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## Trump and Republican senators fight over a century-old tradition for judicial nominees

MARY CLARE JALONICK  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump says the Senate’s century-old tradition of allowing home state senators to sign off on some federal judge and U.S. attorney nominees is “old and outdated.” Republican senators disagree. Trump has been complaining about what’s called the blue slip process for weeks and has pushed Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, to abandon the practice. But the veteran senator hasn’t budged. On Monday, Trump said he may sue, arguing that he can only get “weak” judges approved in states that have at least one Democratic senator. “This is based on an old custom. It’s not based on a law. And I think it’s unconstitutional,” Trump told reporters. “And I’ll probably be filing a suit on that pretty soon.” A look at the blue slip process and why Republicans are holding on to it, for now:

**Trump faces rare pushback from Republicans**

It’s unclear who Trump would sue or how such a lawsuit would work since the Senate sets its own rules. And Senate Republicans have been unbowed, arguing that they used the process to their own benefit when Democrat Joe Biden was president. They say they will want the practice to be in place if they are in the minority again. Republicans also note that judges who don’t receive approval from their home state

senators are unlikely to have enough votes for confirmation, anyway. “In Biden admin Republicans kept 30 LIBERALS OFF BENCH THAT PRES TRUMP CAN NOW FILL W CONSERVATIVES,” Grassley posted on X shortly after Trump’s remarks on Monday. North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis, a Republican member of the judiciary committee, posted on X that getting rid of the blue slip “is a terrible, short-sighted ploy that paves the path for Democrats to ram through extremist liberal judges in red states over the long-term.” Republicans “shouldn’t fall for it,” Tillis wrote. Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., has also defended blue slips, saying in the past that he had used the process himself and worked with the Biden administration when there was a judicial vacancy in South Dakota. “I don’t sense any rush to change it,” Thune said.

**It’s a longstanding practice, though it’s evolved**

The blue slip is a blue-colored form that is submitted to the two home state senators after the president nominates someone to become a district judge or U.S. attorney, among other federal positions that are contained within one state. The home state senators can individually return the slips with a positive or negative response. If there is a negative response, or if the form is not returned, the chairman of the judiciary panel can choose not to move forward.

**DROUGHT**  
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becomes too much of a problem,” he said. The bad news is that there aren’t many chances to see any rain for quite a while. “We’re shifting into a fairly dry and cool pattern, so it’s looking pretty dry across all of eastern and central Kentucky through the remainder of this week,” Geertson said. There is a weather front

**PULASKI**  
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Despite the stable rate, many residents are seeing higher tax bills due to rising property values. County assessments have steadily increased since 2020, with a \$210 million jump recorded that year alone. Property values have continued trending upward through 2025, though recent data shows signs of market fluctuations. In a related update, Bridgette Bender of the Pulaski County Health Department reported that the local health board also voted to maintain its current tax rate — three cents per \$100 of assessed property value — with no change from the previous year.

**DON’T PLAY WITH FIRE**

Although the local area is not under a mandated ‘burn ban’, Pulaski County Public Safety Director Stacy Hal-

comb warned local residents of the current dry conditions and the potential dangers of fire outbreaks. “I know Pulaski County’s in a moderate drought zone right now,” Halcomb said. “So I just ask everybody to use some common sense if you’re going to do any burning. I know we had some rain in different areas of the county and we don’t have the Forest Service ‘burn ban’ until October 1st, but if you’re going be burning outside, try to wait until the evenings and call into 911 so the fire department doesn’t show up. “They’d all appreciate your assistance in that,” he added. “I know it’s getting real dry and we’re lucky right now we’ve not had too many grass fires. Just be mindful whenever you’re going to burn something until we get some rain.” Contact **Steve Cornelius** at [scornelius@somerset-kentucky.com](mailto:scornelius@somerset-kentucky.com).

**LABOR DAY**  
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giving a solid indication of the area’s tourism health. If nothing else, the June Somernites Cruise would have given a boost to visitation numbers, as the stunt of the General Lee replica car over the Fountain Square not only went viral, it packed the streets of downtown Somerset. “Think about it: Where ‘the Jump’ happened, and there were 35,000 people (in town to watch it), we don’t usually have that,” she said, “and I know that there were hotels having to turn people away,

because it was so successful.” Likewise, the 2025 Master Musicians Festival saw a record crowd, “so that helps tremendously,” said Allen. Allen’s tourism office has stayed busy with people coming into town, wanting to know about such local events (which includes Thunder Over Burnside this coming Saturday at Cole Park in Burnside) and attractions like Haney’s Appledale Farm, Daniel Boone National Forest and similar opportunities for outdoor recreation off the lake. Many people ask weeks in advance of an event or holiday, knowing that hotels and short-term rental tend to book up fairly quickly.

## Staying Healthy



Jehad Alshrafi | Associated Press

**Freelance journalist Mariam Dagga, 33**, who had been working with the Associated Press and other outlets during the Gaza war, poses for a portrait in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, on June 14, 2024. Dagga was one of several journalists killed along with other people in Israeli strikes on Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis on Monday.

