

2021-2024

# SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS UNDER CHAIR DURBIN



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## **SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES ACCOMPLISHMENTS UNDER CHAIR DURBIN**

*Under the leadership of Chair Durbin, the Senate Judiciary Committee held 145 full Committee hearings, 88 subcommittee hearings, and 86 executive business meetings; advanced 373 executive and judicial nominees out of Committee; and reported 56 bills out of Committee from 2021 to 2024.*

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, released a review of the accomplishments of the 2021-2024 Democratic majority Senate Judiciary Committee, which includes a compilation of the four years under Chair Durbin’s leadership and during the Biden-Harris Administration.

**“Our country demands much of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and it’s been the honor of a lifetime to serve as its Chair for the last four years. We defended our freedoms, advanced justice and equality, and brought balance to our federal judiciary.**

**“Together, we advanced highly qualified, diverse judicial nominees who will be a frontline defense of the rule of law for a generation. We revitalized our Committee’s oversight role. And importantly, we made progress on issues critical to the American people, including protecting children online, supporting women who have faced sexual harassment and assault in the workplace, implementing critical gun violence prevention reforms, and much more.**

**“I thank all Senate Judiciary Democrats for their hard work to secure equal justice for all and uphold our democracy, and I would be remiss to not acknowledge our former colleague Senator Feinstein, a trailblazer and champion for LGBTQ+ Americans, reproductive rights, gun violence prevention, and more. Additionally, I thank Senator Butler for answering the call to serve the people of California this Congress.**



**“I’m also grateful to Ranking Member Graham and our Senate Judiciary Republican colleagues who have been willing to work across the aisle to advance judicial nominees and bipartisan legislation.**

**“Leading the Senate Judiciary Committee has been the highest honor of my career, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve our democracy, our justice system, and the American people.”**

During Durbin’s time as Chair, the Senate Judiciary Committee held 145 full Committee hearings, 88 subcommittee hearings, and 86 executive business meetings; advanced 373 executive and judicial nominees out of Committee; and reported 56 bills out of Committee.

Read the Senate Judiciary Committee Accomplishments in Review below for more information from current members: Chair Dick Durbin (D-IL), and U.S. Senators Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Chris Coons (D-DE), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Jon Ossoff (D-GA), Peter Welch (D-VT), and Adam Schiff (D-CA).

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**Advancing judicial and executive nominations**

The Senate Judiciary Committee began its nominations work by fulfilling its role of advice and consent on the President's nominees, which resulted in the [confirmation of senior leadership](#) to the Department of Justice, including [Attorney General Merrick Garland](#); [Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco](#); [Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta](#), the first civil rights lawyer confirmed to this role; and [Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke](#), the first Black woman confirmed to lead the Civil Rights Division.

During the last four years, Senate Democrats confirmed 235 judges to lifetime positions on the federal judiciary. This surpasses the 234 judges confirmed during the first Trump Administration. These 235 confirmations highlight Democrats' work filling judicial vacancies with highly qualified, diverse candidates who help ensure the fair and impartial administration of the American justice system. These judges are already making significant contributions to protect our freedoms and democracy on the bench.

On April 7, 2022, the Senate [confirmed](#) Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, who became the first Black woman and the first former public defender to serve as an Associate Justice on the Supreme Court.

Notably, Senate Democrats accomplished this feat during the longest 50-50 Senate in history, followed by a narrow majority in the current Congress, and while facing less than half as many vacancies on the first day of the Biden-Harris Administration (46) than Senate Republicans did on the first day of the Trump Administration (108).

These 235 judicial confirmations include:

- 187 district court judges.
- 45 circuit court judges.
- One Supreme Court justice.
- Two Court of International Trade judges.

Of those:

- About two-thirds are women.
- About two-thirds are people of color.
- About two-fifths are women of color.

In comparison to other presidents' terms, during the Biden-Harris Administration, the Senate has confirmed:

- More women of color to the bench than any other president.
- More Black women to judgeships than any other president, including more Black women to circuit court judgeships than all other presidents combined.
- More women to judgeships than any president.
- More people of color to circuit court judgeships than any other president.
- More former public defenders to circuit court judgeships than any other president.
- More LGBTQ+ individuals to the bench than any other president.

These historic judges confirmed include:

- The first Black woman and former public defender confirmed to the Supreme Court.
- The first Muslim-American man and woman on the federal bench.
- The first out lesbian to serve on any federal circuit court.
- The first Asian-American individual and first Black woman on the Third Circuit.
- The first Latina to serve on the Fifth Circuit.

- The first Hispanic judges to serve on the D.C. and Seventh Circuits.
- The first Asian American to serve on the Seventh Circuit.
- The first Black judge on the Federal Circuit.
- The first Navajo federal judge.
- Half of all Native judges ever confirmed.
- The first female federal judge in the District of Idaho.
- The first person of color on the federal bench in the Western District of Louisiana.
- The first female Native-American judge in the District of Oklahoma.
- The first openly LGBTQ+ federal judge in Colorado and the first Asian American federal judge in Colorado.
- The first Black woman to serve as a federal judge in Oregon.
- The first Asian-American judge in the Western District of Washington.
- The first Hispanic district judge in Ohio.
- The first Asian-American judge in the Western District of Virginia.
- The first Asian-American judge in the Western District of New York.

