



COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
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**SILENCED, SIDELINED AND UNDER THREAT:
HOW THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION
IS TARGETING NONPROFITS AND
WEAKENING DEMOCRACY**

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INTRODUCTION

Across the country, President Trump, the Trump Administration, and allied Republican officials are attempting to undermine the foundations of our democracy and weaken Americans' confidence in the 2026 midterm elections through attacks on nonprofit organizations and other civil society institutions. These organizations, along with journalists, universities, and professional associations, are on the front lines of serving communities, protecting constitutional rights, and helping Americans navigate moments of crisis and uncertainty. They provide food, healthcare, legal services, disaster relief, and support for families, often stepping in when government falls short. They help Americans exercise their most crucial right—the right to vote. At the same time, they play a critical role in ensuring those in power answer to the American people and are held accountable for their actions. By informing the public, advocating for change, and protecting the right of every American to participate in civic life, these organizations are a critical and necessary part of our democratic fabric.

Today, that work is under coordinated attack.

Since the start of President Trump's second term, the Administration—alongside aligned Republican officials at the state level and in Congress—has been using the tools of government to target nonprofit organizations and other civil society institutions because of who they serve, the actions they expose, and the viewpoints they represent. These actions are not isolated policy disputes. They reflect a broader pattern of government abuse and blatant lies that raise serious concerns about the deliberate misuse of federal power to punish perceived opponents, deter lawful civic engagement, and ensure the federal government's power is unchallenged and unchecked. These efforts sow the seeds of distrust in our institutions and contribute to the Administration's overarching goal: destabilize the 2026 midterm elections.

The consequences are immediate and concrete. When nonprofit organizations are threatened with investigations, funding cuts, de-banking, or loss of tax-exempt status, they are forced to divert scarce resources away from serving their communities. When voting rights organizations are raided and their staff harassed by law enforcement, election integrity becomes critically endangered. When universities, journalists, and legal advocates are pressured or silenced, the public loses access to information and accountability, and their rights are at greater risk. And when fear and uncertainty spread across civil society, families are less likely to seek help, workers are less willing to speak out, and communities are left more vulnerable.

This report documents a pattern of abuse by the Trump Administration and its allies that, taken together, amounts to a systematic effort to weaponize government authority against civil society. These efforts threaten not only the organizations directly targeted, but also the millions of Americans who depend on them for food assistance, healthcare, legal support, and protection of their constitutional rights to free expression, faith, association, and democratic participation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Civil society organizations, journalists, universities, professional associations, and community-based nonprofit organizations are essential to the fabric of America. Food pantries provide nourishment, create networks of community support, and increase the public's ability to access basic necessities, maintain their dignity, and find relief from hunger. Independent media organizations create channels for marginalized voices and bolster the public's constitutional right to question, challenge, and hold those in power accountable. Community organizing groups build grassroots power and create spaces for collective action. Civil rights organizations identify societal inequities and defend the rights of marginalized groups. Watchdog organizations monitor government conduct, create records of abuse and corruption, and facilitate the public's constitutional right to transparency, oversight, and accountability for those in power.

This report describes a coordinated pattern by which the Trump Administration is laying the groundwork to undermine the 2026 midterm elections by taking specific actions to instill fear, abuse traditional law enforcement and national security powers, and issue threats to destabilize civic institutions and chill participation in public life.

The Trump Administration perpetrates this abuse with executive actions, investigations, press conferences, licensing threats, and targeted public campaigns against perceived opponents. Considered individually, each action may be framed as a discrete policy choice; viewed together, they reveal a broader effort to tighten executive control and create disincentives for organized opposition, independent oversight, and public criticism. The effect is cumulative, and the impact is felt throughout civil society and in communities across the country.

This report highlights some of the ways the Administration is undercutting civil society by abusing law enforcement and national security authorities, attacking the institutions that protect freedom of expression, speech and faith, silencing nonprofits with disfavored viewpoints, and undermining free and fair elections.



ABUSE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND NATIONAL SECURITY AUTHORITIES

Throughout President Trump's second term, the President and his allies—both in the Administration, Congress, and the States—have weaponized law enforcement and national security authorities to undermine the rule of law, sow chaos in the justice system, and destabilize civil society. President Trump bends the rule of law to its breaking point, attempting to conform it to his will. He elevates unqualified allies to positions of power and encourages them to prosecute his perceived enemies, intimidate and denigrate everyday Americans exercising their First Amendment rights, and attack civil society. Even when those efforts fall short, they create a climate of fear and intimidation and inflict needless cruelty on Americans that President Trump views as a threat to his power.

The Administration is targeting civil rights organizations for their work protecting marginalized communities and against extremist groups.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) is a civil rights organization known for tracking and bringing legal action against hate groups, most notably the Ku Klux Klan. As part of its efforts, the SPLC used confidential informants to infiltrate the hate groups and, until 2025, assisted the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) in investigating extremist groups by sharing with the agencies the information gathered by the informants.¹

On April 21, 2026, DOJ indicted the SPLC, alleging wire fraud, false statements to a federally insured bank, and conspiracy to commit money laundering in connection with payments to these informants.² The indictment alleges that the SPLC defrauded its donors by not revealing that funds would be routed to individuals involved—*i.e.*, confidential informants—in violent extremist groups.³ By all accounts, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Alabama, where the case was brought, "rush[ed] through the indictment of the SPLC, despite serious concerns about the strength of the case."⁴

The indictment is illustrative of the Trump Administration's campaign of intimidation against those who stand up to racialized oppression and work to advance civil rights, strengthen our democracy, and hold bad actors accountable. Organizations that have previously worked with government agencies are now vulnerable to having that cooperation turned against them. Because of the indictment, the

1 Alan Feuer, F.B.I. Knew Civil Rights Group Informants Helped Bring Down Extremists, Lawyers Say, N.Y. Times (Apr. 28, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/04/28/us/politics/fbi-southern-poverty-law-center-informants.html>.

2 U.S. Dep't of Justice, Press Release: Federal Grand Jury Charges Southern Poverty Law Center for Wire Fraud, False Statements, and Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering (Apr. 21, 2026), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/federal-grand-jury-charges-southern-poverty-law-center-wire-fraud-false-statements-and>.

3 See Indictment ¶ 16, United States v. Southern Poverty Law Center, Case No. 2:26-cr-000139 (M.D. Ala. Apr. 21, 2026), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/media/1437146/dl>.

4 Letter from Ranking Member Raskin, H. Comm. Judiciary to Kevin P. Davidson (Apr. 30, 2026), <https://democrats-judiciary.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/democrats-judiciary.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/2026-04-30-raskin-scanlon-to-davidson-mdal-re-splc-and-first-amendment.pdf>.

SPLC is forced to devote significant time and resources to fighting federal criminal charges described by former prosecutors as “not...valid” and “very stretched,”⁵ weakening the infrastructure for protecting the civil rights of all Americans. The indictment exemplifies the Administration’s broader weaponization of its law enforcement tools — a pattern evident across the federal government, including in DOJ’s Civil Rights Division. The Civil Rights Division, established to enforce civil rights statutes promoting equality and protecting against unlawful discrimination, has been repurposed to dismantle diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs and pursue claims of “reverse discrimination.”⁶ Indeed, in addition to the indictment against the SPLC, the Civil Rights Division moved to intervene in litigation challenging Evanston, Illinois’s locally-enacted reparations program, alleging the program violated the Equal Protection Clause and Fair Housing Act by distributing housing-related benefits based on race.⁷ The indictment and intervention reveal a total transformation of the Division and preview what is sure to be a more active role for the Civil Rights Division in President Trump’s retribution campaign against his political enemies going forward.

The SPLC’s experience makes plain that no nonprofit is beyond reach: organizations that work in good faith with federal agencies, disclose their activities to donors, and operate within the law may nonetheless find themselves in the crosshairs of an administration that views their mission as a threat. Today it is the SPLC; tomorrow it could be any organization that refuses to stand down.

Public officials are impeded by politically charged investigations due to the President’s systematic weaponization of the FBI and DOJ.

President Trump is weaponizing the FBI and DOJ against public officials of the opposing party, enlisting law enforcement as his personal legal team. This weaponization signals to public officials, nonprofit advocacy organizations, and watchdogs that confronting the Administration is costly—in both monetary and reputational terms. In addition to public officials, President Trump threatens action against organizations he perceives as unfriendly, causing political opponents to fear exercising their First Amendment rights.⁸ These investigations, indictments, and threats undermine the ability of public officials to do their jobs on behalf of the American people and weaken the rule of law with long-term repercussions for democratic governance and organizations that advance it. For example:

Former FBI Director James Comey: In September 2025, DOJ sought an indictment in the Eastern District of Virginia of former FBI director James Comey on charges of false statements and obstruction of a congressional proceeding.⁹ Erik Siebert, the then-U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, raised concerns with senior DOJ officials about the strength of the evidence against Comey.¹⁰ Before seeking

5 Sarah N. Lynch, Former federal prosecutors see legal flaws in DOJ’s indictment of Southern Poverty Law Center, CBS News (Apr. 23, 2026), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/southern-poverty-law-center-justice-department-indictment-legal-flaws/>.

6 Scott MacFarlane, Jacob Rosen & Julia Kimani Burnham, Trump administration’s claims of so-called “reverse discrimination” upend DOJ Civil Rights Division, CBS News (Jan. 19, 2026), <http://cbsnews.com/news/justice-department-reverse-discrimination-civil-rights-division/>.

7 Safiyah Riddle, Federal Government Seeks to Halt the First US Reparations Program for Black People, AP News (June 16, 2026), <https://apnews.com/article/illinois-reparations-trump-department-of-justice-race-814515b5c67c176f0fa7b-da09e172245>.

8 See Countering Domestic Terrorism and Organized Political Violence, The White House (Sept. 25, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/09/countering-domestic-terrorism-and-organized-political-violence/>.

9 Jill Colvin, Read the Trump Administration’s full indictment of former FBI Director Comey, PBS (Sept. 26, 2025).

10 Glenn Thrush, Maggie Haberman, Jonah E. Bromwich, Alan Feuer & William K. Rashbaum, U.S. Attorney Investigating Two Trump Foes Departs Amid Pressure From President, N.Y. Times (Sept. 19, 2025).

5 Abuse of Law Enforcement and National Security Authorities

the indictment against Comey, President Trump pushed out Siebert and appointed former White House aide Lindsey Halligan, who had no previous experience as a prosecutor, to bring the charges.¹¹ Halligan quickly secured an indictment, but the judge dismissed the charges because Halligan was unlawfully appointed.¹² In April 2026, Comey was indicted again, this time in the Eastern District of North Carolina, over an alleged threat to President Trump.¹³



New York Attorney General Letitia James: In October 2025, Halligan also brought charges against New York Attorney General Letitia James, whose office had successfully brought fraud charges against the President.¹⁴ Here too the reviewing judge dismissed the charges due to Halligan's unlawful appointment, and a grand jury rejected an attempt to re-indict James.¹⁵

Other Politically Motivated Investigations: The Administration ordered investigations into Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell,¹⁶ former Trump aide turned January 6 Committee witness Cassidy Hutchinson,¹⁷ and Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook.¹⁸

President Trump also ordered investigations into elected members of the opposition party, including Senator Adam Schiff (D-Calif.)¹⁹ and six Democratic lawmakers who posted a video reminding members of the military that “no one has to carry out orders that violate the law or our Constitution.”²⁰

Each of these instances illustrates the way the Administration uses the weight of the federal government to go after critics and silence dissent. President Trump has not stopped at high-profile current and former public officials.

