

OUR NATION NEEDS

LAW

HEROES

NOW.



REMINDER:
WE
TOOK AN
OATH

In this moment with democracy on the brink,
lawyers often ask “What can I do?”

Jump into Community Building & Action-oriented
Tasks that **Lawyers Can Do Now** →

PRESENTED BY

THE RULE
OF LAWYERS

A DEMOCRACY RISING
COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

IN THIS DOCUMENT:

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PART ONE: GET IN THE GAME

Take the first step toward defending the Rule of Law in your community and beyond.

PART TWO: USE YOUR VOICE

High-visibility and under-the-radar actions that you can take, regardless of how much time you have.

PART THREE: READY TO LEAD

You've done the basics & you're ready for more. Learn how to inspire others to maximise your impact.

PART FOUR: COURAGEOUS ACTION

Unprecedented times require bold action. Learn effective, strategic ways to take courageous action.

PART FIVE: BE A HERO

Take action if your redline is crossed. Use your economic power to defend the Rule of Law.



All materials have been prepared for general information purposes only to permit you to learn more about how lawyers can defend the Rule of Law. The information presented is not legal advice, is not to be acted on as such, may not be current and is subject to change without notice.

A LAWYER'S TOOLKIT TO FIGHT FOR THE RULE OF LAW

We have witnessed an unprecedented assault on American democracy & the Rule of Law.

While we have seen an impressive effort from civil rights and pro-democracy organizations to fight back by litigating against this lawlessness, the vast majority of the nation's **1.3 million lawyers have remained on the sidelines of the fight** against democratic backsliding.

This is for a variety of reasons, including personal or professional fear, the fact that many attorneys are cautious in nature, questions about whether any one individual can make a difference, and hope that the situation will simply go away. It is also because most lawyers, even if they want to do something, don't know what to do.

Many attorneys are also looking for ways outside of the courtroom where they can participate and lead in this defining moment in our country's history.

Research shows that while litigation is a critical element of defeating government overreach, it is insufficient on its own. **People power** is necessary to stop the assault on the Rule of Law that our nation is facing and to prevent America's descent into authoritarianism.

To that end, this toolkit and accompanying resources describes very clearly what **YOU** can do as a lawyer to save our democracy.



In this moment, when so much that we care about throughout American society is under attack, including the legal profession itself, it is up to us to take a stand for the Rule of Law.



It is up to us to make our voices heard.



It is up to us to harness our cultural and economic power to hold anti-democratic actors accountable.



It is up to us to use our moral authority to mobilize the broader population to protect our democracy.

In this document:

(CLICK ANY TOPIC TO
JUMP TO THAT SECTION)

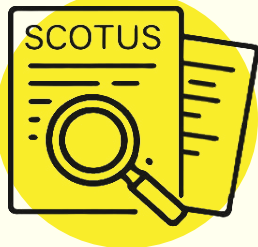
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PART ONE

GET IN

THE GAME





Keep informed about key legal issues of the day by reading [Just Security](#),

Steve Vladeck's "[One First](#)" blog, and Joyce Vance's "[Civil Discourse](#)" substack, to name a few important resources.



Stay up to date on broader democracy issues

by subscribing to newsletters from leading pro-democracy organizations like the [Brennan Center](#) or [Protect Democracy](#) or by reading a book like [On Tyranny](#) by Timothy Snyder or [Autocracy, Inc.](#) by Anne Applebaum. Check out expert [Hardy Merriman's recommendations](#) for how to resist democratic backsliding.



Create a LinkedIn account

([Here's how](#)) and connect with other lawyers. Follow prominent legal commentators like [Gregg Nunziata](#) and [Mimi Rocah](#) and legal organizations like [Lawyers for Good Government](#). "Like" a post that you agree with. If you really like it, you can repost it and include your own supportive comments.



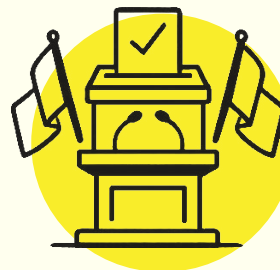
Follow the work of important litigation organizations.

Check out [Democracy Forward](#), [Democracy Defenders](#), [ACLU](#), [Public Citizen](#), and [CREW](#).



Attend a CLE on the Rule of Law.

See this new [CLE series](#) on the ABA's website.



Attend a live pro-democracy panel, event, or debate.