Additionally, the Senate Judiciary Committee advanced 131 executive nominees to the full Senate, including:

- 73 U.S. Attorneys.
- 21 U.S. Marshals.
- 20 Department of Justice nominees.

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### **Revitalizing regular oversight of executive agencies**

Since becoming Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee in 2021, Durbin has restored and revitalized the Committee's longstanding bipartisan tradition of regular agency oversight for executive branch agencies within the Committee's jurisdiction.

#### **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)**

The Committee held three FBI oversight hearings featuring Director Wray in [2021](#), [2022](#), and [2023](#).

During negotiations to extend Section 702 of the *Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act*, Durbin remained a leader in pushing for significant reforms to prevent warrantless surveillance of Americans. He [held](#) an oversight hearing on Section 702 with senior administration officials from across the Intelligence Community and [introduced](#) a bipartisan compromise bill to protect Americans from foreign threats and from warrantless government surveillance.

Prior to the 2024 election, Durbin also [pressed](#) numerous agencies—including the FBI—to prioritize election security and ensure they have resources in place to combat potential threats like cyberattacks, foreign influence operations, and physical violence against election workers and infrastructure.

In September 2021, Olympic and world champion gymnasts Simone Biles, McKayla Maroney, Maggie Nichols, and Aly Raisman [testified](#) at a landmark Committee hearing on the FBI's dereliction of duty in the Larry Nassar sexual abuse case. Following the hearing, Durbin sent bipartisan [oversight letters](#) and [introduced](#) the bipartisan *Eliminating Limits to Justice for Child Sex Abuse Victims Act* with Senator Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) to ensure that survivors of child

sex abuse can seek justice in federal court no matter when their abuse occurred. This legislation was signed into law in 2022.

### **Department of Justice (DOJ)**

The Committee held DOJ oversight hearings featuring Attorney General Merrick Garland in [2021](#) and [2023](#), which marked the Committee's first oversight hearings of the Department since 2017. Durbin also held hearings related to the growing threats of [hate crimes](#), [domestic terrorism](#), and [election workers' safety](#).

Following the deadly January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol, in October 2021, Durbin released new [testimony](#) and a [staff report](#) entitled "Subverting Justice: How the Former President and His Allies Pressured DOJ to Overturn the 2020 Election." The report and testimony revealed that our nation was only a half-step away from a full-blown constitutional crisis as President Trump and his loyalists threatened a wholesale takeover of DOJ. The report also revealed how former DOJ Acting Civil Division Assistant Attorney General Jeffrey Clark became Trump's Big Lie Lawyer, attempting to pressure his DOJ colleagues to overturn the 2020 election.

After Geoffrey Berman, the former President Trump's U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York (SDNY), published a book claiming that high-ranking Trump Administration appointees pressured the SDNY U.S. Attorney's Office to prosecute critics of the former president and protect the former president and his allies, Durbin [sent](#) a letter to Attorney General Garland seeking information on reports of political interference during the Trump presidency by then-Attorney General Barr and other Trump loyalists.

After the *Los Angeles Times* detailed a high number of prosecutions of migrants from Muslim-majority countries brought by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Texas from October 2021 to May 2023, Durbin requested that Attorney General Merrick Garland and DOJ Inspector General (IG) Michael Horowitz review whether the Justice Department was targeting migrants for prosecution based on their religion, national origin, or any other protected characteristic.

Additionally, Durbin and Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) [reintroduced](#) bipartisan legislation to expand the jurisdiction of DOJ's Office of the IG to include alleged DOJ attorney misconduct. Currently, the DOJ IG has no authority to investigate professional misconduct by DOJ lawyers. DOJ is the only agency whose IG has such a jurisdictional carve-out. The bill would simply strike this loophole, which leads to an unfair double standard under which every DOJ employee—including FBI and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents, U.S. Marshals, and federal prison guards—can be investigated by the DOJ IG except DOJ lawyers.

### **Bureau of Prisons (BOP)**

Chair Durbin has successfully pushed for reform at the agency historically riddled with accusations of mismanagement. Durbin [called](#) for a new, reform-minded BOP Director to replace then Director Michael Carvajal in November 2021, following an [Associated Press report](#) that found that BOP is a "hotbed of abuse, graft and corruption, and has turned a blind eye to employees accused of misconduct." Carvajal's resignation was [announced](#) less than two months later, and Colette Peters was named the new Director.

Durbin established a new Committee practice of holding regular BOP oversight hearings. The Committee held BOP oversight hearings featuring Director Peters in [2021](#), [2022](#), and [2023](#).



Durbin has worked to improve conditions for adults in custody and ensure BOP is fulfilling its primary mission: to rehabilitate and prepare people for successful reentry into society. He [reintroduced](#) the *Solitary Confinement Reform Act* to limit the use of solitary confinement, as well as held hearings on deeply disturbing reports of [deaths of incarcerated individuals](#) and the frequent abuse of [solitary confinement](#) in federal custody. Durbin also led a group of Senate Democrats [pressing](#) BOP on voting access for incarcerated people, as well as [pressing](#) for more information on sexual misconduct in BOP facilities.

