

Justice Sonia Sotomayor says lawyers should stand up and fight amid turmoil in nation's legal system



WASHINGTON (AP) — Justice Sonia Sotomayor said Thursday that lawyers should stand up and fight in battles faced by the nation's legal system, comments that come amid attacks on federal judges and President Donald Trump's targeting of elite law firms in executive orders.

"Our job is to stand up for people who can't do it themselves. And our job is to be the champion of lost causes," she said. "But right now, we can't lose the battles we are facing. And we need trained and passionate and committed lawyers to fight this fight."

Sotomayor didn't mention the president as she spoke at an event in the nation's capital hosted by a section of the American Bar Association, which has also been targeted by Trump.

The liberal justice's remarks come a day after conservative Chief Justice John Roberts defended judicial independence as necessary to "check the excesses of the Congress or the executive" at an appearance in Buffalo, New York.

Last week, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson forcefully condemned attacks on judges in her own speech. She did not mention Trump by name, but called the threats and harassment "an attack on democracy."

The nation's highest court is weighing a growing number of emergency appeals from the Trump administration as his sweeping conservative agenda faces pushback in lower courts.

The president and his allies have railed at judges who have blocked parts of Trump's agenda, sometimes with highly personal attacks. Trump has also targeted elite law firms over work he disagrees with, leading some to fight back in court and others to strike deals with him.

The ABA has sued Trump over federal grant terminations and Trump has threatened the organization's role in accrediting law schools over its diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.