

# [***New York Judge's Letitia James Comment Sparks Backlash***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BPG-YM11-JBR6-9003-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 546 words

**Byline:** Gabe Whisnant

**Highlight:** Federal Court Judge Nicholas Garaufis reportedly said the recent heckling of Letitia James at an FDNY event "had to do with race."

**Body**

Brooklyn Federal Court Judge Nicholas Garaufis is facing backlash for suggesting that New York firefighters heckled state Attorney General Letitia James based on "race."

Garaufis, a United States District Judge in the Eastern District of New York, ordered the FDNY commissioner and the city's top lawyer last month to appear before him to explain the fire department's inability to answer equal opportunity complaints.

"That's not a request; that's a direction," Garaufis said, the *New York Daily News* reported. His order came after the president of the Vulcan Society of Black firefighters, Regina Wilson, said that [*James being heckled*](https://www.newsweek.com/letitia-james-booed-firefighters-ceremony-1877054?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) at a March 7 firefighter promotion ceremony demonstrated problems within the FDNY.

"I don't know if you had an opportunity to just see the vile nature of these members even when we were at Christian Cultural Center where they started booing and saying 'Trump, Trump Trump,' while Letitia James was at the podium," Wilson said.

"This behavior is who this department is. Not all of them, but a large portion of them. So when Black people go to work and have to deal with this and you don't get any help or support really from the department, it's horrific."

Garaufis responded that he was shocked by James' heckling.

"I've lived in New York City all my life. I know what the problem is. And believe me, front and center is what happened the other day. This doesn't have to do with ***politics***, this has to do with race," Garaufis said.

*Newsweek* reached out to Garaufis via email for comment.

In a post on X, formerly [*Twitter*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/twitter?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), Valentina Gomez, a [*Republican*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republican?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) Secretary of State candidate from Missouri, wrote:

"These heroes that run into burning buildings, and save lives, are being suppressed by a tyrant government in New York City. When I'm Secretary of State in Missouri, I will happily higher these brave heroes. Freedom of speech will never be suppressed."

Legal analyst Phil Holloway posted on X, "New York judge says FDNY booing of Letitia James, pro-Trump chants not about ***politics***, 'has to do with race. Brooklyn Federal Court Judge Nicholas Garaufis sees the entire world through one and only one lens."

A firefighter's union in New York City [*reportedly chastised some members*](https://www.newsweek.com/new-york-firefighters-investigated-after-booing-letitia-james-1877609?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) after boos and "Trump" chants broke at an event featuring James, who has been thrown into the spotlight in recent years for investigating Trump, culminating in a recently successful business fraud lawsuit against the ex-president.

On March 14, an FDNY spokesperson told [*Fox News*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/fox-news?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), "At no point has there been an investigation into members booing."

This statement seemed to contradict reported FDNY internal messages that hinted at an investigation.

"Beginning today, deputy chiefs will visit each company in attendance to discuss the events and offer members the opportunity to come forward," one of the messages read. "Additionally, they may make members aware that the Department is in possession of video footage of the event."

FDNY spokesman James Long told the *New York Daily News,* "Commissioner [Laura] Kavanagh and the FDNY [are] committed to providing a professional work environment free of discrimination and harassment for all Department employees, which is why we continue to work with our city partners so we can effectively re-staff the EEO office."

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2371810/letitia-james-ny.jpg)

**Graphic**

Letitia James in NY

AFP/Getty Images

Attorney General Letitia James speaks during a press conference following a verdict against former U.S. President Donald Trump in a civil fraud trial on February 16, 2024 in New York City.

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