Additionally, Durbin called for BOP to investigate allegations of abuse at [United States Penitentiary \(USP\) Thomson in Illinois](#) and [Federal Correctional Complex \(FCC\) Hazelton in West Virginia](#), and he also demanded answers from BOP in response to its closure of [Federal Correction Institution \(FCI\) Dublin in California](#) and subsequent transfer of hundreds of women across the country.

Durbin conducted rigorous oversight of BOP's implementation of the landmark *First Step Act*, the landmark bipartisan criminal justice reform law that Durbin authored with Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA). This oversight included site visits to BOP institutions in each of the six BOP regions of the country to assess BOP's implementation of the law.

Durbin also advocated for measures to make salaries more competitive for BOP employees, [pressing](#) BOP to request a special pay rate for critical staff and share results of a study on staffing guidelines.

### **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)**

The Committee held two oversight hearings of DHS in [2021](#) and [2023](#), which marked the Committee's first oversight hearings of the Department since 2018.

Durbin has investigated access to counsel, medical neglect, and solitary confinement in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facilities. His committee staff have completed multiple site visits to ICE detention centers across five states. Durbin [reintroduced](#) the *Restricting Solitary Confinement in Immigration Detention Act*, [urged](#) DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and ICE Acting Director Patrick Lechleitner to eliminate the use of solitary confinement in immigration detention, and [held](#) a hearing on eliminating the abuse of solitary confinement. Additionally, he [called](#) for a Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigation into the matter. After the tragic death of an eight-year-old girl in U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody, Durbin [launched](#) an investigation into deficient medical care at CBP facilities and its medical care contractor.

Following a bombshell *New York Times* [report](#) detailing abuse and exploitation of migrant children, the Committee carried out oversight to help ensure these children's safety and well-being, holding [two hearings](#) on the topic. Durbin and Immigration Subcommittee Chair Padilla [pressed](#) Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra for answers regarding reports that HHS dismissed warnings of threats to the safety of migrant children that the agency placed with sponsors. Durbin [urged](#) the Department of Labor (DOL) to hold companies accountable for violating child labor laws. Also, Durbin [introduced](#) the *Protecting Unaccompanied Children Act* to strengthen safeguards on the release of migrant children from government custody, increase unaccompanied children's access to social services and legal protections, and create new safeguards and services to protect children's safety.

Following the attempted assassination of former President Trump at a Pennsylvania rally, Durbin and Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) announced a joint effort between the Judiciary and Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committees to conduct oversight of the Secret Service and FBI. The Committees [received](#) classified briefings, [held](#) a joint hearing on the assassination attempt, and advocated for [shored up](#) security to address potential vulnerabilities at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago and for all campaign events for both presidential tickets through the 2024 election.

The Committee has continued its investigation into the exploitation of online platforms by domestic extremists to radicalize, recruit, and amplify violence and threats of violence. Durbin [pressed](#) seven publishers of online games with reported extremist content issues to do more to identify and remove extremist content.

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## Legislating to deliver for the American people

### Protecting children online

In the real world, child safety is a top priority. But in the virtual world, criminals and bullies don't need to pick a lock or wait outside the playground to cause harm. They can harass, intimidate, addict, or sexually exploit our kids without leaving home. Congress is not doing enough to protect our kids from online harms and needs to address this issue head-on. As Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Durbin has been committed to ensuring children's online safety.

Reports of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) have exploded in recent years. Between March 2009 and February 2022, the number of victims identified in CSAM rose tenfold from 2,172 victims to more than 21,413 victims. Between 2012 and 2022, the volume of reports to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's CyberTipline concerning child sexual exploitation increased from 415,650 reports to more than 32 million reports.

Durbin and the Committee have extensively examined the plague of online child sexual exploitation through hearings, legislation, and oversight efforts. On January 31, 2024, the Committee held a hearing featuring testimony from the CEOs of social media companies Discord, Meta, Snap, TikTok, and X (formerly known as Twitter). This hearing highlighted the ongoing risk to children and the immediate need for Congress to act on the bipartisan bills reported by the Committee.

Since February 2023, the Committee has unanimously reported multiple bipartisan bills to help stop the exploitation of kids online, including:

- the [STOP CSAM Act](#), which provides a comprehensive response to online child sexual exploitation by supporting victims and increasing accountability and transparency for online platforms;
- the *EARN IT Act*, which removes Big Tech's blanket immunity from civil and criminal liability for CSAM and establishes a National Commission on Online Child Sexual Exploitation Prevention;
- the *SHIELD Act*, which ensures that federal prosecutors have appropriate and effective tools to address the nonconsensual distribution of sexual imagery;
- the *Project Safe Childhood Act*, which modernizes the investigation and prosecution of online child exploitation crimes; and



- the *REPORT Act*, which combats the rise in online child sexual exploitation by establishing new measures to help strengthen reporting of those crimes to the CyberTipline.

