

# Huge fire destroys the house of South Carolina Circuit Court judge after clash with Trump, Miller

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An investigation is underway into the fire that destroyed South Carolina Circuit Court Judge Diane Goodstein's Edisto Island residence on Saturday.

The investigation is being led by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED). In a statement to TIME and Newsweek, SLED Chief Mark Keel said: "At this time, there is no evidence to indicate the fire was intentionally set ... The investigation remains active and ongoing."

Keel added, "I urge our citizens, elected officials, and members of the press to exercise good judgment and not share information that has not been verified."

Although initial reports mentioned the possibility of an explosion before the fire began, SLED agents say their preliminary investigation has found no evidence of a pre-fire explosion. SLED said it is continuing forensic inspections to determine the fire's origin.

On Saturday, October 4, at approximately 11:30 am ET, Judge Goodstein's home on Edisto Island erupted in flames. Edisto Island is a barrier island located on the coast of South Carolina, approximately 45 miles south of Charleston.

Judge Goodstein was not present at the time, but her husband, Arnold Goodstein, a former Democratic state senator, and two other family members were injured and hospitalized. The fire was so intense that rescue crews had to evacuate some occupants by kayak through the swampy terrain around the house.

St. Paul's Fire District and Colleton County Fire-Rescue responded to the incident, with one person airlifted to the Medical University of South Carolina due to serious injuries. Dramatic footage showed the home engulfed and subsequently reduced to twisted beams and charred debris.

Judge Diane S. Goodstein has served as a Circuit Court judge since May 1998, presiding over thousands of cases. South Carolina judges are elected by the General Assembly. Her husband, Arnold Goodstein, previously represented Charleston County in the South Carolina House and Senate during the 1970s and has been involved in real estate and community affairs.

Judge Goodstein had received death threats in recent weeks that were linked to her rulings, especially after she blocked the release of voter registration data sought by the Trump administration.

Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Harmeet Dhillon and White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller both publicly targeted Goodstein, inciting abuse and threats from right-wing activists. The threats escalated after the ruling, placing her and her family under heightened security.

In September, Judge Goodstein issued a temporary restraining order prohibiting the South Carolina Election Commission (SCEC) from turning over the voter registration data for over 3 million residents to the US Department of Justice. The DOJ demanded personal details—including Social Security numbers—as part of an effort to cull voter rolls and investigate claims of fraudulent voting.

The order came in response to a lawsuit from Dr. Anne Crook, who argued that releasing such data would violate South Carolina's constitutional privacy protections. "The release of the personal information data of Plaintiff ... would violate Article 1 Section 10 of the Constitution of South Carolina which guarantees Plaintiff's right to privacy," Crook's complaint read. Judge Goodstein's restraining order was overturned by the South Carolina Supreme Court four days before the

fire.

Her decision was denounced by Trump administration officials who called it judicial “interference” that sabotaged federal election integrity efforts. Stephen Miller labeled it and other such decisions “a legal insurrection,” arguing that “district court judges ... have issued rulings that are flagrantly unlawful and unconstitutional. It is an insurrection against the laws and Constitution of the United States. We need to have courts that see themselves as under the laws and constitution—not able to assume powers reserved solely for the president.”

The fascist Miller also accused “Democrat-appointed judges, prosecutors, and attorneys general” of shielding “leftwing terrorism” and undermining law and order. These incitements have intensified while Trump has ordered military deployments to major US cities in a direct assault on the Constitution.

A surge in violent threats and intimidation against judges who opposed Trump administration policies includes both federal and state judges. Chief US District Judge John McConnell of Rhode Island recounted receiving multiple death threats and harassing phone calls after issuing rulings blocking administration actions.

At a “Speak For Justice” conference, judges warned publicly that “hostile rhetoric” from the administration has emboldened dangerous actors and undermined judicial independence. US District Court Judge Esther Salas from New Jersey shared her personal experience after her son was murdered by an assailant who tracked their home, highlighting the real-world consequences of online and media incitement directed at judges.

Legal experts have characterized the current environment as especially perilous for judges. Expert commentary from judicial advocacy groups emphasize that Trump administration figures repeatedly demonize judges as “crooked” and call for their impeachment or criminal prosecution in the wake of unfavorable rulings.

Experts have also noted the degree of direct public incitement from top political officials is unprecedented in modern American history and warn that when “national leaders demonize the judiciary, they are inviting people to do us harm.” The fact is that the campaign against the legitimacy of court decisions is part of the dismantling of democratic government and

the implementation of a presidential dictatorship run by Donald Trump out of the White House.

Judicial advocacy organizations have called on Congress and professional associations to safeguard the independence and physical safety of judges, arguing that normal appeals processes must prevail over political intimidation.

Republican leaders in Congress, including Speaker Mike Johnson, have called for leveraging congressional powers to restrict or eliminate federal courts that block Trump administration policies. Johnson said, “We can eliminate an entire district court. We do have power over funding over the courts and all these other things. But desperate times call for desperate measures, and Congress is going to act.”

House Republicans have introduced articles of impeachment against multiple judges issuing nationwide injunctions against administration initiatives. Although the impeachments are unlikely to succeed, they have discussed alternative legislative approaches to restrict the judiciary’s role in reviewing executive actions.

The fire at Judge Diane Goodstein’s home remains under investigation and so far, there is no official word as to the cause of the blaze. Meanwhile, the fire took place amid a wave of threats and political attacks on the judiciary by Donald Trump and leading members of his administration and Judge Goodstein had recently been the subject of death threats.

The aim of the fascists in the White House and their congressional allies and equally far-right representatives of the Republican Party is to intimidate and eliminate any judicial obstacles to the establishment of an authoritarian regime and presidential dictatorship in the US.



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