11 Ryan J. Reilly & Dareh Gregorian, Lindsey Halligan is no longer employed by the Justice Department after her departure from Virginia U.S. attorney's office, NBC News (Jan. 26, 2026), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/lindsey-halligan-not-employed-justice-department-us-attorney-rcna255969>.

12 Eric Tucker, Judge dismisses Comey, James indictments after finding that prosecutor was illegally appointed, AP News (Nov. 25, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/comey-james-justice-department-5ec1a59d152bc1fd000ade15e20745b5>.

13 Hannah Rabinowitz, Kristen Holmes & Holmes Lybrand, Exclusive: Former FBI Director James Comey Indicted Over Alleged 'Threat' Against Trump, CNN (April 28, 2026), <https://www.cnn.com/2026/04/28/politics/justice-department-indicts-ex-fbi-director-james-comey-again>.

14 Kyle Cheney, Letitia James pursued Trump. Then she was indicted, Politico (Oct. 9, 2025).

15 Eric Tucker, Judge dismisses Comey, James indictments after finding that prosecutor was illegally appointed, AP News (Nov. 25, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/comey-james-justice-department-5ec1a59d152bc1fd000ade15e20745b5>; Alanna Durkin Richer & Olivia Diaz, Grand jury rejects new mortgage fraud indictment against New York Attorney General Letitia James, AP News (Dec. 4, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/letitia-james-justice-department-mortgage-fraud-fa10cc83a925ecbb628f44572ee7931b>.

16 Andrew Goudswaard and Nate Raymond, US judge upholds block on subpoenas to Fed's Powell, teeing up likely appeal, Reuters (Apr. 3, 2026), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-judge-upholds-block-subpoenas-feds-powell-teeing-up-likely-appeal-2026-04-03/>.

17 Alan Feuer & Michael S. Schmidt, Justice Dept.'s Civil Rights Division Is Investigating Star Witness Against Trump, New York Times (April 7, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/04/07/us/doj-cassidy-hutchinson-investigation-trump.html>.

18 Eric Tucker & Paul Wiseman, Justice Department probes mortgage fraud claims against Lisa Cook of Federal Reserve, AP source says, AP (Sept. 4, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/federal-reserve-trump-cook-8c81cf9978f5ca-33304753e875355a80>.

19 Brian Slodysko, Eric Tucker & Alanna Durkin Richer, Document shows DOJ examining the handling of mortgage fraud investigation into Sen. Schiff, PBS (Nov. 20 2025), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/document-shows-doj-examining-the-handling-of-mortgage-fraud-investigation-into-sen-schiff>.

20 Chantelle Lee, Is It “Seditious” or “Illegal” to Urge the Military to Refuse Unlawful Orders? Legal Experts Weigh In, Time (Nov. 25, 2025), <https://time.com/7336802/trump-military-orders-mark-kelly-democratic-lawmakers-video/>.

Private citizens, organizations, and institutions are being targeted, silenced, and punished through the Administration's improper use of national security tools.

When the Administration targets viewpoints for political reasons, it diverts law enforcement and national security resources from their core missions, damages public trust in law enforcement and makes us all less safe. These actions sideline public safety priorities and dismantle the FBI's capacity to combat real threats like child exploitation and true domestic terrorism. This unprecedented overreach chills legitimate discourse by instilling fear and preventing public critique for fear of potential sanction.

On September 22, 2025, President Trump issued an executive order purporting to designate "Antifa" as a "Domestic Terrorist Organization," despite antifa not being an organization or entity.²¹ Three days later, the Administration published National Security Presidential Memorandum 7 (NSPM-7) directing federal law enforcement agencies to aggressively employ existing authorities to further the goal of "disband[ing] and uproot[ing] networks, entities, and organizations," and to include "antifa" as an organization that the NSPM claims "promote organized violence, violent intimidation, conspiracies against rights, and other efforts to disrupt the functioning of a democratic society."²²

On December 4, 2025, then-Attorney General Pamela Bondi issued an internal memorandum (the Bondi Memo) to all federal prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, and DOJ grant-making components providing guidance on complying with NSPM-7 and highlighting as enforcement targets groups with the following views: "extreme views in favor of mass migration and open borders; adherence to radical gender ideology, anti-Americanism, anti-capitalism, or anti-Christianity; ... [and] hostility towards traditional views on family, religion, and morality..."²³ This is not an empty direction: the FBI has launched a task force, Joint Task Force Vanguard, to implement the White House directive, and also requested funding for fiscal year 2027 to "continue the implementation of NSPM-7 requirements," as part of its counterterrorism budget.²⁴ Importantly, NSPM-7 does not create any new federal crimes, and there is no legal authority to designate a domestic entity as a "terrorist" organization. This directive is an attempt to create a backdoor to brand any organization as "antifa" and create the pretense to label them as a domestic terrorist.

State governments also are working hand-in-hand with the Trump Administration to target nonprofit organizations using national security concerns as a pretext. In December 2025, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis issued an executive order purporting to designate the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a group whose mission is to protect civil rights and promote justice, as a domestic terrorist organization. CAIR sued to block the order, and in March 2026, a federal district court granted a preliminary injunction, holding that CAIR was substantially likely to succeed on its claim that the designation violated the First Amendment.²⁵ In response, the state legislature passed, and in April 2026, Governor DeSantis

21 Designating Antifa as a Domestic Terrorist Organization, 90 Fed. Reg. 46,317 (Sept. 25, 2025), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2025-09-25/pdf/2025-18709.pdf>.

22 Countering Domestic Terrorism and Organized Political Violence, 90 Fed. Reg. 47,225 (Sept. 30, 2025), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2025-09-30/pdf/2025-19141.pdf>.

23 Memorandum: Implementing National Security Presidential Memorandum-7: Countering Domestic Terrorism and Organized Political Violence (Dec. 4, 2025), <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU00/20260211/118951/HHRG-119-JU00-20260211-SD032.pdf>.

24 FY 2027 FBI Budget Request to Congress 13–14 (Mar. 2026), <https://www.justice.gov/jmd/media/1435001/dl?inline>.

25 *CAIR-Found., Inc. v. DeSantis*, 822 F. Supp. 3d 1263, 1282 (N.D. Fla. 2026) ("The Constitution protects Plaintiff's speech just as it protects any other organization's lawful speech from suppression by governmental coercion of third parties. And Defendant has violated Plaintiff's rights by targeting it in his EO and threatening any who wish to provide material support or resources to Plaintiff with government consequences. This the First Amendment does not permit.").

signed into law, a bill establishing a state-level framework to designate domestic and foreign terrorist organizations²⁶ and a companion bill that exempts the information relied upon in the designation process from public disclosure requirements,²⁷ impeding potential designees' ability to challenge the designation. The laws went into effect on July 1, 2026; that day, Governor DeSantis announced Florida's intent to designate the CAIR under the new statute.²⁸ CAIR, along with the ACLU, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and partner law firms, filed suit that same day challenging the new law.²⁹ The state, meanwhile, is separately appealing the March decision to the Eleventh Circuit. Even if CAIR's lawsuits are successful, fighting this political, viewpoint-based targeting requires a significant redirection of resources away from CAIR's civil rights mission.

Attacks on everyday citizens also run rampant. In January 2026, the Trump Administration said it revoked 8,000 student visas as part of its larger deportation campaign, claiming the targets "pose a risk to public safety or national security."³⁰ Critics draw a connection between visa actions and deportation hearings to a broader attempt to suppress pro-Palestinian organizing and other contentious issues,³¹ which aligns with the Administration's proclivity to tie rights and privileges to actual or perceived legally protected political activity. These unprecedented actions are enhanced by the inflammatory language federal officials use against political opponents. The resulting effect chills dissent under the false guise of national security.

Protestors and others involved in First Amendment protected activity are publicly labeled as "domestic terrorists" and "assassins."

The public labeling of protesters and observers as criminals, with language such as "domestic terrorists" and "assassins," is an important part of the Administration's strategy. When protected First Amendment activity such as filming, observing, or protesting invokes accusations of domestic terrorism, civic engagement is chilled. As a result, public pressure and criticism, important means of drawing accountability from the Administration, are diminished.

For example, now-former Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem described both Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti, killed by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officers in Minneapolis on January 7 and January 24, 2026, respectively, as "domestic terrorists" and a "would-be assassin," despite no evidence in support of such allegations.³²

The December 4, 2025 Bondi Memo also directed the FBI to "compile a list of groups or entities engaged in acts that may constitute domestic terrorism," establish a tip line, and provide cash rewards for those

26 Fla. Stat. § 943.03102(1) (2026).

27 Fla. Stat. § 943.03102(2) (2026).

28 Press Release: Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Implementation of Florida Law to Combat Terrorist Organizations, Exec. Off. of Gov. Ron DeSantis (July 1, 2026), <https://www.flgov.com/eog/news/press/2026/governor-ron-desantis-announces-implementation-florida-law-combat-terrorist>.

29 See generally Complaint, ECF No. 1, CAIR-Found., Inc. v. DeSantis, Case No. 4:26-cv-00315 (N.D. Fla. July 1, 2026).

30 Johanna Alonso, Trump Administration Touts 8,000 Student Visas Revoked, Inside Higher Ed (Jan. 13, 2026), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/quick-takes/2026/01/13/trump-admin-says-it-revoked-8000-student-visas>.

31 Amy Gottlieb & Michael Merryman-Lotze, Stop the Persecution of Student Activists in the U.S., Am. Friends Serv. Comm. (May 4, 2025), <https://afsc.org/news/stop-persecution-student-activists-us>.

32 Brittany Gibson, Trump officials stick "terrorist" label on Americans killed by DHS, Axios (Jan. 25, 2026), <https://www.axios.com/2026/01/25/trump-officials-stick-terrorist-label-on-americans-killed-by-dhs>; George Chidi, Trump officials continue to push lies after fatal shooting of Alex Pretti, The Guardian (Jan. 26, 2026), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jan/26/trump-administration-alex-pretti-shooting-statements>.

who submit a tip leading to the arrest of individuals engaged in such acts.³³ Shortly after, in January 2026, Representative Chellie Pingree (D-Maine) shared a video in which an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent called a woman filming the agent a “domestic terrorist” and stated, “we have a nice little database,” and “now you’re considered a domestic terrorist,”³⁴ implying that the woman was being tracked as a result of her First Amendment protected activity.³⁵ This conduct also forecasts possible Administration abuse of invasive surveillance tools on civilians in the name of counterterrorism.

