

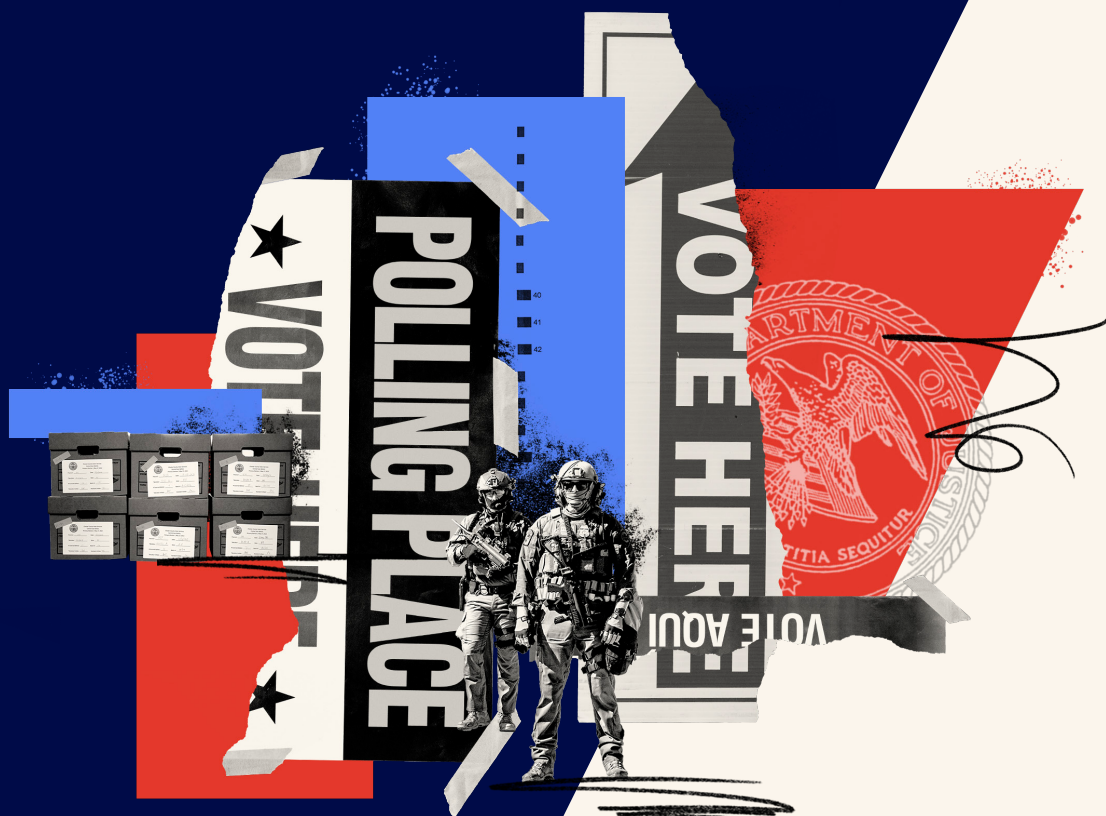
JULY 2026 UPDATE

Deceive, Disrupt, Deny in Full Effect

The last four months of the Executive Override strategy

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JULY 2026



Protect Democracy is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing American democracy from declining into a more authoritarian form of government.

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Introduction

IN MARCH, WE PUBLISHED *Executive Override*, outlining how the Trump administration is using federal power to deceive Americans, disrupt our elections, and deny fair results — and what we can do to stop it. The report laid out a set of actions the Trump administration is pursuing to weaponize the full power of the federal government against our elections.

To recap, the strategy involves three stages. It begins with using the machinery of government to fuel disinformation about voting and elections. That deception provides the pretext for increasingly aggressive moves by the Trump White House to disrupt the conduct of elections as well as the playing field on which they are contested. And finally, if and when preferred candidates lose, the Trump administration is readying to deny the outcome and seek to overthrow the results.

In the months since our report was published, Trump's override strategy has only accelerated. As unending corruption, a failed Middle Eastern war, and a crumbling economy continue to erode political support for the president's partisan allies, he has ramped up efforts to manipulate the election to cling to power and evade democratic accountability. At the same time, the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice John Roberts, has issued a series of decisions that hasten, rather than check, this tilting of the playing field.

