

## Judiciary

# Recent Opinions Show 4th Circuit's Shift to Left; Court Is 'Almost One of the Most Liberal'

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By [Debra Cassens Weiss](#)

A federal appeals court once known for its conservative opinions has undergone a marked change since five of President Obama's judicial nominees won confirmation.

The Richmond, Va.-based 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has taken an apparent "left turn," the [Baltimore Sun](#) concludes.

Currently, the court has nine judges nominated by Democratic presidents and five nominated by Republicans. Another Obama nominee is awaiting confirmation.

The story cites these decisions as evidence of the leftward shift:

- Last week the court ruled a defendant's Fourth Amendment rights were violated when police used his criminal record as a reason to search him after a traffic stop. The court has also ruled for criminal suspects challenging police searches in three other cases this year.
- In July, the court ruled that only nonsectarian prayers pass constitutional muster at government meetings.
- In September, the court [dismissed a challenge](#) to the health-care law on the ground that Virginia had no standing to sue.

The article quotes Ilya Shapiro, a senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute. "Historically, this has been one of the most, if not the most, conservative circuits," she said. "Now it's almost one of the most liberal."

Hat tip to [How Appealing](#).

### Prior coverage:

[ABA Journal](#): "Logjam: Politicians Can't Agree Who Should Fill Vacancies on the Nation's Most Reliably Conservative Appellate Court. If the Lasts Past November, the Court May Take a Turn to the Left"

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