Nonprofits, schools, and other civil society organizations are unable to serve their target populations when fear of ICE permeates their communities.

Significant DHS actions in major U.S. cities deter community members from seeking assistance typically provided by nonprofit organizations. In June 2026, the City of Minneapolis released an Impact Assessment indicating that as of April 2026, the intensive DHS activity in Minneapolis beginning in December 2025 (dubbed “Operation Metro Surge”) “caused nearly \$700 million in costs and increased basic needs across Minneapolis.”³⁶ Anecdotal, nonprofit groups in the cities most impacted by ICE’s presence report a significant decline in the number of individuals seeking to access their services—whether citizens or not. In other words, the impact of ICE’s actions reaches far beyond those detained by ICE and their immediate families, harming the communities that need social services the most.³⁷

In 2025 and 2026, ICE raids throughout Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Charlotte—all heavily Democratic cities—resulted in hundreds of arrests, confrontations between agents and civilians, and widespread fear of violence, including at the site of nonprofit organizations serving the community.³⁸ For example, immigration officials repeatedly visited homeless shelters in Los Angeles and San Diego, California, in some cases arresting people.³⁹ A mobile healthcare clinic in Los Angeles reported that armed officers wearing tactical gear approached the clinic in unmarked vehicles; the agents left without

33 Memorandum for All Federal Prosecutors, Law Enforcement Agencies, Department of Justice Grant-Making Components (Dec. 4, 2025), <https://ca-times.brightspotcdn.com/6a/6c/c5feff2a460baba3db6b96ded309/attorney-general-bondi-memorandum-re-nspm-7-ag-guidance-12-4-2025.pdf>; see also Michael Wilner & Ana Ceballos, Justice Department drafting a list of ‘domestic terrorists’, LA Times (Dec. 11, 2025), <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2025-12-11/justice-department-drafting-list-of-domestic-terrorists>.

34 Rep. Pingree shares video of ICE agent calling woman ‘domestic terrorist’ for filming him, WGME (Jan. 23, 2026), <https://wgme.com/news/local/representative-chellie-pingree-shares-video-of-ice-agent-calling-woman-domestic-terrorist-for-filming-him-immigration-customs-enforcement-maine-president-donald-trump>.

35 Jude Joffe-Block, A new lawsuit alleges DHS illegally tracked and intimidated observers, NPR (Feb. 23, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/02/23/nx-s1-5722988/dhs-lawsuit-biometrics-domestic-terrorism>.

36 City of Minneapolis, Updated Impact Assessment & Recovery Needs Overview: Operation Metro Surge 16 (June 10, 2026), <https://www.minneapolismn.gov/media/-www-content-assets/documents/Updated-Impact-Assessment--Recovery-Needs-Overview---June-10-2026.pdf>.

37 Ana B. Ibarra, ‘We held our ground’: LA-area health clinic describes close encounter with immigration agents, CalMatters (June 14, 2025), <https://calmatters.org/health/2025/06/la-area-medical-clinic-immigration-agents/>; Alicia Victoria Lozano, ICE targets Los Angeles homeless shelter, NBC News (July 26, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/ice-targets-los-angeles-homeless-shelter-rcna220597>.

38 Nigel Duara, What it’s like to live through LA’s long deportation summer, CalMatters (Aug. 13, 2025), <https://calmatters.org/justice/2025/08/la-immigration-raids-empty-spaces/>.

39 Alicia Victoria Lozano, ICE targets Los Angeles homeless shelter, NBC News (July 26, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/ice-targets-los-angeles-homeless-shelter-rcna220597>; Blake Nelson, ICE just visited a San Diego homeless shelter. New rules say how that’s supposed to go., San Diego Union-Tribune (Mar. 22, 2025), <https://www.sandiegounion-tribune.com/2025/03/22/ice-just-visited-a-san-diego-homeless-shelter-new-rules-say-how-thats-supposed-to-go/>.

incident, but it left staff and patients shaken.⁴⁰ As states and municipalities have attempted to institute regulations related to officers' use of masks, identifiers, and unmarked vehicles, the Administration has sued to stop the regulations from going into effect, revealing their desire to continue these fear-inducing tactics free from accountability.⁴¹ Hunger relief organizations in Minnesota reported that ICE tracked food delivery volunteers and staked out food pantries.⁴² Medical providers in North Carolina report "skyrocketing" numbers of missed appointments as immigrants and people of color—regardless of status—forgo critical, time-sensitive care as they are afraid to leave their homes.⁴³ A survey of Minneapolis residents revealed that during Operation Metro Surge, roughly 30% of people missed scheduled medical appointments (including for vaccinations) and nearly 40% did not go to urgent care or a hospital due to concerns about ICE presence in the city.⁴⁴ As a consequence of these actions, people are afraid to seek help provided by these organizations.

Further, houses of worship and schools are no longer seen as safe spaces free from ICE enforcement. Hours after President Trump's inauguration, DHS revoked a Biden-era policy that prohibited U.S. immigration agents from making arrests at or near schools, places of worship, and other "sensitive locations."⁴⁵ A coalition of faith-based organizations sued to stop this directive but were unsuccessful in their attempt to obtain an emergency injunction.⁴⁶ A Minneapolis school reported that students who are children of immigrants or who are themselves immigrants, many of whom rely on school breakfasts and lunches, began staying home after Good's killing on January 7, 2026.⁴⁷

When viewed together, these actions reflect the Administration's coordinated effort to weaponize federal power to punish political and ideological opponents, intimidate communities, and weaken the very institutions that keep our democracy functioning. Congress must shine a light on this pattern of abuse, stand with organizations that serve their communities and protect our freedoms, and ensure that no Administration can weaponize the American government against the American people.

40 Ana B. Ibarra, 'We held our ground': LA-area health clinic describes close encounter with immigration agents, CalMatters (June 14, 2025), <https://calmatters.org/health/2025/06/la-area-medical-clinic-immigration-agents/>.

41 U.S. Dep't of Justice, Press Release: Justice Department Files Complaint Challenging Philadelphia Mask Ban and Identification Requirements for Federal Officers and Vehicles (June 18, 2026), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-files-complaint-challenging-philadelphia-mask-ban-and-identification>; see also U.S. Dep't of Justice, Press Release: Justice Department Files Complaint Challenging Virginia Mask Ban and Identification Requirements for Federal Officers (June 11, 2026), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-files-complaint-challenging-virginia-mask-ban-and-identification>.

42 Brett Anderson, Hungry Families, ICE and Secret Grocery Networks in Minneapolis, N.Y. Times (Feb. 9, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/09/dining/minneapolis-ice-grocery-stores-hunger.html>.

43 Michelle Crouch & Charlotte Ledger, Providers: Patients skip care during NC immigration crackdown, NC Health News (Nov. 20, 2025), <https://www.northcarolinahealthnews.org/2025/11/20/medical-appointments-drop-during-immigration-enforcement/>.

44 City of Minneapolis, Updated Impact Assessment & Recovery Needs Overview: Operation Metro Surge 43 (June 10, 2026), <https://www.minneapolismn.gov/media-www-content-assets/documents/Updated-Impact-Assessment--Recovery-Needs-Overview---June-10-2026.pdf>.

45 Camilo Montoya-Galvez, Trump officials revoke Biden policy that barred ICE arrests near "sensitive locations" like schools and churches, CBS News (Jan. 21, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-immigration-ice-arrests-sensitive-locations/>.

46 Lindsay Whitehurst & Michael Kunzelman, Judge sides with Trump, permits immigration enforcement in houses of worship, NBC New York (4New York) (Apr. 12, 2025), <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/national-international/judge-sides-with-trump-permits-immigration-enforcement-in-houses-of-worship/6222946/>.

47 Brett Anderson, Hungry Families, ICE and Secret Grocery Networks in Minneapolis, N.Y. Times (Feb. 9, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/09/dining/minneapolis-ice-grocery-stores-hunger.html>.

Civilians involved in First Amendment protected activity are experiencing increased surveillance and less privacy.

The Trump Administration is dismantling privacy protections in an effort to chill what they perceive as anti-Administration activity. Its moves lay the groundwork for a new wave of government censorship and investigations targeting individuals and advocacy organizations viewed as a threat to the Administration or its aims. Even perceived lack of privacy stokes fear in individuals, reporters, and community groups, leading to a chill in First Amendment activity.

In early 2026, ProPublica reported Trump Administration officials indicated there was a push within the Administration to loosen restrictions on sharing law enforcement information, such as FBI files, with intelligence agencies.⁴⁸ Historically, law enforcement agencies like the FBI and DEA have operated under strict rules about who can access their investigative files. These controls have been in place for decades specifically to protect the privacy of U.S. citizens. The loosening of these restrictions, put in place following revelations that the CIA spied on American anti-war and civil rights activists in the Vietnam era, carries significant implications for the health of American civil liberties.

The proposed changes could give intelligence agencies access to a database containing hundreds of millions of documents—from FBI case files and banking records to criminal investigations of labor unions—that touch on the activities of law-abiding Americans. When sensitive law enforcement data is more widely disseminated across agencies, the potential for misuse increases, particularly in a climate where advocacy groups and dissenting voices are already under heightened scrutiny.



48 Tim Golden, Trump Administration Moves to Allow Intelligence Agencies Easier Access to Law Enforcement Files, ProPublica (Feb. 25, 2026), <https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-cia-law-enforcement-records-privacy-intelligence-community>.

ATTACKS ON THE INSTITUTIONS THAT SAFEGUARD THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

President Trump and his allies are strangling Americans' First Amendment rights. From blatant attacks on the freedom of the press to actions designed to cut off dissidents from legal representation, the attacks on civil society's core rights are a flashing warning sign for all Americans. This coordinated and unprecedented assault is designed to suppress the viewpoints of Americans who speak their mind and seek to hold the Administration accountable.

Journalists with disfavored viewpoints are restricted from accessing vital information and investigated over their coverage.

Independent, fact-based journalism requires access to firsthand information. The Administration's actions severely undermine access to the information the public needs most. Press-access restrictions function as a multiplier: they directly weaken journalism and make it increasingly difficult for every other accountability institution to do its job. By undermining the free press, the Trump Administration is mounting a direct assault on First Amendment freedoms.

On September 18, 2026, President Trump announced via Truth Social that he was banning MS NOW (formerly MSNBC), CNN, and Politico from the White House over what he called "FICTION and LIES" in their coverage, adding that "other Fake News Media Outlets" could follow.⁴⁹ This follows a broader pattern of press-access restrictions. This was no idle threat; by Saturday morning, September 19, reporters and photographers from CNN, MS NOW, and Politico were denied access to the White House grounds, with at least one CNN reporter's press pass seized.⁵⁰

One year earlier, in September 2025, the Pentagon proposed several new restrictions for journalists hoping to maintain credentialed access to the building, including barring them from gathering or using



⁴⁹ The Associated Press, *Trump says he is banning CNN, MS NOW and Politico from the White House*, NPR (Sept. 18, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/09/18/g-s1-144112/trump-ban-cnn-msnow-politico-white-house-media>.