And yet, the strategy outlined in *Executive Override* continues to run into obstacles: The law gives state and local officials, not the executive branch, the power to administer elections — and where the administration has tried to usurp that power, lower federal courts have repeatedly rebuffed them. Meanwhile, a growing number of Americans are coming together to defend elections and our right to decide who represents us, and to hold leaders accountable for abusing their power.

This July 2026 update covers the last four months in the battle between the Executive Override strategy and the American people working to protect a meaningful chance to participate in our democracy in the midterm elections. We will issue the next update this fall.

Executive Override Snapshot

Deceive

MANUFACTURE FALSE NARRATIVES TO CREATE A PRETEXT FOR DISRUPTION AND DENIAL

- ➔ **California conspiracy theories spawn baseless investigations**
After his preferred candidate lost the Los Angeles mayoral primary, Trump and his allies pushed election-fraud lies while his U.S. Attorney announced fraud investigations with no stated factual basis — turning federal power into a conspiracy engine.
- ➔ **Trump installs retaliation attack dog as interim intel chief**
Unqualified for Director of National Intelligence, Bill Pulte's record of partisan retribution makes him ideal to weaponize intelligence and fabricate evidence of fraud.
- ➔ **FCC and DOJ intimidate and manipulate news outlets**
Independent no longer, the FCC and DOJ are coordinating directly with the White House to punish outlets who report unfavorably on the administration and clearing the path for Trump allies to gain control of media channels.

WHAT WE'RE WATCHING

The Director of National Intelligence has access to highly sensitive intelligence that could be used to supercharge election conspiracies, such as selective leaks suggesting foreign interference in the election process.

Disrupt

USE THE MIGHT OF GOVERNMENT TO QUASH POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND MANIPULATE ELECTION RULES

- ➔ **Unworkable USPS rule threatens mail-in ballots**
After Trump's 2025 election executive order, the USPS proposed a rule casting itself as gatekeeper of who can vote by mail, a role for which it has no expertise. The move is designed to sow confusion and prevent eligible voters from casting ballots.
- ➔ **Trump's SAVE Act obsession points to a strategy to prebute election results**
Trump keeps pushing the SAVE Act above all else, suggesting he wants to position its failure to pass as a pretext to cast election results as tainted and illegitimate.

➔ **Political prosecutions target voting organizations and election officials**

The administration is not only targeting high-profile critics but civil rights groups, voter registration organizations, and election officials with criminal investigations.

➔ **Protest and dissent are met with harassment and prosecution**

Alongside its deportation campaign, the administration is surveilling, harassing, and prosecuting protesters and critics to make people hesitate before speaking out.

➔ **The Roberts Court accelerates election chaos**

A series of recent Roberts Court rulings that gutted the Voting Rights Act, expanded presidential control over independent agencies, and loosened party spending limits have tilted the playing field toward Trump's allies and made elections easier to subvert.

WHAT WE'RE WATCHING

The administration's voter roll campaign is on a collision course with federal law, which bars voter purges within 90 days of a federal election. Rather than stand down, the administration argues that the law doesn't apply to voters it flags, an issue the Supreme Court won't resolve until after the midterms. We expect political prosecutions to continue, potentially targeting candidates with investigations and innuendo, and we're watching for surges of federal law enforcement into key communities — shows of force that are meant to discourage voting and would be illegal at the polls.

Deny

INTERVENE TO CONTEST AND REVERSE UNFAVORABLE RESULTS

➔ **Purging independent voices from the GOP**

The president has moved to purge members who defied him or supported accountability for January 6, warning of punishment for voices who challenge election denial.

➔ **Paying off election denial henchmen**

The proposed \$1.8 billion slush fund for January 6 insurrectionists signals the president's loyalty to those who break the law and commit violence on his behalf.

➔ **State allies supercharge election denial**

After the *Callais* decision, state officials have canceled elections, nullified results, and sidelined a non-MAGA officeholder to gain maximum partisan advantage.

WHAT WE'RE WATCHING

As we get closer to the general election, we are looking out for “zombie lawsuits” designed to seed legal challenges to results, disruptions to the certification process, and desperate abuses of power, such as declaring a national emergency, seizing ballots and voting machines, or refusing to seat duly-elected members of Congress.