Your local or state bar association is a good place to check for these. Leading pro-democracy organizations like the [Brennan Center](#) often host briefings on key issues of the day.

↑ **SIMPLE ACTION! CLICK TO JUMP IN**



Take a look at the U.S. citizenship exam.

[Test Yourself](#) to see if you could pass the test. How did you do in the practice?



Listen to a Supreme Court [argument](#)

and follow along when the Court issues its final opinions of the term.

PART TWO

USE YOUR

VOICE



I

Publicly retake your oath to the Constitution

like thousands of lawyers did [May 1, 2025](#), Law Day. Look [HERE](#) to see the organizations that hosted Law Day of Action events, including the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association, Durham Bar, Philadelphia Bar Association, among many others. Make your plan for 2026. Connect with others to get the ball rolling in your community.

III

Participate in citizen and bridge-building initiatives.

You can read about those initiatives [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

V

Join a pro-democracy group.

If you're right leaning, check out [Principles First](#) and [Society for the Rule of Law](#). If you're left leaning, check out [American Constitution Society](#) and [People's Parity Project](#).

II

Write an op-ed or letter to the editor in your local paper about the Rule of Law.

[Local media remains](#) an influential way to express your views. It makes a difference!

IV

Attend a peaceful protest in support of democracy

and be sure to make a sign related to the Rule of Law. When you're ready, organize a protest. Be sure to check out the ACLU's Protesters' Right's [Toolkit](#).

VI

Sign on to a [letter](#) in defense of the Rule of Law and the legal profession.

VII

Deans from 119 law schools [signed a letter](#) in 2024 in support of the Constitution.

Is your school on the list? If so, reach out and see how you can get involved. Check if they will host a Democracy or Rule of Law forum.

SIMPLE ACTION! [CLICK TO JUMP IN](#) ↑

VIII

If you're at a law firm that hasn't taken a position at this moment, organize a letter within the firm encouraging its leadership to take a stand for the Rule of Law.

IX

If you're a general counsel at a company, meet with other general counsels

about key Rule of Law issues. If you're a lawyer at a business, consider getting involved with [Integrity Matters](#), [Leadership Now](#), or other pro-democracy business groups.

Take inspiration from [small business leaders](#) in Minneapolis.

PART THREE

READY

TO LEAD



1 Take on pro bono legal work: It doesn't matter what experience level you have, where you're located, or how busy you are, there's an opportunity for you to use your law license to make a difference in this moment and stand up for the Rule of Law.



Check out pro bono opportunities at [We The Action](#), [Lawyers for Good Government](#), and [Federal Workers Legal Defense Network](#) to learn about the many different opportunities available to you. You can also look into local or smaller nonprofits that run on volunteer and pro bono work.

#2. Don't just attend a protest, mobilize lawyers for protests. Read about what lawyers and judges did in [Poland](#) and [Pakistan](#) to defend the Rule of Law. Read about what [lawyers are doing](#) in this country. Get inspired.

You can make a big difference by taking to the streets with your fellow attorneys. If the American public sees lawyers, often highly regarded in their community, marching in the streets, they may be inspired to get involved.



#3. Become an educator, organizer, and activist. As lawyers, our fellow citizens are looking to us at this moment like much of the country looked to doctors during the pandemic.

Sign on to [Principles for the Independence of the Legal Profession](#) and help spread the word to make sure law students and corporate clients are asking firms whether they adhere to them. Launch a civics group through [Meetup.com](#) to teach your neighbors and other members of your community about the Constitution. Contact friends, former colleagues, and law school classmates to organize weekly or bi-weekly calls about what's happening here and what can be done about it. If you're in touch with current law students, be sure to share with them [Rachel Cohen's toolkit](#) on how they can stand up for the Rule of Law.

If you don't want to organize, you can educate. Return to your college or law school, or even high school, to talk to students about the Rule of Law. Look into speaking at the local Rotary or Kiwanis club to give a talk about the threats to democracy. You can even start a TikTok account ([here's how](#)) to engage on the news of the day with younger folks who [don't get their news](#) from traditional media. Spread the good word far and wide, and as Protect Democracy's Founder Ian Bassin notes: [Collective action](#) is the way.

#4. Become a leader with your local bar association. Contact your local bar association to see if they have any Rule of Law programming or are otherwise prioritizing democracy issues.

