NEWS

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Suit disputing how Yale picks trustees could reach state Supreme Court

BY SARA AGRAWAL
STAFF REPORTER

A candidate once nominated to serve on Yale's board of trustees and his former classmate have been pursuing legal action against the Yale Corporation since 2022. They're now trying to bring the case to the Connecticut Supreme Court.

Victor Ashe '67, along with Donald Glascoff '67, is suing Yale for changing the nomination process by which alumni are elected to the University's board of trustees. Since filing their initial complaint in 2022, Ashe and Glascoff's case has travelled through Connecticut's district and appellate courts.

On Dec. 19, the plaintiffs filed a petition for certification to the Connecticut Supreme Court. If the Court grants this petition, the Court will hear the case. The petition argues that the district and appellate courts were mistaken after both ruled against Ashe and Glascoff in February 2024 and December 2025. Yale has until Jan. 28 to file a response to the petition.

In a phone interview on Tuesday, Ashe said he believes it is undemocratic for Yale not to allow alumni petitions for nominations, a change that occurred in 2021.

"What was done was fundamentally undemocratic. Yale stands for lux et veritas. Light and truth. There's no light if the nominating process is abolished," Ashe said.

In response to Ashe's allegations and the court proceedings, University spokesperson Karen Peart affirmed support for the rulings of the court.

"We are pleased that both of the courts — the Superior Court and the Court of Appeals — that have reviewed the case, filed by two alumni regarding the process for electing Alumni Fellows to the Yale board of trustees, have found the university's actions legally appropriate," Peart wrote in an email statement to the News on Wednesday.

Ashe qualified as a candidate for the 2021 election to the Yale Corporation through a petitioning campaign, which required him to attain at least 4,394 signatures from other alumni. Glascoff intended to petition for nomination, but was prevented from doing so by the changes in the nomination process, according to the 2022 complaint.

Before 2022, an alumnus could petition for a nomination to the board beginning a year before the election. They needed 3 percent of eligible alumni signatures to qualify. The more common route to a nomination was through the Yale Alumni Association's nominating committee, which is made up primarily of "volunteer alumni leaders," according to the committee's website. Per tradition, these nominated candidates do not campaign ahead of the final election, in which alumni who have held degrees for at least five years can vote for nominated candidates.

During Ashe's 2020 campaign for the 2021 election, he called for reform in the election system — specifically, that there should be more discussion between candidates and more transparency in the board's meetings.

While Ashe earned a nomination through petitioning, he lost the final election to the board.

In May 2021, the Yale Corporation announced that it was terminating the petitioning route to qualify for nomination.

Catharine Bond Hill GRD '84 '85, a former senior trustee, wrote in a message to alumni at the time that the petitioning process "no longer serves the best interests of the university." She reasoned that the petitioning process, which was initiated in 1929, was scarcely used until recently, when candidates began running on "issue-based candidacies." The last petition candidate to successfully be elected was in 1965. Bond Hill claimed that recent petition candidacies cost money and time that might prevent qualified alumni from pursuing election.

A trustee should be a "person elected without any agenda other than to bring independent judgment to the varied and complex issues facing the university," Bond Hill wrote.

Bond Hill's announcement was met with outrage from alumni, the News reported at the time.

On March 7, 2022, Ashe and Glascoff filed their first complaint against Yale for unilaterally eliminating the petitioning process. Their complaint stated that Yale had violated the Connecticut Revised Nonstock Corporation Act — which allows members of a nonstock corporation to challenge actions done beyond the corporation's power. In their suit, Ashe and Glascoff argued that because alumni can vote other alumni to the board, they count as members of the corporation under the law.



YULIN ZHEN / PHOTO EDITOR
Victor Ashe'67 and Donald Glascoff '67 sued Yale in 2022 after the Yale Corporation changed the nomination process for electing alumni to the board of trustees. Now, the case may be argued for a third time.

Ashe and Glascoff also argued that Yale had committed a breach of contract of the 1872 amendment of the University Charter. The amendment reads that graduates of five years may "cast their votes, under such regulations as the president and fellows may prescribe, for six persons to be chosen from among such graduates."

Ashe and Glascoff's 2022 complaint claimed that while the amendment allows the Yale Corporation to regulate "voting procedure," it does not allow the Corporation "to restrict or regulate who alumni may vote for or who may put themselves up as a candidate."

"The Corporation is engaging in the most obvious form of voter suppression and denial of rights of free expression of opinion," Eric Henzy, Ashe and Glascoff's lawyer, wrote in the 2022 complaint.

On Sept. 19, 2022, plaintiffs Ashe and Glascoff argued their case in the Hartford district court of the Connecticut Superior Court.

On Feb. 26, 2024, Judge John Burns Farley ruled in favor of Yale, saying that the University is entitled to run alumni elections as it pleases and that Ashe was not entitled to sue; he was neither a member of the Yale Corporation under the Connecticut Revised Nonstock Corporation Act nor a third-party beneficiary of the University Charter.

Ashe and Glascoff appealed the ruling. After an argument on Sept. 16, 2025, the Connecticut Appellate Court unanimously affirmed the district court ruling on Dec. 2 and denied the plaintiffs' petition for summary judgment. On Dec. 19, the plaintiffs then filed a petition for certification to the Connecticut Supreme Court against the appeals court's ruling.

The petition states, "the 1872 Amendment requires direct ballot access, meaning direct nominations, as existed for 150 years, and what they seek on the merits is a restoration of meaningful, independent choice in the election of Alumni Fellows through restoration of direct nominations."