Defeat

HOW WE THE PEOPLE ARE STANDING UP TO DEFEND OUR ELECTIONS

✓ **Federal district courts hold the line against illegal power grabs**

The administration is 0-13 in cases about its attempt to grab state voter roll data. The courts have also ruled against the White House's attempts to give the Post Office power to decide who can vote by mail and to consolidate an error-prone database of sensitive voter and citizenship data to analyze voter rolls.

✓ **Pressure on Congress yields crucial wins**

Bipartisan majorities have rejected Trump's demands to pass the SAVE Act, create the \$1.8 billion slush fund for his henchmen, and to confirm Bill Pulte for Director of National Intelligence.

✓ **Communities and civil society stand up for each other**

Activist groups and communities have effectively organized to coordinate legal and advocacy responses to attacks on civil rights and voting organizations, to mobilize voters and defend the right to protest and dissent, and to stand in solidarity with federal workers who refuse to comply with dangerous and illegal orders.

✓ **States pass laws to hold federal agents accountable for civil rights abuses**

Working with many organizations and state leaders, Protect Democracy has advanced the Universal Constitutional Remedies Act (UCRA), which would let state residents sue federal agents or officials who violate their constitutional rights through acts like violence, harassment, or intimidation.

Deceive in action

Lies about California and a partisan attack dog running intelligence

THE EXECUTIVE OVERRIDE REPORT set out three approaches the Trump administration is pursuing to spread lies and fuel distrust in our elections. First, promoting election denialism as official policy. Second, using federal power to drive conspiracies. And third, manipulating the media ecosystem to spread disinformation. The administration has pursued each this spring.

California conspiracy theories

While Trump continues to regularly peddle vague conspiracy theories about unknown election fraud, he has lately been heavily focused on California. Trump and his allies responded to their preferred mayoral candidate losing the primary in Los Angeles with an avalanche of lies. Not content just to repeat the lies, Trump's U.S. Attorney took to social media to announce "multiple election fraud investigations" — albeit without identifying any specific factual basis for doing so. A perfect example of using the full powers of the federal government to fuel a conspiracy.

Weaponizing the intelligence community

The *Executive Override* report warned of the administration "effectively turning law enforcement and intelligence agencies into conduits for partisan disinformation." Trump's installation of Bill Pulte as the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) supercharges that strategy. Pulte lacks the "extensive national security experience" the law requires for his role; instead, it appears he's been put there because of his extensive experience abusing power against the president's opponents. (In his former role as director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, Pulte pursued unprecedented partisan retribution investigations against an array of Trump critics and foes). As Jess Marsden warned, "The DNI could use selective disclosures of raw intelligence — on

its own, not evidence of wrongdoing, but potentially highly suggestive to a lay audience — to bolster false claims about the election.” Pulte is already working to eliminate experienced public servants in his office, giving him more room to manipulate or manufacture “intelligence” to enable election interference. He put in place as the chief of staff of the U.S. intelligence community a partisan election operative, not somebody with experience protecting our country and communities. And the White House is launching a new task force designed to disseminate long-discredited allegations of foreign interference in the 2020 election.

Media manipulation

And finally, the administration continues its escalating abuses of power to shape the media environment. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chair Brendan Carr, who has proclaimed that the agency is no longer independent of the White House, has escalated his campaign against ABC News for airing journalism and comedy that Trump dislikes. The agency initiated an investigation based on a routine interview with Democratic Senate candidate James Talarico on *The View*, and then took the separate and extraordinary step of forcing ABC to file years early for the renewal of broadcasting licenses for the eight television stations that it owns and operates. Trump recently piled on by threatening to sue ABC for its reporting on the reflecting pool scandal.

Trump and Carr have also repeatedly threatened coverage of the Iran War that they dislike: from Mar-a-Lago, Carr reposted one of Trump’s Truth Social posts complaining about media coverage of the war, citing an FCC policy (that Protect Democracy has challenged) to threaten the licenses of broadcast outlets that post “fake news.” Later, Trump called *The New York Times* “treasonous” and threatened to sue it based on its analysis of the war’s failures. Lastly, in the ongoing attempt to help transfer ownership of media outlets to Trump allies, the Department of Justice (DOJ) Antitrust Division recently cleared the way for the takeover of CNN by the Ellison family by signing off on the Paramount-Warner Bros. merger, overruling career staff.