Consider running to lead key positions within the bar. If you need ideas for how your bar can engage with the community to strengthen democratic values, read this [newly released ABA report](#). Additionally, you can always organize lawyers outside of the bar to stand up for the Rule of Law, like the [Georgia Lawyers for the Rule of Law](#) has. To take an even bolder step, start your own organization, like the [Lawyers' Committee for Rhode Island](#).



#5. Work with your company to do a lunch series on the Rule of Law or civics education.



Check out [Civics Break](#), which is a course created by the Bolch Judicial Institute at Duke Law that “examines the Rule of Law, how courts fit into the American democratic system, what judges do, and how courts and judges affect our lives.” Consider holding an event at work to watch the videos with colleagues.

TAKE

COURAGE

GEORGE

ACTION





Talk to your colleagues & friends about their redlines. Make sure you have them too.

What are you going to do if your place of work, whether law firm, business, or government agency, capitulates to anti-democratic actors? What will you do if your place of work enables, empowers, or even partakes in anti-democratic actions? Each of us will answer this question differently. Everyone's redline is different and that's OK. But everyone should be asking themselves and their friends and colleagues these questions now, so all of us are prepared to act if that becomes necessary. For inspiration, read heroic jurist J. Michael Luttig's (ret.) [essay](#) on the importance of the Declaration of Independence.



II

Learn about the most effective ways for communities to push back against democratic backsliding & help form a “Big Tent.”

[Horizons Project](#), led by Maria Stephan and Julia Roig, global experts in [civil resistance movements](#), has done deep research on the most effective ways to push back against democratic backsliding. This includes teaming up with other “pillars” of society. Connect with civic leaders throughout your community, including other attorneys, veterans, and business, faith, and union leaders, to build a “Big Tent” across civil society to fight back against attacks on the Rule of Law.





Prepare your community for if the worst comes to pass.

What happens if the National Guard is deployed in your community? What if ICE is surged into your city? [Free DC has modeled](#) what well-coordinated, strategic impact resistance can look like. Chicago effectively [stood up to](#) Operation 'Midway Blitz.' The people of Minneapolis have courageously stood up to government overreach and for their community. Don't assume someone else will do this.

Plan ahead and build a reservoir of power in your community to respond to whatever comes. Consider writing a letter to your community that asks your fellow citizens and important institutions to begin planning now for if the worst comes to pass.

For inspiration, look to what the leaders of the Cleveland legal community have done. They developed a letter urging the community to think about their redlines and how they would respond to government overreach. [Read it here](#). Two retired Ohio Supreme Court Justices - a Republican and Democrat - [led the effort](#).

“

I want to make something absolutely clear. If you thought there was some working group coming to the rescue well I want you to know that you're wrong. This is it. There is nobody else hidden away on some other floor. There is just us and we are failing.

”

– ZERO DARK THIRTY

We cannot fail!



IV

Don't let corporate attorneys off the hook who work at firms that have abdicated their duty to defend the Rule of Law.

This isn't about public shame campaigns. It's about opening lines of communication to our fellow attorneys to persuade them to prioritize the Rule of Law over their career ambitions and to pressure firm management to rethink their decision to capitulate to anti-democratic actors. At the same time, it is absolutely essential to showcase those corporate attorneys that have done the right thing in this moment. From individuals like Rachel Cohen, Brenna Trout Frey, and Thomas Sipp, to firms like Jenner & Block, Perkins Coie, and WilmerHale, many of our colleagues have stepped up, and we must applaud their efforts.



V

Stand up for judges and the judicial system.

At a time when judges are being vilified and harassed and even facing threats to their safety, it is absolutely imperative for lawyers to take a stand for judges and the judiciary. In fact, lawyers have a [special duty to speak up for judges](#), per the American Bar Association. And there are many ways you can do this.

Invite a judge to come to your community organization to speak about what it's like to be a judge and answer questions about the Rule of Law.

Many community activities like farmers markets have tables for local organizations. Invite a judge to sit for these sorts of informal greetings.

Check out organizations like the [Bolch Judicial Institute](#), dedicated to defending the judiciary, and [Keep Our Republic](#), which organizes retired judges through its Article III coalition.

Tell everyone you can about the kinds of pro-democracy work that judges participated in Poland in 2020, like the [March of a Thousand Robes](#) and a nationwide bus tour for democracy. Their efforts were a success! Let the story of Polish judges inspire lawyers and judges in the United States to take courageous action.