The *REPORT Act* was signed into law in May 2024, while the *SHIELD Act* and the *Project Safe Childhood Act* unanimously passed the Senate in July 2024 and October 2023, respectively.

In addition, Durbin’s bipartisan *Disrupt Explicit Forged Images and Non-Consensual Edits Act of 2024 (DEFIANCE Act)* [passed](#) the Senate in July 2024. The legislation would hold accountable those responsible for the proliferation of nonconsensual, sexually-explicit “deepfake” images and videos. The volume of “deepfake” content available online is increasing exponentially as the technology used to create it has become more accessible to the public. The overwhelming majority of this material is sexually explicit and is produced without the consent of the person depicted.

To read more about Durbin’s efforts to protect children online, click [here](#).

### **Shedding light on the need for Supreme Court ethics reform**

The Supreme Court’s ethical crisis is a problem of its own making. Chair Durbin first urged Chief Justice Roberts to address the need for the Court to establish an enforceable code of conduct over 12 years ago. However, the code of conduct the Court announced in November 2023 lacks any meaningful enforcement mechanism and falls short of the ethical standards that bind other federal judges.

By refusing to take the sensible steps needed to establish an enforceable code of conduct, the the Chief Justice has ensured that public confidence in the Court and its integrity will continue to plummet. Since the Chief Justice’s 2012 refusal to adopt a code of conduct, justices have engaged in dozens of reported instances of apparent ethical misconduct—and many more instances of potential misconduct may remain unknown. By accepting lavish, undisclosed gifts, the justices have enabled their wealthy benefactors and other individuals with business before the Court to gain private access to the justices, while preventing public scrutiny of this conduct.

To adequately address this crisis, it is imperative to understand how people with interests before the Court are able to use undisclosed gifts to gain private access to the justices. Following [investigative reporting](#) by *ProPublica*, which found justices had received lavish, undisclosed gifts, Durbin [led](#) Committee Democrats in an April 2023 letter urging Chief Justice Roberts to investigate the Court’s ethics crisis. That same month, Durbin [invited](#) the Chief Justice to testify before the Committee regarding Supreme Court ethics. In May 2023, the Committee [held](#) a hearing on Supreme Court ethics reform. Durbin also [led](#) all Committee Democrats in a letter to Republican megadonor Harlan Crow seeking information on gifts and travel given to Justice Clarence Thomas. Durbin also sent letters to [Leonard Leo](#), [Robin Arkley](#), [Paul Singer](#), [Paul Novelly](#), and [David Sokol](#) requesting information for the Committee’s Supreme Court ethics investigation.

In addition, the Committee voted to [advance](#) the *Supreme Court Ethics, Recusal, and Transparency (SCERT) Act* in July 2023. Introduced by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), and cosponsored by every Democratic member of the Committee, the bill would require Supreme Court justices to adopt a binding code of conduct, create a mechanism to investigate alleged violations of the code of conduct and other laws, improve disclosure and transparency when a justice has a connection to a party or amicus before the Court, and require justices to explain their recusal decisions to the public. In June 2024, Durbin went to the Senate floor and asked for

unanimous consent (UC) for the Senate to pass the *SCERT Act*. Senate Republicans [blocked](#) Durbin's UC request.

Durbin repeatedly asked Crow and Leo to comply with the Committee's legitimate oversight requests pursuant to the Committee's Supreme Court ethics investigation. Following their refusal, Durbin and Committee Democrats voted to authorize subpoenas for both Crow and Leo.

In December, the Committee [released](#) its revealing investigative report entitled "An Investigation of the Ethics Challenge at the Supreme Court," the culmination of a 20-month investigation and a comprehensive analysis of the ongoing ethics challenge at the Supreme Court.

Senate Democrats are determined to move forward with efforts to reform Supreme Court ethics. The highest court in the land cannot have the lowest ethical standards.

[Visit this page](#) for full background on the Committee's efforts to reform Supreme Court ethics, including a timeline, releases, correspondence, and information on the *SCERT Act*.

### **Protecting human rights at home and abroad**

Durbin along with Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) introduced the *Justice for Victims of War Crimes Act*, which updates the *War Crimes Act* to enable prosecution of war criminals present in the United States regardless of the nationality of the perpetrators or victims. The bill also extends the statute of limitations for certain war crimes. The bill was [signed](#) into law by President Biden in December 2022.

In April 2023, Durbin [held](#) a Committee hearing on accountability for Russian war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine with Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco.

In December 2023, the Justice Department [announced](#) first-of-its-kind war crimes charges against four Russian men in connection to Russia's invasion of Ukraine following a letter from Durbin and Ranking Member Lindsey Graham urging the Administration to utilize existing authorities to prosecute war criminals. In July 2023, the Biden Administration [heeded](#) Durbin and Graham's bipartisan call to support the International Criminal Court's investigation into atrocities in Ukraine, utilizing the enhanced authority provided by Congress in the Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations bill.

Durbin has also been a vocal advocate for shuttering the detention center at Guantanamo Bay. After holding the Committee's [first hearing](#) on the need to close Guantanamo in 2013, Durbin held another hearing in 2021, where he [reiterated](#) his frequent calls to close the detention facilities. Durbin emphasized that keeping the detention center open undermines America's moral standing and credibility around the world and wastes taxpayer dollars.

