

Chief Justice Roberts says judicial independence is key to checking Congress and the president





BUFFALO (AP) — Amid [attacks on federal judges](#) who have slowed President Donald Trump’s agenda, Chief Justice John Roberts on Wednesday defended judicial independence as necessary to “check the excesses of the Congress or the executive.”

“Judicial independence is crucial,” Roberts, the leader of the Supreme Court and the entire federal judiciary, said at a gathering of judges and lawyers in his hometown.

He described the creation of three co-equal branches of government as the Constitution's one innovation. "That innovation doesn't work if the judiciary is not independent," he said.

The 70-year-old chief justice largely repeated things he has said previously. But his comments, in response to questions from another federal judge, drew applause from the 600 people who gathered to mark the 125th anniversary of federal courts in the Western District of New York.

Asked about comments from Trump and his allies supporting the impeachment of judges because of their rulings, Roberts largely repeated [the statement he issued in March](#). "Impeachment is not how you register disagreement with a decision," he said.

Roberts also said he has no plans to retire as he nears the 20th anniversary of his confirmation to the nation's highest court.

His appearance in the city where he was born followed — by less than a week — Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson's forceful condemnation of attacks on judges.

In a speech to a conference of judges and lawyers in Puerto Rico, Jackson talked about "the relentless attacks and disregard and disparagement that judges around the country, and perhaps many of you, are now facing on a daily basis."

Jackson, in remarks posted on the court's website, described the attacks as "the elephant in the room" in the course of a talk that did not once mention Trump.

The president, senior aide Stephen Miller and billionaire Elon Musk have [railed at judges](#) who have blocked parts of Trump's agenda, sometimes with highly personal attacks. Trump called the judge who temporarily halted deportations using an 18th century wartime law a "radical left lunatic."

There also have been unsettling attempts at intimidation in the form of unwanted pizza deliveries to the homes of judges and their children. Some of those deliveries have been sent in the name of Daniel Anderl, the son of U.S. District Judge Esther Salas. Anderl was shot dead at the family home by a disgruntled lawyer in 2020.

"These deliveries are threats intended to show that those seeking to intimidate the targeted judge know the judge's address or their family members' addresses," Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., wrote Tuesday in a letter to Attorney General Pam Bondi and FBI Director Kash Patel.

Trump has largely spared the high court, which is weighing several emergency appeals of lower court rulings that have gone against him.

The president has a mixed record in front of the justices so far. On Tuesday, the court's conservative majority revived the administration's ban on transgender military service members while court challenges to the policy continue. The three liberal justices dissented.

But the court also has temporarily halted some deportations of alleged Venezuelan gang members under an 18th century wartime law. And the justices also said deportations can't take place without giving people a chance to challenge them in court.

Next week, the court is hearing arguments over Trump's executive order that would deny citizenship to American-born children of people who are in the country illegally. The Justice Department wants the court to narrow lower court orders so that the restrictions could be enforced in more than half the country, while the cases continue.