⁵⁰ NPR, *CNN, MS NOW, Politico reporters denied access to White House following Trump ban*, NPR (Sept. 19, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/09/19/nx-s1-5974854/trump-cnn-msnow-politico-ban>.

information not formally approved for release, even if the information was unclassified.⁵¹ The next month, Pentagon reporters chose to turn in their security badges en masse—losing access to the Pentagon—rather than agree to the new rules.⁵²

More broadly, the White House Press Office is commandeering control of the daily press pool,⁵³ traditionally managed by the White House Correspondents' Association, and reducing access to the White House Press Secretary's office,⁵⁴ in one instance attempting to bar the Associated Press over its continued use of "Gulf of Mexico" rather than "Gulf of America."⁵⁵

Journalists protecting their sources—paramount to journalistic integrity—also face threats. In April 2026, President Trump threatened to jail journalists unwilling to reveal sources used in reporting on the 2026 war with Iran. "Give it up or go to jail," he said.⁵⁶

Later that month, reporting revealed the FBI opened an investigation into a New York Times reporter after she wrote a story on FBI Director Kash Patel's use of Bureau resources for protection and transportation of his girlfriend. Following the revelation, the FBI publicly stated it was no longer moving forward with a potential case against the reporter.⁵⁷

ICE further contributes to this culture of censorship by targeting journalists reporting on its abuses of power,⁵⁸ indicating that those who speak out will face consequences.

Threatening legal repercussions for journalists seeking to shed light on the Administration's abuse of authority is antithetical to the First Amendment and undermines the rule of law. Law firms and other legal institutions face similar threats as well.

Attacks on the legal profession make it more difficult to access legal services and hold the Administration accountable to the public.

Law firms, legal services providers, and law schools are essential elements of our democratic system. They supply the lawyers who challenge unlawful detention, defend protest rights, represent nonprofit organizations, and provide the expertise that turns public grievances into legal claims. By attacking

51 Morgan Lee, Pentagon steps up media restrictions, now requiring approval before reporting even unclassified info, AP News (Sept. 20, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/pentagon-press-media-restrictions-nondisclosure-8420d3a80de20a39605c588d9990c582>.

52 David Bauder, Journalists turn in access badges, exit Pentagon rather than agree to new reporting rules, AP News (Oct. 15, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/pentagon-press-access-hegseth-trump-restrictions-5d9c2a63e4e03b91fc1546bb09ffb12>; David Bauder, Pentagon, journalists on collision course as restrictions on reporting loom, AP News (Oct. 8, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/pentagon-journalists-new-restrictions-hegseth-b9e70801f7d7930251a0740e7168f775>.

53 Steven Nelson & Diana Nerozzi, Karoline Leavitt Announces White House Will Assume Direct Control of Daily Press Pool After Judge Denies AP's Bid to Restore Access, N.Y. Post (Feb. 25, 2025), <https://nypost.com/2025/02/25/us-news/karoline-leavitt-says-white-house-will-assume-control-of-daily-press-pool-after-ap-loses-in-court/>.

54 Brian Stelter, Trump Administration Restricts Reporters' Access to White House Press Secretary's Office, CNN (Nov. 1, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/11/01/business/trump-white-house-press-limits>.

55 Brian Stelter, The White House Bans the AP Indefinitely Over the Use of "Gulf of Mexico," CNN (Feb. 14, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/14/media/ap-white-house-gulf-of-mexico>.

56 Erik Wemple, Trump Threatens Jail if Journalists Protect Certain Iran Sources, N.Y. Times (Apr. 6, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/04/06/business/media/trump-jail-journalists-fighter-crew.html>.

57 Marina Dunbar, NYT Alleges FBI Investigated Reporter Over Story on Kash Patel's Girlfriend, The Guardian (Apr. 23, 2026), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/apr/23/new-york-times-reporter-investigated-fbi-kash-patel-girlfriend>.

58 US immigration authorities arrest Spanish-language news reporter in Tennessee, AP News (Mar. 6, 2026), <https://apnews.com/article/reporter-arrested-immigration-nashville-5b3869f74a84023fd430f09d5515fdc0>.

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them, the Administration is undermining legal protections for individuals most vulnerable to government abuses of power.

In March 2025, the President issued executive orders aimed at specific law firms, threatening their access to federal buildings, agency contacts, and federal contracting.⁵⁹ The law firms were targeted for their representation of clients in matters disfavored by the President. For example, the President cited a Paul Weiss partner's initiation of "a pro bono suit against individuals alleged to have participated in the events that occurred at or near the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021, on behalf of the District of Columbia Attorney General" as an example of "harmful activity" inspiring the order.⁶⁰

Many of the targeted firms are challenging the orders in court on First Amendment grounds. In one case, the judge found that the order was "an unprecedented attack" on the "foundational principles" of the American judicial system and blocked its implementation.⁶¹ Each of the firms has so far been successful.⁶² However, appeals may be on the horizon—unless the Administration changes course for a third time.⁶³ Other targeted firms chose a different tactic. Some law firms, rather than litigate, caved to President Trump and agreed to provide tens of millions of dollars' worth of free legal services to Trump-aligned causes.⁶⁴ Through these executive orders, President Trump invaded the legal sector with a list of demands, resulting in the diversion of resources away from pro bono clients—both individuals and civil society organizations—and toward the Administration.

The Administration's attempts to silence the legal profession extend to legal services providers as well. For example, in early 2025, the Administration terminated contracts with the Acacia Center for Justice, a nonprofit legal aid organization dedicated to providing representation to unaccompanied children in immigration proceedings.⁶⁵ The Acacia Center for Justice operates through a network of organizations that receive funding as subcontractors, some of which challenged the action in court. They received a preliminary injunction ordering the funding restored but said the Administration did not comply with

59 John R. Vile, Trump's Executive Orders Against Law Firms, Free Speech Center at Middle Tenn. State Univ. (Mar. 13, 2026), <https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu/article/trumps-executive-orders-against-law-firms/>.

60 Addressing Risks from Paul Weiss, The White House (Mar. 14, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/addressing-risks-from-paul-weiss/>.

61 Kyle Cheney & Josh Gerstein, Judge Blocks Key Provision of Trump's Bid to Punish Democratic-Linked Law Firm, Politico (Mar. 13, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/12/perkins-coie-trump-executive-order-025783>; Meghan Tribe, Trump's Battle With Big Law Firms Heads into 2026: What to Know, Bloomberg Law (Jan. 2, 2026) <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/business-and-practice/trumps-battle-with-big-law-firms-heads-into-2026-what-to-know>; see also Ryland Barton, Federal judge strikes down Trump order targeting the law firm Perkins Coie, NPR (May 2, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/05/02/nx-s1-5385355/perkins-coie-trump-executive-order-law-firms>.

62 Meghan Tribe, Trump's Battle With Big Law Firms Heads into 2026: What to Know, Bloomberg Law (Jan. 2, 2026), <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/business-and-practice/trumps-battle-with-big-law-firms-heads-into-2026-what-to-know>; Sarah N. Lynch & Joe Walsh, DOJ Asks Appeals Court to Restore Trump's Executive Orders Targeting Law Firms, Just 4 Days After Moving to Drop Defense, CBS News (Mar. 6, 2026), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/doj-appeal-trump-law-firms-executive-orders/>.

63 Sarah N. Lynch & Joe Walsh, DOJ Asks Appeals Court to Restore Trump's Executive Orders Targeting Law Firms, Just 4 Days After Moving to Drop Defense, CBS News (March 6, 2026), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/doj-appeal-trump-law-firms-executive-orders/> (in a four day span in March 2026, DOJ went from appealing the district court rulings to filing a voluntary dismissal to then withdrawing the voluntary dismissal).

64 Ryan J. Reilly & Lawrence Hurley, Legal Community Shaken by a Powerful Law Firm's Decision to Give in to Trump's Demands, NBC News (March 21, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-administration/legal-community-shaken-powerful-law-firm-paul-weiss-trump-rcna197490>.

65 Didi Martinez & Julia Ainsley, Legal organizations told to stop federally funded work for unaccompanied migrant children, NBC News (Feb. 19, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/legal-organizations-told-stop-federally-funded-work-unaccompanied-migr-rcna192828>.

the court's order; litigation is ongoing.⁶⁶ In June 2026, the criminal investigations arm of DHS, Homeland Security Investigations, attempted to visit the offices of Kids in Need of Defense, Amica Center for Immigrant Rights, and Ayuda, nonprofits that also provide legal services to unaccompanied migrant children.⁶⁷ According to representatives from the organizations, the agents did not have a warrant but asked for financial information related to their legal services work.⁶⁸ Taken together, these actions—terminating funding for legal aid, defying court orders to restore it, and dispatching federal agents to the offices of nonprofit legal services providers without warrants—send an unmistakable message intended to chill the willingness of organizations and attorneys to represent some of the most vulnerable individuals in America.

The Administration is wielding state power against nonprofit organizations, universities, and faith communities to enforce ideological conformity.

For civil society, nonprofit organizations and universities are not merely service-oriented or educational spaces; they are major employers, research institutions, and convening spaces, all necessary for a robust democracy. This Administration is targeting the organizations that keep democracy working by threatening the financial stability and operational independence of nonprofit and educational organizations, with the goal of forcing both to conform their speech to the Administration's will. These actions undermine civil society's most fundamental bastions of free speech and chill individual freedom of expression.

Attacks on university research funding came first. In early 2025, Columbia University, Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, and others had federal grants frozen.⁶⁹ Then, on July 1, 2025, University of Virginia (UVA) President Jim Ryan resigned amid growing pressure from the Administration facing the threatened loss of hundreds of millions of federal dollars and a request for extensive records regarding UVA's handling of DEI-related issues.⁷⁰ In October 2025, the Administration offered a select group of universities preferred funding if they made certain commitments regarding admissions, testing, protest rules, and gender policy.⁷¹ Each phase of this ongoing pattern of coercion involves the Administration leveraging its institutional authority to strike blows on these institutions that keep democracy functioning.

Recent developments suggest further action is coming. President Trump has threatened legal action against the Center for American Progress (CAP), a nonprofit research organization, in response to research

66 Hilda Gutierrez, Trump Administration defies court order to restore legal aid funding for migrant children, NBC News (Apr. 22, 2025), <https://www.nbcbayarea.com/investigations/trump-administration-court-order-restore-legal-aid-funding-migrant-children/3850568/>.

67 Rebecca Santana & Valerie Gonzalez, Legal groups that help migrant children say law enforcement visits were attempt at intimidation, AP News (June 12, 2026), <https://apnews.com/article/border-immigration-children-legal-services-homeland-security-investigations-035cd451ecc8449ad0919a02dc141555>.

68 Rebecca Santana & Valerie Gonzalez, Legal groups that help migrant children say law enforcement visits were attempt at intimidation, AP News (June 12, 2026), <https://apnews.com/article/border-immigration-children-legal-services-homeland-security-investigations-035cd451ecc8449ad0919a02dc141555>.