Disrupt in action

Demanding data, manipulating mail, and prosecuting those who stand in the way

THE SPREAD OF DISINFORMATION lays the foundation for actions to disrupt the election process and tilt the playing field to benefit White House allies. As the *Executive Override* report lays out, this involves two separate but overlapping forms of disruption:

- 1 Manipulating election rules to block eligible voters or enable tampering with the vote count; and
- 2 The use of violence and federal power to deter voting, silence Americans, and try to take the administration's opponents off the field.

We've seen all of that over the last four months.

Postal Service takeover designed to fail

The administration has attempted to use the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) to prevent eligible voters from casting their ballot by mail. Following Trump's March 31 executive order, the USPS published a proposed rule giving it a new role as gatekeeper of who can vote by mail. As Ben Berwick and Alexandra Chandler explained: This is not the job of the agency that is responsible for birthday cards and holiday gifts and has no expertise in election administration. The rule is not just built on a fiction but is also "designed to manufacture proof of that fiction;" it's implausible to pull off in the months before the election; and if the rule goes live, it's destined to sow confusion and prevent eligible voters from casting ballots. For now, two federal courts have enjoined the rule from going into effect.

All in on the SAVE Act

The administration may be pushing this bizarre role for the USPS so much because its top legislative priority — the SAVE Act — is going nowhere. (As a reminder, the SAVE Act

would create new barriers to voter registration that jeopardize the ability of millions of eligible Americans to vote.) We'll say more below on the effective strategies that so far are defeating this dangerous legislation. But Trump continues to prioritize this legislation above virtually all else: consensus with his partisan allies, a bipartisan housing bill, his proposed nominee to the DNI Jay Clayton. This is so hard to fathom as a coherent strategy that it suggests Trump is pushing the SAVE Act not with any actual expectations of rewriting election policy, but instead to give him a talking point if his preferred candidates lose and he wants to overturn the election. (In other words, it's failing as a "disrupt" tactic, but might still succeed as a "deceive" or "deny" one.)

Funding coercion

The administration has also opened a new front in its campaign to force election changes on the states: money. In late June, CNN reported that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) intends to withhold homeland security grants — expected to exceed \$1 billion this fiscal year, and relied on by states to guard against terrorism, protect infrastructure, and prepare for disasters — if states don't adopt a slate of Trump's partisan election-administration demands. States that refuse would forfeit 20% of the funds — potentially tens of millions of dollars. Days later, the administration formalized the effort. This is simply another route to the same ends the administration has pursued through the March 31 executive order, the SAVE Act, and its demands for state voter files: pressuring states to remake their elections to the president's specifications, over which he has no lawful authority.

Political prosecutions

The Trump administration strategy not only seeks to disrupt the conduct of elections, but also to tilt the playing field. Trump has spent his time in office directing prosecutions of the political opposition; no surprise that he appears to have added California Governor Gavin Newsom to a growing list. Moreover, the campaign is not limited to political candidates and officeholders. In April, DOJ announced an indictment against the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a leading civil rights organization. The investigation may have been spurred by a letter from right-wing groups complaining about being designated as hate groups by the SPLC.

In March, our report warned: "We anticipate that the DOJ will turn its focus to election-related groups in the run-up to the election." And so it has. Last month, the FBI raided the offices of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative (OOC), the state's leading voter registration group — ostensibly searching for evidence of voter registration fraud. Agents also visited the homes of volunteers, board members, and staff; seized phones,

computers, and other records; and sought records from a national organization that funded OOC. In July, the Trump administration sent letters to state and local election officials threatening to criminally prosecute them if noncitizen voting occurs. All this despite the fact that investigations — led by Democrats and Republicans alike — have consistently disproven claims of widespread unauthorized voting.

What's so dangerous is that it's not just Trump himself driving these retaliatory prosecutions; he's stacked his administration full of allies pursuing sycophantic prosecutions. "While it might seem laughable, performative flattery has serious consequences," wrote Grant Tudor and Shanna Singh Hughey. "Targets of farcical cases must still hire counsel and defend themselves against criminal charges. And each act of leader-pleasing further degrades the moral and legal authority of the DOJ — and ultimately, the principle that we are a country of laws, not men."