In April 2021, Durbin [led](#) a group of 23 Senators in a letter to President Biden expressing support for finally closing the detention facility, which he again [pressed](#) the President to do in another [letter](#) with a group of Senators in February 2024.

Alongside his efforts to close the Guantanamo detention facility, Durbin has called for justice for the victims of 9/11 and their loved ones. Durbin [called on the government](#) to [secure guilty](#) pleas from the defendants following years of delays in the military commission case against the accused September 11 plotters and [applauded the plea deal](#) that prosecutors ultimately secured in the case.

After Secretary Austin tried to revoke the guilty pleas just days after they were announced, Durbin urged the Secretary to reconsider on his decision in [August](#) and [December](#) 2024.

Durbin has also called attention to the human cost of drone strikes lethally targeting suspected terrorists overseas. In a February 2022 [hearing](#), Durbin stressed that since he held the [first-ever congressional hearing](#) on drone strikes in 2013, thousands of civilians have been killed by U.S. coalition strikes. Durbin has repeatedly urged his colleagues to revisit the 2001 Authorization of Use of Military Force, which has become the legal basis for these strikes; and he has [urged](#) the Biden Administration to halt unnecessary drone strikes and take steps to prevent the deaths of innocent bystanders. The Fiscal Year 2025 *National Defense Authorization Act* included a provision, authored by Durbin, extending the requirement for an annual report on lethal strikes undertaken by the U.S. against terrorist targets outside of active hostilities. This provision is the only public transparency regarding all such strikes.

### **Defending reproductive health care**

Following the Supreme Court's *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision in June 2022 that stripped women of the constitutional right to an abortion and relentless efforts by elected Republicans at the state, local, and federal level to deny Americans reproductive health freedom, Chair Durbin and the Senate Judiciary Committee made it a priority to defend a woman's right to bodily autonomy.

Following the *Dobbs* decision, Durbin and the Committee [held](#) a hearing in July 2022 to examine the decision's consequences. In April 2023, the Committee [held](#) another hearing to examine the decision's devastating fallout. In March 2024, the Committee [held](#) its third hearing on the health care crisis that the Court unleashed when it overruled *Roe v. Wade*.

Durbin also led the fight to preserve access to the medication abortion pill mifepristone, following an ongoing push by anti-abortion extremists to ban the sale of a drug that was approved as safe and effective by the Food and Drug Administration more than two decades ago. Durbin [co-  
led multiple amicus briefs](#) filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit and the Supreme Court in support of protecting access to mifepristone, following a Texas district court ruling that threatened access nationwide to the medication; the Supreme Court recently agreed to dismiss the case.

In addition, Durbin has supported legislation to codify access to abortion and provide comprehensive reproductive health care for millions of Americans. Durbin [cosponsored](#) the *Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA)*, legislation which would codify the right to provide and obtain an abortion free from medically unnecessary restrictions. Durbin also cosponsored the *Reproductive Freedom for Women Act*, a bill that simply states that women should have the basic freedom to make their own health care decisions. Senate Republicans voted against the bill. Durbin also cosponsored the [Right to IVF Act](#), legislation that establishes a clear and enforceable nationwide right to receive, provide, or cover in vitro fertilization (IVF) services and other assisted reproductive technologies. It also expands insurance coverage for such care. Senate Republicans voted against the legislation twice.

Eight in 10 Americans, including two-thirds of Republicans, agree that the government shouldn't be involved in how a woman manages abortion issues, according to an [Axios/Ipsos poll](#) from March 2024. This is consistent with other [recent polling](#) post-*Dobbs* that has consistently found

that Americans across the political spectrum support legal abortion and believe the decision whether to have an abortion should be a woman's choice, along with her doctor.

### **Curbing the gun violence epidemic**

Gun violence is currently the leading cause of death for children and teens across America. Chair Durbin has led efforts in Congress to combat the epidemic of gun violence in our country. Since Durbin took the gavel in 2021, the Senate Judiciary Committee has held 14 hearings on the impact of gun violence.

Durbin was a strong supporter of the [Bipartisan Safer Communities Act \(BSCA\)](#), which cracks down on straw purchasing and gun trafficking, expands background checks for buyers under 21 years of age, takes steps to close the "boyfriend loophole," supports state red flag laws, and offers billions in funding for counseling, mental health, and trauma support to break the cycle of gun violence.

Durbin is also a staunch advocate for the [Assault Weapons Ban](#) and additional gun safety measures. Following the deadly shooting at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, in 2022, the Committee held a hearing with testimony from experts about the lasting trauma that gun violence causes children. Durbin also [held](#) a hearing on protecting communities from mass shootings after the Independence Day Parade shooting in Highland Park, Illinois. That hearing focused on the dangers of widespread civilian access to military-style assault weapons that can be used to kill large numbers of people in mere seconds.

