

Defending Scientific Integrity

America's research enterprise is under attack from a deliberate campaign of unlawful government actions designed to cancel critical research and replace evidence with ideology. In response, a unified front of legal and political challenges is being mobilized across the country—and it is vital that the entire scientific and healthcare community stand behind it.

A Coordinated Attack on Science

The current threats to the scientific community are not a series of isolated incidents but a systemic, interconnected assault. From federal agencies to university campuses, the goal is to undermine scientific independence and control research outcomes, creating a chilling effect across all fields of study.

The Landscape of Attacks

The pressure campaign extends across federal agencies and into the academic institutions where research is conducted, using federal funding as a weapon to enforce ideological conformity.

Ideological Purges of Research Grants	Competitively awarded, peer-reviewed research grants issued by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are being abruptly canceled for political reasons, cutting off promising studies without scientific justification.
Threats to University Autonomy	Federal funding is being used as a weapon to control research and speech on campus, threatening academic freedom and forcing universities to censor students and faculty.
Undermining Science Agencies	Actions against the NIH are mirrored by politically motivated freezes on congressionally appropriated funds at other key scientific bodies, like the National Science Foundation (NSF), targeting climate and infrastructure research.

Key examples of litigation in this space include:

- **Pushing Back Against NIH Grant Purges** – Multiple lawsuits ([APHA v. NIH](#), [GLMA v. NIH](#), [Commonwealth of Mass. v. Kennedy](#), [AAPHR v. NIH](#)) have successfully halted or challenged the abrupt, discriminatory cancellation of hundreds of peer-reviewed NIH grants. Courts have ordered the agencies to reinstate suspended awards, resume peer-review processes, and disclose records underlying the political interference. These rulings reaffirm that research funding decisions must rest on scientific merit and lawful policies, not ideology.
- **Standing up for Academic Freedom** – Faculty and academic associations have gone to court to defend universities from political interference in research. In [AAUP v. DOJ](#) and [multiple challenges](#) from [Harvard](#) and University of California faculty ([Thakur v. Trump](#)), courts have blocked government directives that sought to condition research funding on adherence to certain political views. The resulting injunctions safeguard scholars' rights to pursue inquiry freely and make clear that the government cannot weaponize funding to enforce ideological conformity on campus.
- **Safeguarding Federal Science Agencies** – Coalitions of states, universities, and scientific associations have successfully challenged efforts to politicize the National Science Foundation and other agencies. In [State of New York v. NSF](#), [AAPT v. NSF](#), [AAU et al. v. NSF](#), courts have issued injunctions stopping discriminatory funding freezes and ordering the reinstatement of suspended grant programs. With these decisions, the courts have reinforced a simple truth—federal science must operate independently of partisan control.

It is critical to emphasize that the threats against federal agencies, universities, and marginalized communities are not isolated incidents. They are interconnected parts of a broader, systemic anti-science agenda that must be fought with a unified front.

Why Fighting Back Matters

We need to articulate the real-world stakes of politicizing science. Attacking science and healthcare research hurts everyone by limiting innovation and preventing the discovery of treatments and cures we all need.

- When a multi-year, peer-reviewed NIH study is abruptly canceled, we don't just lose data; we delay our ability to solve real-world public health crises, which has tangible costs in lives and resources.
- Every family in America has someone who is or will benefit from healthcare research to help keep them healthy or treat an illness. These attacks kneecap our ability to help cure a child's cancer or a grandparent's heart disease.

What You Can Do: The Power of a United Front

The core strategy is to unite the scientific community's voice, transforming isolated incidents into a powerful public narrative, because speaking together demonstrates to policymakers and the media that these are not minor disputes but a systemic threat.

- ✓ **Do portray the threat as immediate and personal.** The vague justification used to
- ✗ **Don't assume this is a distant political fight.** It's about your professional

cancel grants is a dangerous precedent.

- ✓ **Do foster solidarity and a shared narrative.** Bolster morale among researchers and organizations by joining to form a cohesive, powerful voice.

environment.

- ✗ **Don't view these as isolated incidents.** The power of this advocacy comes from connecting the dots.

ABOUT US

Protect Democracy is a nonpartisan, nonprofit group working to prevent American democracy from declining into a more authoritarian form of government.