Harassment and prosecution of protesters

As the administration's deportation campaign has continued, DHS and DOJ have taken increasingly drastic measures to harass, penalize, and prosecute protesters and critics. In recent weeks, law enforcement officials have tracked down at least two citizens who criticized DHS misconduct — one in a social media post, the other in a letter to a Trump administration official. They are using administrative subpoenas to unmask anonymous critics online. New surveillance tools — paid for by the massive cash infusion from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act — have enabled them to track and harass protesters. Most seriously, DOJ is taking increasingly aggressive steps to prosecute protesters for interfering with federal agents — though most of those cases end well before trial, sometimes because courts have exposed significant wrongdoing by prosecutors and law enforcement agents.

The purpose appears clear: to make people think twice before speaking out and criticizing the Trump administration. Fortunately, the threats don't seem to be working — we continue to see Americans speaking out against administration policies they oppose (more on that below). But the costs are real: For protesters charged with crimes, the cost of mounting a legal defense is significant, even when (as many have) cases end well before trial.

Deny in action

Purging those who followed the law, paying those who would break it

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES to deceive voters, and the repeated weaponization of government power to disrupt how our elections are conducted and make it harder for the administration's perceived opponents to participate in our political system, are not independent tactics. They are part of a coherent strategy to lay the foundation for denying and overthrowing unfavorable results. The administration is actively putting in place the pieces for election denial, while its allies in states are experimenting with new forms of election denialism.

Purging independent voices

The president has purged from his party those who have stood up for following the rule of law and the will of voters. He has harnessed his political energy towards defeating those members of his party in Congress who have defied him — like Senator Bill Cassidy and Representative Thomas Massie — and those who have supported investigations or accountability for January 6 and the attempt to overthrow the 2020 election.

The slush fund

At the same time, he has sought to create a slush fund to reward allies who act on his behalf. A federal court has now described how it was built: On July 13, Judge Kathleen Williams ruled that Trump's \$10 billion suit against the IRS was manufactured for the purpose of settling it — a settlement that would have conferred immunity on people and entities affiliated with the president and earmarked billions in taxpayer money, in her words, “to redress grievances not defined in the law.” The suit, she wrote, was brought “to manipulate the judicial process.” She sanctioned two of Trump's personal attorneys and suggested the acting attorney general and his deputy may face bar discipline.

In other words: money with no legal basis plus advance immunity for the president's affiliates. This administration has already shown what it does with the power to protect lawbreakers who advance its interests, and a fund built on the same logic, in place before the midterms, would give the president something to offer anyone willing to break the law to help deny an unfavorable result. As Justin Florence and Aaron Baird wrote, “when he encouraged the January 6 insurrectionists to go to the Capitol, it was only with his megaphone” — the fund gives him “something material to offer them now.”

State-level denialism

One unwelcome development over the last four months is that several state officials have begun engaging in new forms of election denialism. Much of this has come in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's *Callais* decision, covered below. As examples, Louisiana declared a state of emergency to cancel an election; various state officers have nullified or threatened to nullify completed elections; and Louisiana eliminated an elected office with a non-MAGA officeholder in order to keep him from exercising power. These are not at the scope or scale of the president's efforts to overturn the 2020 election, but they have occurred without any objection from fellow partisans.

The Roberts Court

How the Supreme Court majority is supercharging election denial

OUR EXECUTIVE OVERRIDE REPORT focused on ways the executive branch of the federal government would seek to manipulate the midterms to keep the voters from having a meaningful say. It did not fully address the extent to which Trump's partisan allies on the Roberts Court would appear to further the strategy.

The Roberts Court's hostility to voting rights is not new. Nor is its willingness to license Trump's abuse of power. Still, in 2020, the Court repeatedly rejected Trump's barrage of litigation attempting to overthrow the election results in various states.

A series of recent decisions from the Roberts Court, however, has already played a substantial role in furthering the deceive, disrupt, deny strategy this time around. In these cases, the Roberts Court embraced and adopted the Trump administration's litigating position.