Since *BSCA* was signed into law, Durbin held a full committee [hearing](#) on public safety and gun safety laws in a post-*Bruen* America in March 2023; [held](#) a hearing on gun violence as a public health crisis featuring testimony from physicians and public health experts; [filed](#) an amicus brief in opposition to legal challenges in *U.S. v. Rahimi*, in which the Supreme Court [upheld](#) a ban on firearm possession for domestic violence offenders; [condemned](#) the Supreme Court decision in *Garland v. Cargill*, which held that a bump stock does not convert a rifle into a machine gun; and introduced [legislation](#) to curb firearms trafficking enabled by weak American gun laws, among other efforts. This past November, the Committee held a [hearing](#) on conversion devices used to increase the lethality of firearms, such as Glock switches, auto sears, bump stocks, and pistol braces.

Durbin continues to meet with [public health experts](#), [advocates](#), [researchers](#), [government officials](#), and other community stakeholders about ways to end the scourge of gun violence. Since 2020, the United States has seen more than 600 mass shootings annually, almost two a day. To address the dramatic toll of gun violence in Illinois, Durbin helped launch the [Chicago HEAL Initiative](#), a collaboration with local hospitals and community groups to identify and treat the root causes of gun violence through economic, health, and community projects in 18 of Chicago's neighborhoods with the highest rates of violence, poverty, and health disparities. Durbin and U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito's (R-WV) [Resilience Investment, Support, and Expansion \(RISE\) from Trauma Act](#) increases support for children who have been exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma by increasing funding for school, community, and health-care interventions and expanding training and workforce development to prevent and mitigate the impact of trauma.

### **Lowering the cost of prescription drugs**

The Senate Judiciary Committee has jurisdiction over federal antitrust laws and the intellectual property system, which play critical roles in incentivizing innovation and protecting a healthy

market that keeps prices for prescription drugs within reach of patients. Chair Durbin has made it a priority to prevent Big Pharma from exploiting patent laws to inflate its profit margins at the expense of delivering affordable and accessible medications to Americans.

The United States has the highest prescription drug prices in the developed world, on average four times higher than what other countries pay for some of the most common brand-name medications. Despite claims from the pharmaceutical industry that these prices are necessary to fund research and development into the next generation of drugs, research suggests that the majority of innovation is driven by smaller companies, as well as taxpayer funding through the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

In May, Durbin held a Committee [hearing](#) that examined prescription drug prices, competition, and innovation and how to ensure medications are accessible and affordable for American families. In October, the Committee held a [field hearing](#) in Chicago to examine the pharmaceutical industry's anti-competitive tactics and highlight the success of the *Inflation Reduction Act* in addressing high prescription drug prices for Medicare beneficiaries, while acknowledging that more must be done to cut costs.

In 2023, a package of bills [advanced](#) unanimously out of the Committee to lower prescription drug prices, including:

- the *Interagency Patent Coordination and Improvement Act*, which Durbin introduced with Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC), to establish an interagency task force between the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and the Food and Drug Administration to prevent patent abuses by the pharmaceutical industry;
- the *Preserve Access to Affordable Generics and Biosimilars Act*, to prohibit brand name drug and biologics companies from compensating generic and biosimilar drug companies to delay the entry of a generic drug into the market;
- the *Stop STALLING Act*, to enable the Federal Trade Commission to deter filing of sham citizen petitions that aim to stifle competition by interfering with approval of a competing generic drug or biosimilar; and
- the *Affordable Prescriptions for Patients Act*, to address the anticompetitive practices of product hopping and patent thickening.

Durbin applauded the Biden-Harris Administration for its efforts to negotiate price reductions for 10 of the most expensive and frequently-dispensed drugs in the Medicare program. The *Inflation Reduction Act*, which Durbin strongly supported, provided the Biden-Harris Administration with the authority to negotiate these drug prices with Big Pharma, resulting in price reductions of up to 79 percent. In total, these reduced prices are estimated to save approximately nine million seniors a total of \$1.5 billion in annual out-of-pocket costs and save the Medicare program \$6 billion. The new prices will go into effect for people with Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage beginning January 1, 2026.

### **Protecting civil rights**

Chair Durbin has made it a priority to protect civil rights for all Americans.

Durbin has long advocated that in order to preserve our democracy, we must protect the constitutional right to vote in free, fair elections. Following efforts to diminish and impede voting rights across the country, Durbin held a hearing to examine America's long history of [voter suppression laws](#). Durbin also held a hearing on the [John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement](#)



[Act](#). In February 2024, Durbin [led the reintroduction](#) of the *John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act* with Senator Reverend Raphael Warnock (D-GA), Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), and Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Laphonza Butler (D-CA). The legislation would update and restore critical safeguards of the original *Voting Rights Act*. Durbin also [reintroduced a joint resolution](#) to enshrine an explicit, individual right to vote in the U.S. Constitution.