69 Collin Brinkley, Trump Administration halts dozens of research grants at Princeton University, AP News (April 1, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/princeton-trump-federal-funding-9c32a996256849ac00792ef50dbdfb0e>.

70 Judy Lê, UVA President Resigns Amid Pressure from Trump Administration on Diversity Practices, Va. Magazine (July 1, 2025), https://uvamagazine.org/articles/uva_president_jim_ryan_resigns.

71 Collin Binkley & Aamer Madhani, Trump Asks 9 Colleges to Commit to His Political Agenda and Get Favorable Access to Federal Money, AP News (Oct. 2, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/trump-political-agenda-colleges-federal-money-756407729a3b16c7bb51564d5056084c>.

critical of his Administration's use of the National Guard. In July 2026, CAP published an evidence-based analysis finding no measurable indication that National Guard deployments had reduced violent crime in the cities studied and estimated that continuing the deployments through the end of 2026 could cost taxpayers more than \$1.7 billion.⁷² President Trump then attacked CAP and the author of the report on Truth Social, stating that a lawsuit against the organization was being prepared and that he was considering including some of CAP's financial contributors in the litigation.⁷³ CAP publicly stood behind the research the following day, despite the President's threat.⁷⁴ President Trump's attorney then sent CAP a letter demanding that it retract the report, apologize, and compensate the President or face a defamation lawsuit seeking at least \$5 billion; CAP rejected the demand and continued to stand by its analysis.⁷⁵ Threatening a nonprofit organization—and potentially its financial supporters—with costly litigation over evidence-based research criticizing government policy raises serious concerns about the use of legal pressure to stifle independent research and deter organizations from scrutinizing or criticizing Administration actions.

On June 16, 2026, the Department of Education announced new partnerships under which the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) would take on special education and rehabilitative services functions and DOJ would take charge on civil rights enforcement, student privacy, training, and advisory functions.⁷⁶ These changes appear to be part of a broader effort to dismantle the Department of Education, consolidate power in HHS and the DOJ, and further weaken independent enforcement, which otherwise would protect vulnerable students and communities.⁷⁷

The Administration has taken a number of steps that are also designed to chill student speech on college and university campuses, particularly speech related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Beginning in 2025, President Trump signed executive orders directing federal agencies to investigate and potentially withhold federal funding from universities deemed insufficiently responsive to protests and demonstrations on their campuses. The Administration has also pursued actions against individual students, including the revocation of visas of international students who participated in campus protests, and in some cases facilitating their detention and deportation. Federal agencies, including the Department of Education, have launched investigations into universities under Title VI of the Civil Rights

72 Chandler Hall, The Trump Administration's \$1.7 Billion National Guard Deployments Fail to Reduce Urban Crime, Center for American Progress (July 13, 2026), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-trump-administrations-1-7-billion-national-guard-deployments-fail-to-reduce-urban-crime/>.

73 Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Truth Social (Aug. 10, 2026, 10:31 PM), <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/117074526504264990>.

74 Cheyanne M. Daniels, Center for American Progress defends National Guard research against Trump's lawsuit threat, Politico (Aug. 11, 2026), <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/08/11/center-for-american-progress-trump-lawsuit-01033086>; Center for American Progress, Statement: Trump's Intimidation Tactics Won't Deter the Truth, CAP's Neera Tanden Says (Aug. 11, 2026), <https://www.americanprogress.org/press/statement-trumps-intimidation-tactics-wont-deter-the-truth-caps-neera-tanden-says/>.

75 Arden Farhi & Jacob Rosen, Trump threatens defamation suit against left-leaning think tank, CBS News (Aug. 21, 2026), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-threatens-defamation-suit-center-american-progress/>; Center for American Progress, Statement: Baseless Threats Won't Stop Our Independent Research, Says CAP's Neera Tanden (Aug. 21, 2026), <https://www.americanprogress.org/press/statement-baseless-threats-wont-stop-our-independent-research-says-caps-neera-tanden/>.

76 U.S. Dep't of Educ., Press Release: U.S. Department of Education Announces Additional Partnerships to Strengthen Coordination for Individuals with Disabilities Programs, Bolster Civil Rights Enforcement (June 16, 2026), <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-announces-additional-partnerships-strengthen-coordination-individuals-disabilities-programs-bolster-civil-rights>.

77 Annie Ma, Trump Ramps Up Education Department's Dismantling with Changes on Special Education and Civil Rights, AP News (June 16, 2026), <https://apnews.com/article/trump-civil-rights-special-education-3483478a51ea8001fc-c70e8a77d08d9a>.

Act, alleging failures to address antisemitism, which critics contend have been wielded broadly to target protected political expression and advocacy. Taken together, these measures—leveraging the significant financial dependence of universities on federal funding, targeting individual students with immigration consequences, and initiating compliance investigations create a chilling effect on constitutionally protected speech, discouraging students and institutions from engaging in protest, advocacy, and open discourse on politically sensitive topics.

Faith communities are also subject to new federal pressure. For example, since 2004, the Nonprofit Security Grant Program administered by DHS's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has allocated grants for bolstering security at nonprofits, including houses of worship. In April 2025, the Administration imposed new guidelines requiring recipients of funds to cooperate with immigrant enforcement officials, refrain from "operating any programs that advance or promote DEI" and avoid "discriminatory prohibited boycott[s]," such as boycotts of Israel or prayer protests lamenting the government's treatment of immigrants.⁷⁸ Litigation challenging these (and other) changes to FEMA funding is still pending.⁷⁹

Many nonprofit organizations—including those that partner closely with educational institutions, as well as their students and faculty—are also at risk and face many of the same threats to their funding and operational independence. These organizations play a central role in civil society by supporting research, providing educational and cultural programming, facilitating international exchange, and serving as platforms for public engagement and debate. They face the same forms of political pressure and viewpoint-based interference. For example, educational and cultural enrichment institutions and nonprofits are targets of the Administration's viewpoint discrimination, with efforts to shape or restrict the content they present to the public.⁸⁰ From dictating which moments of history can be displayed in Smithsonian museums and National Parks to barring certain universities and affiliated nonprofits from operating exchange programs, these actions reach beyond government institutions and into the broader nonprofit sector.⁸¹

The cumulative effect is to constrain the ability of these organizations to operate independently, distort the information environment, and limit opportunities for civic participation, thereby undermining the pluralism and community well-being that is essential to a functioning democracy.

Media companies producing content critical of the Administration are facing enhanced regulatory scrutiny, cutting the public off from key information.

Government regulators must carry out the Administration's policy agenda in a principled manner and without regard to the viewpoints or allegiances of regulated parties. Media companies dependent on regulatory approvals are internalizing the Administration's partisan preferences and altering programming

78 Jack Jenkins, Faith Groups Reject New Trump Security Grant Rules over ICE, DEI, Religion News Service (Oct. 17, 2025), <https://religionnews.com/2025/10/17/faith-groups-voice-confusion-outrage-at-new-security-grant-requirements-under-trump/>.

79 See *Illinois v. Federal Emergency Management Agency*, No. 25-2131 (1st Cir. Dec. 1, 2025).

80 See Trump Administration Education Executive Order Tracker, Nat'l Assoc. of Scholars (Aug. 21, 2025), <https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/trump-administration-education-executive-order-tracker/>.

81 Exec. Order No. 14,253, 90 Fed. Reg. 14,563 (Apr. 3, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/restoring-truth-and-sanity-to-american-history/>.

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to reduce political risk. Enforcement threats create an atmosphere of de facto government censorship implemented by corporations attempting to curry favor with the President.

Government regulators play an important role in carrying out the Administration's anti-free speech agenda. In September 2025, Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Brendan Carr threatened to revoke ABC's broadcasting licenses if the company continued airing the Jimmy Kimmel Show after Kimmel accused President Trump and his base of trying to score "political points" in the aftermath of Charlie Kirk's murder.⁸² In response, ABC briefly cancelled the show, only to change its mind in the wake of widespread criticism.⁸³

In January 2026, the FCC overturned nearly two decades of precedent when it tightened its interpretation of the Equal Time Rule, which requires FCC licensees to afford "equal time" to legally qualified political candidates for public office.⁸⁴ For decades, daytime and late-night television talk shows were exempt from this requirement under the "bona fide news interview" exemption.⁸⁵ But following Chairman Carr's arbitrary re-interpretation, daytime television talk shows and late-night comedy shows are no longer automatically exempt from this rule.⁸⁶ Instead, if one of these programs wants to interview a candidate, all qualified candidates must be given the opportunity to appear or face FCC penalties, such as license revocation.⁸⁷ CBS responded to this change by pulling a Stephen Colbert interview with Texas Senate Democratic candidate James Talarico amid threats from the FCC regarding potential investigations for violations of the new guidance.⁸⁸ ABC, in contrast, has sought to bolster public support for the network by waging an advertising campaign while the FCC conducts an investigation of the network's day-time talk show, "The View."⁸⁹

In March 2026, Chairman Carr threatened to revoke broadcasting licenses for broadcast stations' negative coverage of the Iran war.⁹⁰ The following month, the FCC opened an investigation into ABC's licenses, hours after the White House again called for Jimmy Kimmel's show to be taken off the air.⁹¹

82 The Benny Johnson Show, Jimmy Kimmel LIES About Charlie Kirk Killer, Blames Charlie for His Murder!? Disney Must Fire Kimmel (Sept. 17, 2025), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTyX9JC-rhA>; Mandalit del Barco, *ABC Pulls Jimmy Kimmel Off Air After Comments Made About the Charlie Kirk Killing*, NPR News (Sept. 18, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/09/18/nx-s1-5544559/abc-jimmy-kimmel-comments-charlie-kirk>.

83 Wyatt Grantham-Philips, 4 Things to Know About ABC's Suspension of Jimmy Kimmel's Late-Night Show, PBS (Sept. 18, 2025), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/4-things-to-know-about-abcs-suspension-of-jimmy-kimmels-late-night-show>.

84 47 USC § 315 (commonly referred to as the "Equal Time Rule."). See also Public Notice: FCC's Media Bureau Provides Guidance on Political Equal Opportunities Requirement for Broadcast Television Stations, DA 26-68 (Jan. 21, 2026), <https://www.fcc.gov/document/bureau-provides-guidance-political-equal-opportunities-requirement>.

85 47 USC § 315(a)(2).

86 John Hendel, *Watch Out, Colbert and 'The View': FCC Warns TV Hosts to Air Both Sides*, Politico (Jan. 21, 2026), <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/01/21/fcc-warns-late-night-daytime-tv-to-give-both-parties-equal-time-00740385>.

87 See also Public Notice: FCC's Media Bureau Provides Guidance on Political Equal Opportunities Requirement for Broadcast Television Stations, DA 26-68 (Jan. 21, 2026), <https://www.fcc.gov/document/bureau-provides-guidance-political-equal-opportunities-requirement>.

88 Kayla Guo, Stephen Colbert Blasts CBS for Nixing James Talarico Interview, Tex. Tribune (Feb. 17, 2026), <https://www.texastribune.org/2026/02/17/stephen-colbert-james-talarico-texas-senate-democratic-primary-fcc-trump-late-show/>.