Louisiana v. Callais

Gutting the Voting Rights Act

While historically the Voting Rights Act was championed by both major parties, the Trump administration and its allies on the Roberts Court have actively sought to dismantle it. The Trump administration asked the Court to permit eliminating congressional districts that provided minority representation, and the Court agreed to do so in the midst of active elections to create a maximum advantage for its partisan allies. In subsequent litigation, the Roberts Court overturned a federal court ruling to bless a Republican move to disrupt ongoing elections and redraw districts, creating chaos and confusion notwithstanding the Court's purported Purcell principle.

Trump v. Slaughter

Presidential control of independent agencies

The Court's 6-3 ruling overturning *Humphrey's Executor* removed Congress's check on a president's ability to fire the heads of independent agencies. The decision overturned a 91-year-old precedent, representing a major expansion of presidential control over government. Soon after the decision, President Trump fired all three members of the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), a bipartisan, independent commission Congress created to support the administration of elections. Trump's White House argued "[t]he *Slaughter* decision gives the President" the authority to fire these officials. The Federal Election Commission (FEC) is another of the multimember, bipartisan agencies built on the same design as the FTC, so the logic of this ruling raises the prospect that a president could also remove FEC commissioners who resist enforcement actions the president wants, replacing them with loyalists, and turning the very body meant to police campaign-finance law and election conduct into an instrument of the executive override strategy.

NRSC v. FEC

Allowing more political party spending

The Court, again 6-3, struck down limits on coordinated spending between political parties and their candidates, removing a Watergate-era anti-corruption safeguard. The law at issue limited how much national and state party committees could spend in coordination with federal candidates. Because party committees are controlled by party leadership, the ruling concentrates new financial leverage in the hands of whichever officials run the national party apparatus at a given moment — adding yet another lever that Trump can wield in his override strategy.

Fortunately, the Court did not take the Trump administration's bait in a case (*Watson v. Republican National Committee*) on counting mail-in ballots, upholding a Mississippi law that allowed counting of legal ballots postmarked by election day but received a few days later. And yet, four Justices would have prevented these ballots from being counted; with Justice Alito's dissent steeped in election conspiracies in ways that echo the deceive strategy.

Taken together, the aggressive interventions from the Roberts Court in just the last few months substantially accelerate the deceive, disrupt, deny strategy. They tilt the playing field toward Trump's and Roberts's partisan allies, make it harder for eligible people to vote, easier for disinformation to spread, and invite the types of shenanigans that enable election subversion.

And yet, while the administration's allies on the Court are placing their thumb on the scale to advance their partisan interests, the Supreme Court has not — and cannot — taken away the people's power to elect our representatives and hold them democratically accountable.

What our March report said remains true: “If the public is informed, officials are supported and prepared, civil society is standing firm, the legal community holds the line, and Americans show up — as voters, as volunteers, as protesters — then by the time any dispute reaches Congress or the courts, the facts will be unmistakable: Trump and his allies will be asking them to do something plainly preposterous to overturn a legitimate result. That is a very different situation from a cloud of manufactured uncertainty in which a compliant Congress or Court feels that they have the space to do the wrong thing.”

And the good news is that preparations are well underway to ensure that the voters will have the last say.

Defeating the playbook

How We the People are defeating the override strategy

IN EXECUTIVE OVERRIDE we assessed that for Trump's efforts to undermine our elections to be successful, the administration would have to divide and conquer many targets. Among them: election officials, judges, Congress, and civil society organizations. And the American people would have to be cowed into capitulation. Because they, we, each of us are the backbone of our electoral system.

In the face of attacks from the federal government, if people in key roles follow the law and do the right thing, we will be able to protect the 2026 election.

That's for many reasons.

First, the executive override strategy requires breaking the law — the president in our constitutional system has no power over elections. No surprise, then, that over and over again federal district courts are finding Trump's election power grabs to be unlawful. The administration is 0-13 in cases about its attempt to grab state voter roll data, has lost cases on the Postal Service's role in deciding who gets to vote, and lost cases on the efforts to build a new national voter database.

Second, our elections are run in all 50 states, creating an important bulwark. Most state and local officials in most of the country continue to do the hard work of planning to run fair and effective elections.

Third, the president is wildly unpopular, limiting his ability to consolidate full political power and coerce others to engage in illegal actions.