BEA

HERO



1. Learn about how to use your economic power to engage in strikes and boycotts.

Law students are already engaging in these sorts of actions by [boycotting law firms](#) that have capitulated to administration overreach. And associates at major law firms have courageously resigned in protest of their firms capitulating to anti-democratic actors.

Talk with your colleagues and lawyer friends about the potential, within appropriate ethical guidelines, of [refusing to provide legal services to anti-democratic actors](#), including by boycotting federal work. Consider organizing fellow attorneys to boycott products and services that are enabling the government to engage in anti-democratic activity, to stand up for law firms targeted by sanctions who have resisted, and to protest those law firms who have capitulated. Read about how [Pakistani](#) and [Serbian lawyers](#) have [engaged in strikes during the last year under very difficult circumstances](#). Be inspired by their courage to think outside the box about how to use your economic power to stand up for the Rule of Law in this crucial moment.

2. If your redline is crossed, act.

Resign from your firm or business if it capitulates to or empowers anti-democratic actors, and organize others to do so as well. [If you're a government attorney and you are asked to break the law, defy a court order, or otherwise participate in activities that would violate your attorney's oath, remember that you took an oath when you became an attorney.](#) Consider [reporting](#) illegal behavior through appropriate whistleblowing channels.

3. Engage in acts of resistance within ethical and legal restrictions.

Many people aren't in a position to resign from their job in protest, or engage in strikes. And perhaps you can make more of a difference within your place of employment than by resigning. If you work at a firm that has capitulated, consider **printing out articles or dropping leaflets** in strategic locations to remind everyone that the firm abdicated their responsibility when it mattered most. Don't let your fellow colleagues hide from shame. If you work as a government attorney, you can do the same to remind your **colleagues that they have ethical obligations as attorneys**, and that there can be consequences to their bar license if they participate in the defiance of court orders or otherwise make misrepresentations to courts or judges.

4. Protect our elections from attacks on election integrity.

Like in years past, you can volunteer to engage in traditional [election protection efforts](#). Many people find serving as a [poll worker](#) very gratifying. And be sure to check out pro bono opportunities at the [Election Official Legal Defense Network](#). But **this upcoming cycle demands a community-wide approach and thinking outside the box**, given the possibility of government overreach and intimidation. Along with other leaders in your community, think through how you can provide a sense of security to voters who may feel vulnerable at this moment. **Seek out and organize initiatives to protect voters from anti-democratic actors.** Team up with faith leaders, veterans, and other civic leaders who not only can make voters feel safe in this time of fear and anxiety but can create an atmosphere of joy around the idea of voting. Be sure to check local election rules.

5. Protect immigrants from lawless action.

We are witnessing masked federal agents acting with increasing lawlessness and violence toward American citizens and undocumented immigrants alike. **Lawyers must hold the line against this anti-democratic behavior and stand up for the rights of our friends, neighbors,** and the most vulnerable people in our society. What defines democracy is the idea that those with the least power still have the protection of the law. There are many things you can do in this vein. Help disseminate ACLU [Know Your Rights](#) guides to vulnerable people in your community. Do [pro bono legal work](#) to protect immigrants or even take on an asylum case through [HIAS](#) or the [Immigration Justice Campaign](#). **Volunteer to be a legal observer** and request a training through your nearest [ACLU](#) or [National Lawyers Guild](#) chapter. You could even represent someone whose rights have been violated by a federal immigration agent in a civil rights lawsuit or Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) complaint.

6. Hold government attorneys accountable.

In this moment of unprecedented democratic backsliding, it is not enough for us lawyers to behave ethically. We must also hold our fellow attorneys accountable for their actions, including government attorneys who are behaving unethically. Support organizations like [Lawyers Defending American Democracy](#) and [Campaign for Accountability](#) who are bringing bar complaints against unethical government attorneys. Also consider trying to **organize letters from your law school condemning alumni for taking actions as government attorneys that are inconsistent with their attorney oath.** Government attorneys who are behaving without regard to their ethical responsibilities or even the law still very much care about what their peers think of them. We must think outside of the box at this moment to bring accountability to anti-democratic actors.

7. Run for office.

This moment is calling for courage and for those of us who believe in the Rule of Law to seize the moment and lead. **As lawyers, we took an oath to uphold the Constitution and there's no more important way for us to do so than by seeking elected office.** Lawyers also have an essential role to play as public officials, whether at the state, local, or federal level. It's never been more important for lawyers with honor and integrity to serve the public.

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YOUR JOURNEY

CONTINUES..



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