89 Jeremy Barr, ABC Encourages Viewers to Back Network Amid FCC Investigations, The Guardian (June 22, 2026), <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2026/jun/22/abc-fcc-investigations>.

90 David Folkenflik & Michel Martin, FCC Chair Threatens Broadcasters' Licenses Over Negative Coverage of the War in Iran, NPR (March 16, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/03/16/nx-s1-5748570/fcc-chair-threatens-broadcasters-licenses-over-negative-coverage-of-the-war-in-iran>.

91 John Hendel, Carr Throws ABC Licenses Into Jeopardy in Clash with Disney, Politico (April 28, 2026), <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/04/28/carr-throws-abc-licenses-into-jeopardy-in-clash-with-disney-00896133>.

OVERREACH TARGETING NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

The Trump Administration and congressional Republicans are abusing the tools of government to target nonprofit organizations and other civil society actors because of who they serve and the perception of the viewpoints they represent. These actions are not isolated policy disputes; they are deliberate and systemic, designed to weaken the organizations that serve vulnerable individuals and communities.

The Administration is turning the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) against nonprofit organizations that it perceives as not supporting its authoritarian agenda.

President Trump repeatedly threatens to direct the IRS to investigate or revoke tax-exempt status for various organizations with which he perceives disagreement, saying that tax-exempt status is contingent on those organizations acting in the “public interest” (i.e., his interest) and suggesting that organizations that push “political” or “ideological” agendas (i.e., those with whom he perceives disagreement) should lose their tax-exempt status.⁹² The Administration has gone so far as to threaten the tax exempt status of organizations providing scholarships to minority students.⁹³ These threats made in broad daylight are brazen attempts to force nonprofits to support the same causes and policies as the Administration and cease any activity the Administration perceives as a challenge to its power. Any organization whose tax-exempt status is revoked would also be forced to divert already scarce resources from key missions and expend time and energy to push back or challenge the revocation.

The President and DOJ reportedly threatened the tax status of Wikimedia Foundation;⁹⁴ several medical journals;⁹⁵ Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, a nonprofit government watchdog group; Harvard University;⁹⁶ and churches whose leaders “say something bad about Trump.”⁹⁷ Accompanying the threats are direct attacks on nonprofit staff and leadership, creating a culture of fear.

As of April 2026, the IRS, the gatekeeper of tax-exempt status, is reportedly teaming up with the FBI to investigate nonprofit organizations for supposed links to domestic terrorism, in line with NSPM-7 and

92 Benjamin Guggenheim, Trump eyes targeting more tax-exempt groups while denouncing Harvard, Politico (Apr. 17, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/04/17/harvards-a-disgrace-trump-eyes-targeting-more-tax-exempt-orgs-00298039>.

93 Edward Blum, Gates Foundation Gives In and Stops Discriminating by Race, Wall Street Journal (Apr. 13, 2025), https://www.wsj.com/opinion/gates-foundation-gives-in-and-stops-discriminating-by-race-scholarships-education-law-1a929d00?st=JqFcFJ&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink.

94 Letter from Ed Martin, United States Attorney for the District of Columbia, to Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. (Apr. 24, 2025), https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Letter_from_Ed_Martin_to_the_Wikimedia_Foundation.

95 Rob Stein, Medical journals hit with threatening letters from Justice Department, NPR (May 2, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/05/02/nx-s1-5374993/medical-journals-hit-with-threatening-letters-from-justice-department>.

96 Benjamin Guggenheim, Trump eyes targeting more tax-exempt groups while denouncing Harvard, Politico (Apr. 17, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/04/17/harvards-a-disgrace-trump-eyes-targeting-more-tax-exempt-orgs-00298039>.

97 WATCH: Trump says he will revoke church tax exempt status if leaders ‘say something bad about’ him, PBS News (Feb. 5, 2026), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/watch-trump-says-he-will-revoke-church-tax-exempt-status-if-leaders-say-something-bad-about-him>.

the Bondi Memo directing the FBI to create a list of entities believed to be engaged in domestic terrorism.⁹⁸ In late April, the Treasury Department announced the IRS would be revising Form 990—a standard tax form for nonprofits—warning that “if an organization receives public funds or tax-deductible donations, it should be prepared to show who controls the money and where it goes.”⁹⁹ Together, these actions signal a troubling convergence of political pressure and enforcement authority that threatens the independence and core functioning of the nonprofit sector and chills free speech. All signs indicate that the Administration’s efforts to investigate and revoke the tax status of organizations based on false accusations of misconduct are accelerating.

Vital health centers are endangered by changes in federal policy.

As another example of regulatory pressure, health centers across the country are faced with an existential crisis due to a slew of federal policy changes that feel like “death by a thousand cuts.”¹⁰⁰ These centers serve as a cornerstone of care for the country’s most vulnerable populations—providing primary care, mental health services, substance use disorder treatment, dental and vision care, and more—and the current policy environment threatens their very survival.

A cascade of Medicaid and insurance changes is expected to strip coverage from hundreds of thousands of patients. In Massachusetts, for example, state officials estimate that between 85,000 and 100,000 people may lose commercial insurance coverage over the coming years, and another 200,000 could lose Medicaid coverage due to a variety of changes, including new eligibility rules for certain immigrants and work requirements for some enrollees.¹⁰¹ Because community health centers disproportionately serve Medicaid patients—on average, half of their patient population relies on the program—they are likely to feel the brunt of these cuts in particular. The consequences are already materializing: layoffs, hiring freezes, and program cuts have begun at centers across the state, and executives warn that without significant state intervention, some centers will be forced to close their doors entirely.



98 Sarah N. Lynch & Jennifer Jacobs, FBI and IRS to investigate nonprofit groups for domestic terrorism links, sources say, CBS News (Mar. 18, 2026), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fbi-irs-investigate-nonprofits-domestic-terrorism-links/>.

99 Press Release, US Treasury Department, “Treasury Announces Form 990 Revisions,” Tax Notes (April 23, 2026), <https://www.taxnotes.com/research/federal/other-documents/treasury-news-releases/treasury-announces-form-990-revisions/7vrhx>.

100 Jessica Bartlett, Massachusetts’ Community Health Centers Face Grim Future Under Federal Changes, Boston Globe (Sept. 29, 2025), <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2025/09/29/business/trump-insurance-community-health>.

101 *Id.*

Nonprofit organizations must use limited resources to fend off baseless and ideologically driven congressional investigations.

President Trump is engaged in a frontal assault on nonprofit organizations, their staff, and their leadership and has enlisted Republicans in Congress in his partisan crusade. Congressional Republicans are engaging in baseless investigative activity that saps time, money, and energy from nonprofits and harms their missions. These investigations relate to many of the themes described above, including DEI programs and policies, alleged connections to terrorist groups, or vague national security concerns.¹⁰² Even where investigations ultimately reveal no wrongdoing, they harm nonprofit organizations because preparing responses, preserving records, and counseling staff to counter baseless claims consume resources these organizations would otherwise use to provide services or other core functions.

For example, Congressional Republicans have scrutinized Bloomberg Philanthropies over its environmental grantmaking and advocacy. On September 14, 2026, Representative James Comer (R-Ky.), Chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (House Oversight Committee), and Representative Eric Burlison (R-Mo.) opened an investigation into Bloomberg Philanthropies, alleging that its funding of environmental organizations was being used to challenge U.S. energy projects and raising concerns about grants to organizations with ties to China.¹⁰³ The House Oversight Committee sought documents and communications concerning Bloomberg Philanthropies and its affiliated campaigns and entities, including Beyond Carbon, Beyond Petrochemicals, and the Bloomberg Family Foundation, as well as information regarding its grantmaking, environmental advocacy and litigation, and relationships with organizations including Energy Foundation China, Earthjustice, Earthworks, and the Sierra Club.¹⁰⁴ The September investigation follows an earlier inquiry launched by Rep. Comer in July 2025 into Bloomberg Philanthropies' funding of New York University School of Law's State Energy & Environmental Impact Center and fellows working in state attorneys general offices.¹⁰⁵ Responding to repeated congressional inquiries seeking internal communications, grantmaking records, and information concerning nonprofit partners can require organizations to devote staff time and legal resources to government scrutiny that might otherwise be directed toward their missions.

The threats and direct actions strain nonprofits and threaten the sustainability of these organizations that keep democracy working. Attacks on freedom of expression, the weaponization of federal law enforcement and national security tools, and the assaults on nonprofits are all unprecedented instances of government overreach.

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- 102 U.S. Congressional Investigations Targeting Nonprofits: Analysis, International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (June 2025), <https://www.icnl.org/post/news/congressional-investigations-targeting-nonprofitsanalysis>; see also Full Committee Hearing on Foreign Influence in American Non-profits: Unmasking Threats from Beijing and Beyond, House Ways and Means Committee (Feb. 10, 2026), <https://waysandmeans.house.gov/event/full-committee-hearing-on-foreign-influence-in-american-non-profits-unmasking-threats-from-beijing-and-beyond/>; Letter from Senator Grassley, Chairman of the Sen. Comm. on Judiciary to Gates Foundation (Oct. 27, 2025), https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley_to_gates_foundation_-_foreign_funding.pdf.
 - 103 U.S. House Comm. on Oversight & Gov't Reform, Comer, Burlison Launch Investigation into Bloomberg Philanthropies' Funding of Anti-American Energy Lawfare (Sept. 14, 2026), <https://oversight.house.gov/release/comer-burlison-launch-investigation-into-bloomberg-philanthropies-funding-of-anti-american-energy-lawfare/>.
 - 104 Letter from James Comer, Chairman, H. Comm. on Oversight & Gov't Reform, & Eric Burlison, Chairman, Subcomm. on Econ. Growth, Energy Pol'y & Regul. Affs., to Patricia E. Harris, Chief Exec. Officer, Bloomberg Philanthropies (Sept. 14, 2026), <https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/Bloomberg-Philanthropies-Letter-9.14.26.pdf>.
 - 105 U.S. House Comm. on Oversight & Gov't Reform, Comer Investigates Bloomberg Philanthropies for Partisan Activism with State Attorneys General (July 17, 2025), <https://oversight.house.gov/release/comer-investigates-bloomberg-philanthropies-for-partisan-activism-with-state-attorneys-general/>.

OMB's proposed rewrite of federal grant rules requires nonprofits to align with the Administration's priorities to receive federal grant money.

Federal grants are an important source of funding for nonprofits; for many, federal funding makes up more than half their total revenue.¹⁰⁶ On May 29, 2026, OMB published stunningly broad proposed changes to the federal grant rules that would require pre-award review by senior political appointees, provide that discretionary awards must “demonstrably advance” the President’s policy priorities, make peer-review recommendations advisory, and allow agencies broader grounds to terminate awards that are no longer in the agency’s priorities or “national interest.”¹⁰⁷

The proposed rule also says grants should not fund or promote certain disfavored categories of services, including those involving “racial preferences,” illegal immigration, and initiatives that advance “anti-American values.”¹⁰⁸ If this proposed rule change goes into effect, it will drastically inhibit nonprofits’ ability to pursue their own initiatives that may be perceived as running counter to the Administration’s goals. The funding risks associated with further attempts to consolidate power in OMB are extremely high and threaten to decimate the vital funding coming from the federal government.