## The 189 Palestinian journalists killed in the war in Gaza endured hunger and grief

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Since the war began in Gaza, 189 Palestinian journalists have been killed, according to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists. They include men and women, freelancers and staffers, veterans with years in the field and young reporters on some of their first assignments. Some were killed with their families at home, others were in vehicles marked “PRESS,” or in tents near hospitals, or out covering the violence. Many endured the same conditions as those they covered — hunger, displacement, and grief. Among them: • **Mariam Dagga**, 33. A visual journalist and a 33-year-old mother, she was known for human-centered reporting from southern Gaza, including at Nasser Hospital, where she was killed in an Israeli strike in August 2025. During the war, she worked for The Associated Press and Independent Arabia. The strike that killed her also claimed the lives of rescuers and four other journalists. • **Anas al-Sharif**, 28. The



Hatem Ali | Associated Press

**Al Jazeera journalist Wael Dahdouh** holds the hand of his son, Hamza, who also worked for Al Jazeera and was killed in an Israeli airstrike, in Rafah, Gaza Strip, Jan. 7, 2024. father of two was killed in an Israeli strike on a tent outside Shifa hospital in August 2025, days after he wept on air while reporting on starvation deaths in Gaza. The strike — which also killed five other journalists — prompted an outpouring of condemnation from press freedom groups and foreign officials. • **Hamza Dahdouh**, 27. The son of Al Jazeera’s Gaza City bureau chief, he was killed in a January 2024 drone strike after leaving a reporting assignment at the site of an earlier strike in southern Gaza. He was the fifth member of his family to be killed. • **Ayat Khadoura**, 27. The Al Quds University graduate shed light on the hardships families faced in the first weeks of the war. She became known for reporting on bombs striking her northern Gaza neighborhood, including one video in which she said Israeli forces had ordered residents to evacuate moments before a strike hit her home and killed her in November 2023. • **Hossam Shabat**, 23.

A freelancer from northern Gaza, he was killed while reporting for Al Jazeera in March 2025. Before the war, he told a Beirut-based advocacy group he hoped to start a media company or work in his family’s restaurants. • **Fatima Hassouna**, 25. The photojournalist was killed in an April 2025 Israeli airstrike a day after a documentary about her efforts to film daily life amid war in Gaza was accepted at a Cannes Film Festival program promoting independent films. Israel has accused some of the journalists killed of involvement with militant groups, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad — charges that journalists and their outlets have dismissed as baseless. Israel’s military did not respond to an Associated Press request for comment about the CPJ data. Figures and methodologies may differ among groups that track journalist deaths. CPJ said it “independently investigates and verifies the circumstances behind each death,” including to verify journalists’ lack of involvement in militant activities.

## COUNCIL

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community and new assessments, we know that a lot of people will pay more in taxes than they have in previous years.” Each year, a quarter of the county gets reevaluated by the Property Valuation Administrator’s Office (PVA). City officials warned that this year’s evaluated properties would go up significantly, maybe even as high as 25%. Therefore, while the city’s tax rate will be lower, those who were assessed will have a higher bill. “If your assessment went up 25%, your tax bill’s probably going to go up 25%,” Adams said. “If you got reassessed two years ago or one

year ago, your bill is probably going to go down a little bit, not much.” According to Pulaski County PVA Karen Strand, the City of Somerset’s Global Assessment — the amount property is valued for within the city limits — is \$1.2 billion, or \$1,227,508,218. Adams explained that the reason the city had to lower its tax rate is due to how the city has to treat a potential increase in how much it takes in over last year’s intake. City Clerk Nick Bradley said that Somerset took in around \$1.3 million in tax collections for the 2024-2025 year. Adams said that if the city were projected to take in more than 4% over that amount, then it would require the city to hold a public hearing. In order to avoid that hear-

ing, the city needed to lower its rate to keep the tax it collects to around the same amount — or at least less than 4% more. While a higher assessment may mean paying more in property tax, Keck said that higher assessments were still a positive for the city. “I’ll never apologize for people’s property values going up. I think that’s a good thing,” Keck said. Whatever tax rate is approved, taxpayers will still have the same payment deadlines to consider. There will be a 2% discount on bills paid before Nov. 1, 2025, and a penalty of 20% for bills not paid until after Jan. 1, 2026. Any bills from previous tax years that have not yet been paid are also subject to a 6% interest rate.

The proposed bank franchise and local deposit tax rate will remain the same as it has been in the previous years, holding at 0.025% on all deposits. A 2% discount will be given to financial institutions which pay before December 31. Bills are due before January 31, 2026. Any bank franchise bills not paid before June 30, 2026 for the tax year of 2024, or not paid before January 31 for all subsequent tax years will have a 20% penalty and a 6% interest rate added on. All money collected by both tax rates will go into the city’s General Fund. Contact **Carla Slavey** can be reached at [cslavey@somerset-kentucky.com](mailto:cslavey@somerset-kentucky.com)

office or the (Somerset-Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce), and then they’re getting the numbers, and they’re like, ‘Whoa, wait, you mean you get 4 million visitors in the region a year?’ “We’re kind of like the regional hub,” she added. “I guess that’s why we call ourselves the Capital of Lake Cumberland because people are coming to us and then driving home. Anyone who crosses the county line is still considered a visitor, no matter where they live, if they do not live here in our community. ... We just such a good variety for a diverse group of folks to be able to come and enjoy in our community.”