Durbin has pushed for the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights. In 2021, the Committee held a [hearing](#) on the Equality Act, legislation that codifies federal civil rights protections for LGBTQ+ Americans. Last June, he held a Committee [hearing](#) celebrating historic progress made in protecting the rights of LGBTQ+ Americans and called for defending those rights against a tidal wave of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation being introduced across the country. Durbin has also delivered [speeches](#) on the Senate floor denouncing harmful anti-LGBTQ+ legislation that has been introduced across the country, particularly laws targeting transgender youth. In 2022, Durbin cosponsored the [Respect for Marriage Act](#). The legislation ensures that the federal government must always recognize a marriage between two individuals if the marriage was valid in the state where it was performed. It also guarantees that valid marriages between two individuals are given full faith and credit in all states, regardless of the couple's sex, race, ethnicity, or national origin.

In addition to his work on voting and LGBTQ+ rights, Durbin has [called](#) on his colleagues to pass the *Equal Rights Amendment*, which would enshrine gender equality into the Constitution. In February 2023, the Committee held a [hearing](#) on the ERA, the first Senate hearing on the topic since 1984. And he advocated for students' freedom to read and learn in a September 2023 Committee hearing on book bans.

### **Protecting survivors of crime**

Durbin is also a fierce advocate for victims' rights. In March 2022, Congress enacted the [Violence Against Women Act \(VAWA\) Reauthorization Act](#)—led by Durbin and Senators Joni Ernst (R-IA), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). For 30 years, VAWA has transformed the way we address domestic and sexual violence in America and saved countless lives. The same month as VAWA's reauthorization, President Biden signed into law the bipartisan [Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Act](#), sponsored by Durbin and Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC).

In 2021, Durbin worked with his colleagues to strengthen the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) by leading the *VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund*. This legislation redirects monetary penalties from federal deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements into the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) to increase funding for state victim compensation and assistance programs. The Crime Victims Fund is a lifeline for survivors and their families. Durbin also recently introduced the *Crime Victims Fund Stabilization Act*, which would further shore up the CVF by transferring to it excess funds collected through the *False Claims Act*, and he will continue working with his co-lead, Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), to get this bill signed into law.

### **Spearheading criminal justice reform**

Chair Durbin has been a longtime champion for criminal justice reform. In 2010, President Obama signed into law Durbin's *Fair Sentencing Act*, which lowered the sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine from 100:1 to 18:1. In 2018, President Trump signed into law Durbin's landmark bipartisan *First Step Act*, which made the *Fair Sentencing Act*'s reforms retroactive, among other reforms. Most notably, the *First Step Act* required the Department of Justice to



develop a risk and needs assessment system requiring the federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to assess the recidivism risk of all prisoners, place them in programs and activities designed to reduce this risk, and permit early transition into prerelease custody or supervised release based on earned time credits earned through successful programming; reduced mandatory minimum sentences for certain offenses; expanded the safety valve to allow judges to sentence low-level, nonviolent drug offenders with minor criminal histories to less than the required mandatory minimums; and authorized incarcerated individuals to file compassionate release motions in federal court.

These reforms have been tremendously successful. Of the 44,673 incarcerated adults released under *First Step Act* reforms as of January 2024, only 9.7 percent have been returned to custody or arrested for new crimes. By comparison, the overall BOP recidivism rate currently stands at around 45 percent. To date, there have been 4,152 retroactive sentence reductions and 4,774 compassionate release motions granted.

Continuing his efforts to improve the criminal justice system, Durbin has introduced:

- the [Safer Detention Act](#), intended to further expand the Elderly Home Detention Pilot Program and compassionate release;
- the [Prohibiting Punishment of Acquitted Conduct Act](#), which would end the unjust practice of judges increasing sentences based on conduct for which a defendant has been acquitted;
- the [First Step Implementation Act](#), which would further advance the goals of the *First Step Act*, including by allowing courts to retroactively apply *First Step Act* sentencing reforms;
- the [Smarter Pretrial Detention for Drug Charges Act](#), which would eliminate the blanket presumption of pretrial detention for most federal drug charges; and
- the [Smarter Sentencing Act](#), which would lower mandatory sentences for certain nonviolent drug offenses.

In 2021, Durbin and Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) [sent a letter](#) to President Biden urging his Administration to rescind a Trump-era opinion that would force federal inmates on home confinement to return to prison following the COVID-19 pandemic. Durbin and Booker also [sent a letter](#) to Attorney General Garland on the same matter in April 2021. Following those letters, AG Garland [announced](#) that the DOJ had reconsidered the Trump-era OLC opinion.

As Chair, Durbin has made it a priority to hold hearings on criminal justice reform. This year, the Senate Judiciary Committee held a [hearing](#) to examine the success and impact of the *First Step Act*.

### **Pushing for bipartisan immigration reform**

Chair Durbin has been a champion for immigration reform for decades. Twenty-three years ago, Durbin first introduced the *Dream Act* with the late Republican Senator and then Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Orrin Hatch (R-UT). The *Dream Act* would create a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children, known as Dreamers. In 2010, Durbin and the late U.S. Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN) sent a bipartisan letter asking then-President Obama to stop the deportation of Dreamers. President Obama responded by announcing the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which has kept families together and survived relentless attacks for [more than twelve years](#).

More than 830,000 Dreamers have since come forward and received DACA, which has allowed them to contribute more fully to their country as teachers, nurses, doctors, engineers, and small business owners. Durbin has [shared](#) 148 of their stories on the Senate floor.