Nonprofit organizations are facing hiring challenges because of the Administration's attacks on Public Service Loan Forgiveness.

For many Americans who leave undergraduate or graduate studies with debt, the Public Service Student Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program is a significant source of relief as it provides loan forgiveness for employees in certain public service jobs, including at nonprofit organizations, after making roughly 10 years of payments.¹⁰⁹ On March 7, 2025, President Trump signed an executive order announcing a policy that “individuals employed by organizations whose activities have a substantial illegal purpose” are ineligible for PSLF and directing the Secretary of Education to issue regulations effecting the same.¹¹⁰ The benefits of PSLF make a tangible difference in student loan payments and can be the determining factor in whether a qualified individual opts for public service employment. By way of example, a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley who paid in-state tuition and lived on campus may owe as much as \$200,000 in student loans if they did not receive financial aid.¹¹¹ With PSLF, rather than paying over \$2,000 every month toward their student loan balance, the individual would pay based on their income; in an entry-level role at a nonprofit organization, the individual would likely expect to pay less than \$500

106 Cathleen Clerkin, Anna Koob, & David Wolcheck, How reliant are nonprofits on government grants?, *Candid* (Feb. 6, 2025), <https://candid.org/blogs/how-many-nonprofits-rely-on-government-grants-data/>.

107 Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance, 91 Fed. Reg. 32,198 (proposed May 29, 2026), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/05/29/2026-10817/regulation-for-federal-financial-assistance>; see also Ali Swenson, White House Moves to Give Political Appointees More Power over Federal Grants, *AP News* (May 29, 2026), <https://apnews.com/article/white-house-federal-grants-political-appointees-trump-3322627ce23162d55179484184ea5d8b>.

108 Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance, 91 Fed. Reg. 32,198 (proposed May 29, 2026), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/05/29/2026-10817/regulation-for-federal-financial-assistance>.

109 Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), Student Loan Borrower Assistance, National Consumer Law Center, <https://studentloanborrowerassistance.org/for-borrowers/dealing-with-student-loan-debt/loan-cancellation-forgiveness-bankruptcy/cancellation-forgiveness-options/pslf/>.

110 Exec. Order No. 14,235 § 1, 90 Fed. Reg. 11885, 11885 (Mar. 12, 2025), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2025-03-12/pdf/2025-04103.pdf>.

111 See Student Budgets (Cost of Attendance), <https://financialaid.berkeley.edu/how-aid-works/student-budgets-cost-of-attendance/>.

per month.¹¹² The savings are even greater for those who are married or have children. Removing access to PSLF would dramatically increase individuals' monthly student loan payments, in many cases rendering public service employment unfeasible for those who are not independently wealthy.

These actions suggest that the Administration may deprive individuals of loan forgiveness if they work for nonprofit organizations with which the Administration perceives disagreement. PSLF plays a vital role in enabling mission-driven employees to afford working for lower pay in a nonprofit job. If the President or cabinet secretaries can withdraw eligibility on political grounds, employees will be less willing to take on this work, weakening the ability of organizations to stand up to the Administration as it expands its campaign against nonprofits beyond the Executive Branch.



112 See <https://www.studentloanplanner.com/public-service-loan-forgiveness-pslf-calculator/>.

IMPACT ON VOTING RIGHTS AND THE MIDTERMS

President Trump is targeting the midterm elections to tighten his grip on power. By intimidating voters and sowing doubt about the integrity of American election infrastructure, President Trump is using a familiar playbook in an attempt to prevent Americans from holding him accountable at the ballot box.

The Administration is taking steps to undercut participation in the democratic process.

The right to vote is the foundation of American democracy. Yet the Trump Administration has mounted an unprecedented, multi-front campaign to restrict, surveil, and control how Americans register to vote and cast their ballots. Through executive orders, proposed legislation, and aggressive litigation, the Administration is systematically dismantling the safeguards that protect voter access and election integrity.



President Trump is using his bully pulpit and law enforcement tools to push policy changes that undermine democratic elections, including attempts to nationalize elections¹¹³ and eliminate mail-in ballots.¹¹⁴ On March 31, 2026, President Trump signed an executive order seeking to establish lists of U.S. citizens in each state that may be eligible to vote and directing the U.S. Postal Service not to deliver mail-in ballots from individuals not on these lists.¹¹⁵ This is a thinly veiled effort to eviscerate mail-in voting, undermine voter privacy, and block eligible Americans from voting.

President Trump has also issued an executive order directing the Election Assistance Commission—an independent, bipartisan agency empowered to help election officials improve election administration and help Americans participate in the voting process—to impose a “show your papers” requirement to use the national voter registration form, cease funding for states refusing to accept this change, and eliminate funding for states with mail ballot receipt grace periods.¹¹⁶ Each of these requirements has been blocked by the courts to some degree, though challenges are ongoing.

President Trump is also pushing to pass the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act,¹¹⁷ a voter registration and voter ID bill that experts estimate could disenfranchise millions of Americans by creating

113 Nick Corasaniti & Richard Fausset, Trump Wants to ‘Take Over’ Elections. These States Are Prime Targets., N.Y. Times (Mar. 8, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/08/us/politics/trump-elections-fulton-county-ballots.html>.

114 Ashley Lopez, Trump wants to stop states from voting by mail and using voting machines, NPR (Aug. 19, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/08/18/nx-s1-5506210/trump-mail-in-ballots-ban>.

115 Executive Order: Ensuring Citizenship verification and Integrity in Federal Elections (Mar. 31, 2026), <https://www.white-house.gov/presidential-actions/2026/03/ensuring-citizenship-verification-and-integrity-in-federal-elections/>.

116 Eliza Sweren-Becker, Status of Trump’s Anti-Voting Executive Order, Brennan Center (Apr. 23, 2026), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/status-trumps-anti-voting-executive-order>.

117 Rachel Leingang, Trump threatens not to sign any bills until Congress approves strict voter ID act, The Guardian (Mar. 9, 2026), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/mar/09/trump-threat-congress-save-america-act>.

arbitrary and capricious barriers to voter registration.¹¹⁸ These unjustified, unsupported, and dangerous policy choices destabilize the electoral process by creating chaos and misinformation around who is eligible to vote and how they can do it.

In the spirit of the President's Executive Orders, DOJ is suing 30 states and the District of Columbia seeking access to voter records, ostensibly to ensure the accuracy of voter rolls and promote transparency.¹¹⁹ Then-Attorney General Bondi's action in Minnesota reveals this litigation to be pretext. In January 2026, at the height of the DHS surge in Minneapolis, Bondi informed Minnesota Governor Tim Walz that if Minnesota provided DOJ access to its voter rolls, DHS operations would be scaled down in the state.¹²⁰ Further, on March 26, 2026, DOJ acknowledged that it planned to share voter records with DHS to ensure registered voters are citizens.¹²¹ These records include sensitive personal data such as driver's license numbers, dates of birth, and addresses, raising significant privacy concerns that led at least one high-ranking DOJ official to resign.¹²² When combined with the Administration's simultaneous push to share data across agencies, these acts intimidate communities of color and immigrant populations from registering to vote and participating in civic life.

The Administration is weaponizing federal law enforcement to investigate and intimidate voters and voter-registration organizations.

Despite scant evidence that voter fraud occurs on a widespread scale,¹²³ in late August 2026, the Department of Homeland Security began planning a major expansion of its voter fraud enforcement, directing Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the ICE component that typically handles drug smuggling, human trafficking, and child exploitation cases, to launch a "coordinated criminal voter fraud surge initiative" across nine states.¹²⁴ Field offices in Washington, Wisconsin, Missouri, Georgia, California, Pennsylvania, Nevada, New York, and Connecticut were instructed to pursue investigative leads, conduct field interviews, and support prosecutorial review from early September through mid-October 2026,

118 See, e.g., Gréta Bedekovics & Sydney Bryant, The SAVE Act Would Disenfranchise Millions of Citizens, Center for American Progress (Jan. 31, 2025), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-save-act-would-disenfranchise-millions-of-citizens/>; Eliza Sweren-Becker & Owen Bacskaï, New SAVE Act Bills Would Still Block Millions of Americans From Voting, Brennan Center for Justice (Mar. 20, 2026), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/new-save-act-bills-would-still-block-millions-americans-voting>; Nicole Hansen & Emily Burns, What You Need to Know About the SAVE Act, Campaign Legal Center (Mar. 18, 2026), <https://campaignlegal.org/update/what-you-need-know-about-save-act>.

119 U.S. Dep't of Justice, Press Release: Justice Department Sues Idaho for Failure to Produce Voter Rolls (Apr. 1, 2026), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-sues-idaho-failure-produce-voter-rolls>.

120 MPR News Staff, Minnesota Secretary of State rejects U.S. Attorney's request for confidential voter data (Jan. 25, 2026), <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2026/01/25/minnesota-secretary-of-state-rejects-us-attorneys-request-for-confidential-voter-data>.

121 Sarah N. Lynch, Justice Dept. close to finalizing deal to hand over states' voter roll data to Homeland Security, sources say, CBS News (Mar. 26, 2026), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/justice-dept-finalizing-deal-voter-roll-data-homeland-security/>.

122 Jude Joffe-Block, As DOJ prepares to share state voter data with DHS, a key privacy officer resigns, NPR (Apr. 3, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/04/03/nx-s1-5768455/privacy-doj-dhs-voter-data>.

123 Laura Barron-Lopez and Madeleine Bimonte, Aggressive DHS hunt for voter fraud only finding a handful of possible noncitizen cases, MS NOW (Sept. 2026), <https://www.ms.now/news/aggressive-dhs-hunt-for-voter-fraud-only-finding-a-handful-of-possible-noncitizen-cases>.

124 Priscilla Alvarez, Exclusive: DHS plans to launch voter fraud investigation surge Tuesday, CNN (Sept. 1, 2026), <https://www.cnn.com/2026/08/31/politics/homeland-security-voter-fraud-investigations>.

timing notable given that such “overt” investigative activity close to an election has historically been discouraged under longstanding Justice Department policy.

The Administration’s campaign to control the electoral process also escalated in Ohio, where DHS and the FBI targeted organizations that register voters. Beginning in January 2026, a DHS agent began requesting information from the Franklin County Board of Elections about specific voters and the organizations that registered them, focusing in particular on voter registration codes linked to the Ohio Organizing Collaborative and related groups.¹²⁵ Over the following weeks, the agent pressed the Board of Elections and described voter registration organizations as a “priority.”¹²⁶

Then, on June 11, 2026, dozens of FBI agents raided the Cleveland offices of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, a pro-democracy organization that helps register voters. Simultaneously, FBI agents approached staff and organizational leaders statewide, showing up at their homes, following them in their cars, and frightening their families. The targets were not random: they were overwhelmingly organizers and community leaders who register Black and Brown voters in Ohio. The Ohio Organizing Collaborative described the investigation as “textbook political intimidation similar to Civil Rights Era repressions in the 1960s.”¹²⁷

Taken together, these actions reveal a deliberate strategy intended to restrict how Americans can vote, erect new barriers to registration, and weaponize voter data to intimidate the very communities our democracy depends on. The cumulative effect is not election integrity; it is voter suppression on a national scale, and it demands urgent accountability.