The petition also argues that alumni are members of Yale and that, as members, they have the right to challenge Yale's actions.

Yale had to file a statement in opposition to the petition by Dec. 29 but moved to push that deadline to Jan. 28, 2026, due to the holidays. The court granted the extension.

Ashe declined to comment on why he thought the district and appellate courts ruled in favor of Yale.

As Yale's deadline of Jan. 28 to file an opposition to the petition approaches, it remains unclear whether the case will make it to the Connecticut Supreme Court.

According to Alex Taubes LAW '15, a New Haven-based lawyer, "based on my evaluation of everything so far the plaintiffs have a long shot at success. But in the law you can never say never."

Through a form, Yale graduates can nominate other alumni for the consideration of the Yale Alumni Fellow Nominating Committee to be placed on the election docket.

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Buckley report on liberal faculty gains traction, and Yale responds

BY ARIA LYNN-SKOV
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A Buckley Institute report last month on the predominance of Democrats on the Yale faculty sparked criticism from conservatives about political imbalances in higher education — and prompted an apparent response from Yale.

On Dec. 1, the organization released its Yale Faculty Political Diversity Report, which reported that 82.3 percent of the 1,666 faculty members examined are registered Democrats or primarily support Democratic candidates. Of the remaining faculty, 2.3 percent were found to be Republicans with the remaining 15.4 percent not affiliated with either major party. Of 43 departments that grant undergraduate degrees, 27 had no Republican faculty members at all, according to the report.

"As the data in this report demonstrates, Yale provides its students with a faculty whose ideological and political outlook falls well short of the diversity of the American public," the introduction to the report reads.

The 58-page report landed at the end of the first year of President Donald Trump's second term, when universities came under intense political pressure, often grounded in the claim that elite higher education excludes conservatives. The Buckley Institute, an independent nonprofit that promotes itself as a counterbalance to Yale's liberal tilt, has been cited by University President Maurie McInnis as a possible factor in Yale's having avoided the direct threats from the Trump administration faced by most of its Ivy League peers.



ELLIE PARK / SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER
The report released last month by the Buckley Institute counted 27 Yale departments without any Republican professors. It prompted criticism from conservatives including Elon Musk.

On Dec. 23, after the Buckley Institute report had been covered by several news outlets and received widespread attention online, Yale News released an unsigned "Statement regarding faculty political affiliations." While it did not specifically mention the Buckley Institute or its report, the statement addressed many of the concerns that arose from the release of the report earlier that month.

"Yale hires and retains faculty based on academic excellence, scholarly distinction, and teaching achievement, independent of political views," the statement reads. "Yale does not track or comment on the political affiliations of individual faculty members. The university is, however, deeply committed to fostering open debate, preserving freedom of expression, and creating an environment in which a wide range of ideas can be expressed and heard civilly."

The statement also defended Yale's commitments to "academic freedom," "free expression" and "constructive dialogue across differences," citing initiatives and policies including the 1975 Woodward Report on freedom of expression, the Yale Center for Civic Thought, the Committee on Institutional Voice, the Law School's Center for Academic Freedom and Free Speech and student groups that represent diverse viewpoints, like the Yale Political Union.

The Buckley Institute report took account of faculty members across the Law School, the School of Management and what it described as 43 "undergraduate degree-granting departments" at Yale. The institute used L2 Voter Data, a database of all registered voters in the United States, to determine each faculty member's political affiliation, according to the report.

For individuals whose affiliation was unavailable or unaffiliated, the institute used the Federal Election Commission's campaign donation database. Faculty members whose affiliations were not accessible — 331 of the 1666 faculty members — were not accounted for in the final percentages.

Several conservative-leaning outlets, including Fox News, The New York Post and Campus Reform, which is described on its website as "a conservative watchdog in the nation's higher education system," covered the report's findings.

Outrage about the low percentage of Republican professors and lack of political diversity circulated on social media.

"Literally zero Republicans in 30 Yale departments when half the country is Republican is truly outrageous bigotry!" the billionaire businessman Elon Musk, who previously led the Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency effort, wrote in a post on X. Musk, who owns the platform, has 231.9 million followers, and his post about the Buckley report has nearly 20 million views.

The response to his post was representative of the broader online reactions — a mix of similar disapproval and rebuttals to the criticism of Yale, including some arguing that the conservative push for more Republicans to be hired was inconsistent with the right's opposition to affirmative action.

Tori Cook '27, the new president of the undergraduate William F. Buckley, Jr. Program's Student Leadership Board, told the News she hopes the report can help students see the importance of conversations including perspectives that "perhaps we're missing in class."

"I have great confidence in our professors and I'm sure that many of them are doing their best to present both sides of issues," she said. Cook hopes "realizing that some of those perspectives may be lacking" will encourage students to realize the importance of "having conversations in spaces like Buckley or the YPU," Cook added, referring to the Yale Political Union.

Manu Anpalagan '26, the president of the Yale College Republicans, expressed his frustration with the pattern shown in the report's findings, which he called "very disappointing but not at all surprising."

"It's a known fact, year after year, that Yale's faculty is not politically diverse," he wrote to the News. "A politically diverse faculty represents an intellectually diverse faculty. And an intellectually diverse faculty is essential for an open exchange of ideas and the pursuit of knowledge, both of which are core missions of the university."

The Buckley Institute is named after William F. Buckley Jr. '50, a former chairman of the News.

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