While fighting to shield DACA from attacks by anti-immigrant extremists, Durbin continues to push for passage of his *Dream Act*. The *Dream Act* was included in the 2013 comprehensive immigration reform bill that Durbin coauthored as part of the “Gang of Eight”—made up of four Democrats and four Republicans. The 2013 bill passed the Senate on a strong bipartisan vote of 68-32, but the Republican leadership of the House of Representatives refused to consider it. Over the years, Senate Republicans have filibustered the *Dream Act* at least five times.

Durbin has held multiple hearings on the need for immigration reform. This year, the Committee held a hearing examining the consequences of President-elect Trump’s threats of mass deportations and the need to shift congressional efforts toward sensible solutions that bring order to the border and provide a path to citizenship to longtime residents. Durbin [chaired](#) a hearing highlighting the importance of statutory protections for Dreamers. Last year, the Committee [held](#) a hearing to highlight how immigrant workers are essential to putting food on our tables, the need for immigration reform to help American farms and businesses, and the importance of protections and fair wages for both domestic and immigrant workers.

In addition, Durbin introduced bipartisan legislation to improve lawful pathways to the United States, including:

- The [H-1 and L-1 Visa Reform Act](#) with Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) to reform and close loopholes in the H-1B and L-1 visa programs to protect American and immigrant workers;
- The [Keep Stem Talent Act](#) with Senator Mike Rounds (R-SD) to streamline the path for advanced Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) international graduates who studied at our nation’s universities to remain in the United States; and
- The [Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act](#) with Senator Kevin Cramer (R-ND) to quickly address our nation’s shortage of doctors and nurses.

Earlier this year, Durbin [led](#) 18 of his colleagues in advocating for executive action to keep mixed immigration status families together. The Biden Administration announced the Keeping Families Together initiative to ensure that U.S. citizens with noncitizen spouses and children can keep their families together. That program was quickly challenged by Republicans and has since been enjoined.

Durbin has also advocated for recipients of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and children of temporary workers who age out of legal status when they turn 21. In November 2023, Durbin led 104 of his colleagues in a [bicameral letter](#) to call on the Biden Administration to designate the Palestinian territories for TPS and/or authorize Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Palestinians present in the United States. President Biden authorized DED for such Palestinians in February 2023.

Durbin has called for TPS for Venezuelans in the United States, including through the introduction of the *Venezuela Temporary Protected Status Act* to grant TPS for eligible Venezuelans fleeing the Maduro regime—a move eventually taken by the Biden Administration in early 2021. The Administration’s original designation covered Venezuelans who had arrived in the United States by March 2021. In July 2023, Durbin led 22 of his colleagues in a [letter](#) to Secretary of State Antony Blinken and U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to redesignate Venezuela for TPS. In September 2023, the Administration [announced](#) a redesignation to include Venezuelan migrants who were residing in the United States on or before July 31, 2023.

## **Utilizing subcommittees to further examine important Judiciary Committee matters**

The Senate Judiciary Committee's eight Subcommittees held 88 hearings on matters under the Committee's jurisdiction from 2021-2024.

The Subcommittee on Competition Policy, Antitrust, and Consumer Rights, chaired by Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), held 17 hearings on topics including the use of collusive algorithms in setting prices, competition in the housing market, and bipartisanship in antitrust policy.

The Subcommittee on the Constitution, chaired this Congress by Senator Laphonza Butler (D-CA), held 12 hearings, including field hearings in Alabama on voter discrimination and in Arizona on abortion restrictions.

The Subcommittee on Criminal Justice and Counterterrorism, chaired by Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ), held six hearings on topics including sexual assault in prisons, prison labor, and the correctional staffing crisis.

The Subcommittee on Federal Courts, Oversight, Agency Action, and Federal Rights, chaired by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), held 10 hearings on topics including bankruptcy reform, executive privilege, the right to travel to obtain an abortion, judicial ethics, and his *Supreme Court Ethics, Recusal, and Transparency Act of 2023*.

The Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law, chaired this Congress by Senator Jon Ossoff (D-GA), held 10 hearings, including multiple field hearings, on topics including birth behind bars, artificial intelligence, and abuse and neglect of children in foster care, conducting a thorough investigation into the latter.

The Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, and Border Safety, chaired by Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA), held seven hearings on topics including immigration courts and refugee admissions programs.

The Subcommittee on Intellectual Property, chaired by Senator Chris Coons (D-DE), held 14 hearings on topics including his *PREVAIL Act*, *No FAKES Act*, patent innovation, and artificial intelligence, as well as conducting oversight of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and U.S. Copyright Office.

The Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology, and the Law, chaired by Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), held 12 hearings on topics including artificial intelligence, featuring testimony from some of the leading AI experts, cybersecurity, and social media and the teen mental health crisis, featuring testimony from a Meta whistleblower.

Thank you to Chairs Blumenthal, Booker, Butler, Coons, Klobuchar, Ossoff, Padilla, and Whitehouse for their hard work leading their respective subcommittees.

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**To you and yours: Happy holidays and a joyous New Year!**