ and the critical role juvenile and family court judges are playing during these challenging times to improve the outcomes for children, families, and victims of domestic violence and domestic child sex trafficking. Information-sharing about the work of the NCJFCJ--which includes a focus on helping children and families that appear in your courtrooms heal from trauma--is needed to help federal policymakers understand these issues and support judicial training programs.

As the oldest judicial training organization in the country, the NCJFCJ has provided judicial officers, courts, and court-related agencies nationwide with the education, technical assistance, and research they need to improve the lives of those who seek fair, equal, effective, and timely justice with the support of federal program funds. When contacting your congressional delegation be sure to share specific information as to how you are currently serving families in need and the challenges you are facing to: keep children safe from child abuse and neglect; meet the needs of older youth already in, or transitioning out of, the foster care system; protect the safety of youth being held in juvenile detention centers; address substance and mental health issues; and protect families against violence in the home.

In addition, offer yourself to Members and their staff as they work on issues impacting children, families, and victims. This same outreach is important and encouraged with your Governor and members of your state legislature. The goal is to position the NCJFCJ as a resource for their work as well as to your elected officials. A case is never as simple as it appears. So, we encourage you to invite your Members of Congress and their staff to observe your court as the experience helps them (many of whom have never been in court) understand the highly complex issues that come before you.

The NCJFCJ's federal legislative requests and FY2025 funding requests are stated below and may serve as recommended talking points when you reach out to your Senators and Representative. To access and share the NCJFCJ's state profiles and overview of our subject area work, click [here](#). In addition, [NCJFCJ's Courting Judicial Excellence in Juvenile Justice](#): a 50-state study is a great resource for Congressional staff.

The NCJFCJ appreciates all you do, and we look forward to hearing about your visits and conversations with your Members and elected officials. You can report your visits to NCJFCJ CEO Joey Orduña Hastings at [jhastings@ncjfcj.org](mailto:jhastings@ncjfcj.org).

**How to contact your elected officials:**

U.S. Senate – visit <https://www.senate.gov/> and select Contact under the Senators menu. You will find your Senators’ local office contact information via their webpages. When you call ask to speak with the State Director.

House of Representatives – visit <https://www.house.gov/representatives> to look up your Representative’s local office contact information. When you call ask to speak with the District Director.

**Congress, Please Support the Following!**

**Department of Justice competitive grant programs; FY 2025 Commerce, Justice, and Science (CJS) Appropriations Requests**

*--\$4.5 million for OJJDP Child Abuse Training for Judicial Personnel (President’s proposed levels);* there is no other existing federally supported grant program available that provides specialized training and needed resources to juvenile and family courts. This discretionary grant program supports training, technical assistance, and research for courts which help to improve outcomes for child abuse and neglect victims, dual-status youth, victims of domestic child sex trafficking, and dependency court system reform. (NCJFCJ requested \$4.5 million, which reflects the President’s FY2025 Budget Request. The House bill proposes a 44% cut.)

*--\$22 million for OVW Grants to Support Families in the Justice System (President’s proposed levels);* combines VAWA Court Training and Improvement and Safe Havens: Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange programs and helps judges address the broad range of concerns family violence and child abuse may present while improving the court’s response to all aspects of the civil and criminal justice system on behalf of families impacted by these crimes. (NCJFCJ requested \$22 million, which was the President’s FY2025 Budget Request. The House bill provides \$22 million.)

These grant programs serve as a critical backbone to our nation’s response to family violence and child welfare matters. With the increased funding, NCJFCJ was able to expand judicial education programs. Last year, NCJFCJ increased its trainings and technical assistance for judges and court-related personnel. The NCJFCJ fulfilled over 550 requests for technical assistance and trained approximately 7,500 judges, judicial officers, attorneys, and other juvenile and family court-related professionals (7% increase) across the nation, impacting over 4 million children and families. On-going judicial education is vital given that when Congress enacts legislation, judges interpret the law. For example, with increased funding, NCJFCJ was able to expand from one Child Abuse and Neglect Institute for 50 judges in one year to two CANI institutes. Decreased funding will impact the ability of judges to prevent, identify, and address child abuse and family violence. Proposed funding cuts would impair NCJFCJ’s work to ensure

we have a well-informed judiciary that protects at-risk children and families and implements laws the way Congress intended.

Congress has capped overall spending. The House Commerce-Justice-Science bill has been cut by \$1.3 billion below last year's levels. The Senate Commerce-Justice-Science bill has not been released but we've been told that the bill will try to freeze funding levels for key programs. We need to use the August recess to make the case for judicial education and to ensure that funding levels are not reduced in any final funding agreement for judicial training programs.

**Ask your Senators and Representatives to support funding levels for these DOJ programs.**

### **AUTHORIZATION REQUESTS:**

#### **Offer to be a resource and invite them to your courtroom**

Two bills—traditionally bipartisan—are being discussed behind the scenes in Congress. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A)—traditionally a bipartisan bill—is due for re-authorization but negotiations have stalled. Secondly, Congress is debating several pieces of legislation to address [online safety and children](#), but lawmakers are having trouble finding consensus on how to address the safety of children while preserving privacy. **Offer to be a resource to Hill offices on these issues given your first-hand knowledge of the cases that come before the bench.** For juvenile justice issues, you can highlight [NCJFCJ's 50-state study](#), especially the states identified as key models for scaling. And you can remind them that [NCJFCJ supports the elimination of the Valid Court Order](#).

#### **Countering Threats and Attacks on Our Judges Act (S. 3984/HR 8093)**

This bipartisan legislation would establish a State Judicial Threat Intelligence and Resource Center to provide technical assistance, training, and threat monitoring for state and local judges and court personnel. NCJFCJ supports this legislation; it has passed the Senate and awaits consideration in the House. **Ask your elected House official to cosponsor this legislation.**

#### **Reauthorization of the Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA)**

FVPSA provides core funding to support programs (including shelter) to over 1.3 million domestic violence victims and their families. Bipartisan reauthorization bills have been introduced in the House. In previous years, this legislation was passed on a bipartisan basis. **Ask your elected official to cosponsor this legislation.**

#### **Reauthorization of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)**

This legislation has been bipartisan in previous years and would help states address child abuse and neglect by providing funding for prevention services to support families and to improve child protective services.

Don't forget to thank your Members of Congress for their continued support and efforts on behalf of children, families, and victims of domestic violence and domestic child sex trafficking. For more information regarding the NCJFCJ Legislative Committee and its efforts, please contact Vanessa Stephens, Administrative Services Manager, at (775) 507-4786 or [vstephens@ncjfcj.org](mailto:vstephens@ncjfcj.org).