And fourth, the American people are doing the work to ensure we can vote, have our votes counted, and make sure the winners take office.

Just as we have seen the executive override strategy in full effect in the last few months, so too have we seen the people standing up for elections.

Pressure on Congress

One place we're seeing the fruits of that is in Congress. Because people are putting pressure on their representatives in the Senate and House, we've seen bipartisan majorities thwart some of his worst override priorities. In particular:

- Congress has, at least for now, rejected Trump's demands that it enact the SAVE Act.
- Congress forced Trump to back down, at least initially, on creating the slush fund.
- Congress forced Trump to change his plans, at least for a while, on making Pulte the Director of National Intelligence.

Trump is fighting even his own party tooth and nail to override what Congress wants. He continues to demand the SAVE Act, continues to say he'll create some sort of slush fund, and pulled his own DNI nominee on the day of his confirmation hearing to put Pulte in the job. But the pressure from the American people on Congress is working, and even some Republicans are beginning to stand up to Trump.

The pressure on Congress is just one of many ways that the American people are acting to safeguard our elections.

In the past four months, we have seen how countless “small” acts of bravery beget a cascade of courage, and have provided inspiration, collective energy, and the kind of public support throughout the nation for election officials, judges, and civil society organizations to do the right thing and protect the integrity of our electoral process.

Standing up for each other

The Trump administration's attacks on communities and constituencies around the country — everything from deploying troops and masked agents into American cities, trying to withhold funding from states, and even gutting federal research money critical to the science community — has not isolated and intimidated Americans, and has instead had the opposite effect, inspiring us all to unify and mobilize to defend the right to vote and effect change.

In the wake of the administration's attacks on nonprofits like the SPLC and OOC, over 100 activist groups published a joint letter of solidarity declaring that an attack on one group is an attack on all. Leaders and civil rights advocates organized behind-the-scenes strategy calls to coordinate both legal defense and public messaging to fight the government's fictions about SPLC. Members of Congress have demanded legal justification for the raids of the OOC and described the FBI's actions there as “a blatant effort to suppress and deny the vote.” National organizers coordinated rallies, including the nonpartisan Good Trouble Lives On weekend of action, to promote voter registration.

As the administration has eliminated thousands of federal scientific positions, imposed funding cuts at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Science Foundation (NSF), and dismantled the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) vaccine advisory committee, once again, Americans refused to be bullied. "A resistance emerged," as Protect Democracy's Allie Cashel wrote, and "over the past several months is beginning to look like the early architecture of a movement." One of many examples: "Inside federal agencies, scientists and career workers have faced these pressures most directly. The Federal Workers Alliance for Democracy (FWAD) has built a growing coalition of workers and allies mobilizing the federal workforce to refuse compliance with dangerous and illegal orders, building networks across every federal agency in every state."

This June, after Trump's DOJ indicted 15 anti-ICE protesters in Minnesota, including a union carpenter and a Buddhism professor at Macalester College, some 50 labor and religious groups unified to publicly condemn the indictments as another attempt to intimidate political opponents: "We've seen this playbook before: when self-serving politicians are losing, they lie, lash out, and attempt political repression ... But Minnesotans have already proven we won't cave ..."

And for one of the countless examples of how Gen Z has engaged: After New Hampshire passed a strict law eliminating sworn affidavits for voter registration, the New Hampshire Youth Movement led a federal lawsuit to protect first-time and out-of-state student voters. In May 2026, a federal court struck down the law as unconstitutional, ensuring tens of thousands of young citizens could vote without facing prohibitive bureaucratic hurdles.

Creating accountability

It has become clear that the Trump administration deploying ICE/DHS agents into American cities is a test run for potentially installing those agents to "monitor polling stations;" doing so would violate federal laws that explicitly ban the deployment of armed federal agents and troops to polling stations. Yet, Trump's new Secretary of Homeland Security Markwayne Mullin has said that he would deploy DHS/ICE agents to polling areas if there is a "specific threat" and/or to ensure "only citizens of the United States are voting." There is ample precedent set by this administration to see the latter statement as baseless pretext for the former — deceive to disrupt. The administration has encouraged DHS officers to feel emboldened, with "federal immunity in the conduct of your duties."