The Administration is taking steps to delegitimize forthcoming election results.

Through efforts to fabricate scandals associated with the midterm elections, President Trump has intentionally undermined systems designed to protect America’s election infrastructure and promote confidence in election results.

In February 2025, then-Attorney General Pam Bondi dismantled the FBI’s Foreign Influence Task Force, which was dedicated to investigating potential acts of foreign disinformation and election interference, due to the Administration’s determination that its law enforcement resources should be used “to address more pressing priorities.”¹²⁸

Further, in March 2025, the Administration cut millions of dollars in federal funding that had been allocated for the Center for Internet Security to fund two cybersecurity initiatives: the Elections Infrastructure

125 Lisa Rantala, Franklin County elections board got DHS email on group raided by FBI, records show, WSYX/ABC6 (June 12, 2026), <https://abc6onyourside.com/news/local/franklin-county-elections-board-got-dhs-email-on-group-raided-by-fbi-records-show>

126 Jeremy Edwards, DHS requests voter records in Franklin County, WSYX/ABC6 (Apr. 28, 2026), <https://abc6onyourside.com/news/local/federal-inquiry-reportedly-tied-to-voter-records-franklin-county-reuters-ohio-dhs-department-of-home-land-security> (embedding DHS-FCBOE email communications at https://abc6onyourside.com/resources/pdf/67444c2c-6111-4963-a068-2c9cb14405e9-2026FCBOEDHSCommunications_.pdf).

127 Andrew Tobias, FBI asked elections officials about firm linked to Ohio progressive group more than a year before raid, Signal Ohio (June 16, 2026), <https://signalohio.org/fbi-questioned-cuyahoga-elections-officials-about-voter-registration/>.

128 Ken Dilanian, Pam Bondi Ends FBI Effort to Combat Foreign Influence in U.S. Politics, NBC News (Feb. 6, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/bondi-ends-fbi-effort-combat-foreign-influence-us-politics-rcna191012>.

Information Sharing and Analysis Center and the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center.¹²⁹ Both were designed to help state and local officials combat cyber threats to their election systems. Without this support, officials are concerned about their vulnerabilities to these attacks as the election season approaches.¹³⁰

In June 2026, one report found that the midterms are likely to see “elevated cyber threat activity,” naming phishing, impersonation, and AI as some of the primary dangers.¹³¹ In January 2026 alone, thousands of websites with domain names including the words “election” and “vote” were created, introducing a greater potential for fake campaign websites and impersonation.¹³² The report additionally revealed that major fundraising platforms associated with both parties had user credentials leaked, exposing the security vulnerabilities of some of the biggest names in party politics.¹³³

By simultaneously dismantling federal defenses against foreign interference and stripping state and local officials of the cybersecurity tools they depend on, the Administration has left American elections more vulnerable than at any point in recent history—not by accident, but by design. These actions do not protect election integrity; they sabotage it, eroding the very infrastructure that ensures Americans can trust that their votes are counted accurately and free from foreign manipulation. The result is an electoral system weakened from within, at the precise moment when the threats from without continue to grow.

In addition to raising security alarms, President Trump is using ongoing redistricting battles to preemptively delegitimize the results of the midterms. In April 2026, the Supreme Court ruled in *Louisiana v. Callais*¹³⁴ that a Louisiana congressional map with a majority-minority district was an unconstitutional racial gerrymander, further narrowing the applicability of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, one of the most effective laws in promoting racial equality in American history.¹³⁵ President Trump took to social media shortly after this decision to claim that elections held under current maps would be “conducted unconstitutionally.”¹³⁶ In the states, some legislatures have already begun the process of drawing new maps,¹³⁷ and state analogs of the Voting Rights Act may be in danger as well.¹³⁸ In addition to diluting

129 Christina A. Cassidy, Trump Administration Halts Funding for Two Cybersecurity Efforts, Including One for Elections, AP News (Mar. 10, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/election-security-cisa-trump-kristi-noem-6c437543f5d26d-890704e5f2a8400502>.

130 David DiMolfetta, Federal Drawdown of Election Support ‘Destroyed’ Ongoing Relationships, Experts Say, NextGov/FCW (Apr. 28, 2026), <https://www.nextgov.com/cybersecurity/2026/04/federal-drawdown-election-support-de-destroyed-ongoing-relationships-experts-say/413181/>.

131 Liz Landers, Why a surge of election-related websites could spell rising cyber threats for the midterms, PBS News (June 2, 2026), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/why-a-surge-of-election-related-websites-could-spell-rising-cyber-threats-for-the-midterms>.

132 *Id.*

133 *Id.*

134 No. 24-109, 608 U.S. ____ (2026).

135 Kevin Morris & Michael G. Miller, After *Louisiana v. Callais*: Here’s Proof of Just How Bad Voting Rights in America Are About to Get, Brennan Center for Justice (2026), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/after-louisiana-v-callais-heres-proof-just-how-bad-voting-rights-america>.

136 Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Truth Social (May 3, 2026, 7:09 PM), <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/116513163772009550>.

137 Alabama and Tennessee Move to Draw New Congressional Districts in Wake of Supreme Court Ruling, WTTW News (May 4, 2026), <https://news.wttw.com/2026/05/04/alabama-and-tennessee-move-draw-new-congressional-districts-wake-supreme-court-ruling>; see also Sydney Haulenbeek, Voters end fight against North Carolina Senate map after Louisiana case, Courthouse News Service (May 11, 2026), <https://courthousenews.com/voters-end-fight-against-north-carolina-senate-map-after-louisiana-case/>.

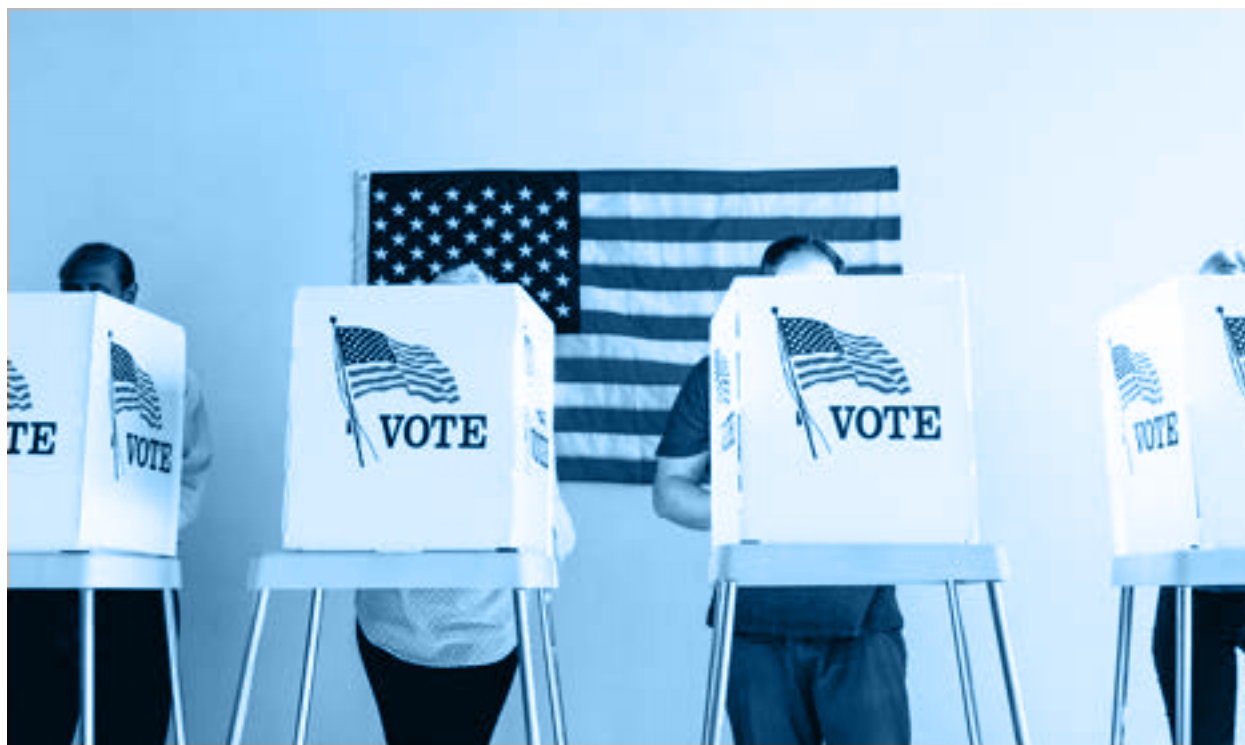
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minority votes and minority representation in Congress, these actions introduce chaos with less than six months until Election Day, sowing the seeds for claims of illegitimacy should the midterms favor Democrats.

The Administration is attempting to intimidate voters at the polls and chill civic participation.

The Administration's actions have created a climate of direct intimidation targeting voters at the polls, election workers carrying out their duties, and local election infrastructure. Across the country—Democrats, Republicans, and independents alike—election workers are reporting escalating threats, harassment, and intimidation that undermine their ability to administer elections safely and impartially.

Federal intimidation efforts extend directly to polling places themselves: ahead of the 2025 off-cycle elections in New Jersey and California, DOJ deployed personnel to “monitor polling sites” at the request of state Republican parties, actions widely viewed as inauthentic and partisan that risk chilling lawful voter participation through an overt federal presence at the polls.¹³⁹ The threat of intimidation has further escalated with the specter of National Guard deployments to polling locations, raising the alarming prospect of armed military personnel stationed where Americans cast their ballots. Taken together, these measures—federal agents at polling sites, unrelenting threats against the election workers who make democracy function, and the potential militarization of the voting process—represent a coordinated assault on the integrity and neutrality of election administration.



139 Jill Colvin & Michael R. Blood, DOJ prepares to send election monitors to California, New Jersey following requests from state GOPs, AP News (Oct. 29, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/doj-election-monitors-new-jersey-california-voting-30d355a9ced990218772eeff1b6642b3>. See also Bill Barrow & Jill Colvin, New Jersey Republicans ask for federal monitors in critical county ahead of governor's election, AP News (Oct. 21, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/new-jersey-governors-race-doj-election-fraud-80d58631b61d5b44ba04dc5cf8288bc5>.

CONCLUSION

The Trump Administration's actions toward political opponents, independent watchdogs, universities, journalists, law firms, election administrators, and nonprofit organizations differ in form but converge in effect. These attacks on civil society raise the cost of dissent and independence and chill First Amendment protected conduct. They burden institutions that help the public monitor government abuse. They disrupt access to critical resources, including access to food, shelter, and healthcare. And each attack expands executive control over civil society that, in a functioning democracy, must remain independent.





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