In response, state leaders, along with many organizations, including Protect Democracy, have worked to enact a law that would serve as an additional deterrent and mechanism for accountability. The Universal Constitutional Remedies Act (UCRA) would allow state

residents to sue federal agents/officials who violate their constitutional rights, and if federal forces are unlawfully deployed to “police” a polling place, voters and civil rights organizations could take immediate legal action. In the wake of the violent and even fatal attacks on some of the tens of thousands of Americans who protested ICE in their communities, Massachusetts, California, and New Jersey now have bills moving through their legislatures that would enable residents to file a suit against ICE/DHS agents. Vermont, New York, and Connecticut have already passed such a law.

What you can do

Our strategy to keep elections free and fair and how you fit in

THE ADMINISTRATION'S deceive, disrupt, deny strategy may feel overwhelming (that's intentional). But our movement has a strategy too, and the most important contributions are simple ones. Here are three principles to guide your engagement and our top priority actions everyone can take to defend elections this fall.

1 Start close to home.

You have the most influence over your own actions and your immediate community: your family, friends, coworkers, faith community, or union. That's where your effort goes furthest and can really make a difference.

2 Find a lane and move.

Many campaigns and groups are organizing to defend our elections, and every successful effort has used a wide range of tactics, adjusting as the facts changed. You don't have to find the perfect tactic. Pick action over agonizing.

3 Bring what only you can.

Your skills, relationships, and resources are the movement's raw materials — and we need those! Lean into the actions that fit your daily life and interests because those are the habits you'll stick with.

The strategies on the following pages show you how.

Organize

Stop voter suppression and election sabotage, starting now.

- **Double-check your voter registration status** and then send the lookup link to friends and family.
- **Check your state's key dates and deadlines**, and put them in your calendar or sign up for text alerts. Make sure you understand your state's ID requirements!
- **Make a plan to vote early and in person**, and make sure your community has one too.
- **Find your people.** Once your friends and family are set, decide who you'll engage over the coming months. Start the conversation about what you can do together.

Vote

Vote for the candidates of your choice. And as an act of solidarity, get out the vote everywhere.

- Think through who in your community may need support to vote. Can you help give a ride, a reminder, time off if you're an employer? Help a young person voting for the first time? Set a goal to support as many people as you can.
- Sign up to be an election worker. Competent, compassionate poll workers make an extraordinary difference in whether elections run smoothly and every eligible voter can cast a ballot and have it counted.
- **Sign up to help cure ballots.** In most states, voters who make a minor mistake, like forgetting to sign the outer envelope, get a chance to fix it and have their vote counted. Cure programs reach those voters in time to do it (look for opportunities to sign up with the League of Women Voters or Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law in the fall).

Prove

Make the results unquestionable.

- **Serve as a poll observer across the process.** Volunteer for logic-and-accuracy testing (where election officials test the machines before voting begins), early vote, election day, mail ballot canvassing, and any audits or recounts. Then share what you saw, however feels comfortable. Firsthand accounts build invaluable credibility and trust.

- **Be your community's trusted source.** Before and after the election, our communities will be flooded with misinformation about the election process and results. Decide now where you'll get reliable information — [electionline](#) and [Votebeat](#) are great places to start — and be the person who shares it. Learn more about how to combat disinformation [here](#).
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Hold the line

Make sure the winners take office.

The precise work of the post-election period will become clearer as the administration's strategy plays out. And we will tell you about it as it does. Some of it we can predict now.

- **Protect the certification process in your community.** The officials who certify results answer to our communities, [so learn who yours are](#), and let them know, before the election, that you expect a lawful process.
 - **Be prepared for peaceful mass mobilization.** [Sign up for updates and alerts](#), so that if the moment calls for mass mobilization, you hear it early. Know that everything above is preparation for this stage: a movement that fought, won, and will be ready to hold.
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Additional Resources

- [How You Can Protect Democracy](#) – Our team updates this page every week with resources and priority actions from across the movement.
- [Gen Z Election Defense Toolkit](#)
- [Business Election Defense Toolkit](#)
- [Faith Communities Election Defense Toolkit](#)
- [How to spot \(and push back against\) federal voter intimidation](#)



Protect Democracy is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing American democracy from declining into a more authoritarian form of government.

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