

# American Autocracy Threat Tracker

## *A Comprehensive Catalog Based on Donald Trump and His Associates' Plans, Promises, and Propositions*

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### Introduction

Former President Donald Trump has said he will be a dictator on “day one.” He and his advisors and associates have publicly discussed hundreds of actions to be taken during a second Trump presidency that directly threaten democracy. These vary from Trump breaking the law and abusing power in areas like immigration roundups and energy extraction; to summarily and baselessly firing tens of thousands of civil servants whom he perceives as adversaries; to prosecuting his political opponents for personal gain and even hinting at executing some of them. We track all of these promises, plans, and pronouncements here and we will continue to update them in real time.

We assess there is a significant risk of autocracy should Trump regain the presidency. Trump has said he would deploy the [military against civilian protestors](#) and his advisors have developed plans for [using the Insurrection Act](#), said he would invoke the [Alien Enemies Act](#) to conduct deportations of non-citizens, continued to [threaten legally-established abortion rights](#), and even had his lawyers argue that a president should be [immune from prosecution](#) if he directed SEAL Team Six to assassinate his political enemies. Trump also seeks the power to protect his personal wealth as he faces [staggering civil fines](#), and to bolster his immunity as he faces [91 criminal charges](#) in prosecutions in different parts of the country.

While Trump has claimed he will be a dictator for only the first day of his administration, his promise to do so—even for 24 hours—is antithetical to American democracy. [History teaches us that dictatorial powers, once assumed, are rarely relinquished.](#) Moreover, Trump cannot possibly achieve his stated goals for the use of that power (in immigration and energy policy) in one day, meaning that his “dictatorship” would of necessity likely last much longer.

Trump’s former advisors—those with the most experience watching him govern behind the scenes—believe he is a danger to the country. John Bolton, Trump’s former National Security Advisor, [said](#), “I think Trump will cause significant damage in a second term, damage that in some cases will be irreparable.” Alyssa Farah Griffin, former Trump White House Director of Strategic Communications, [noted](#), “Fundamentally, a second Trump term could mean the end of American democracy as we know it, and I don't say that lightly.”

Trump's dictatorial aspirations are complemented by an extensive pre-election plan to fundamentally alter the nature of American government: the [Heritage Foundation's 2025 Presidential Transition Project \(Project 2025\)](#). Created by Trump allies and staffed by those including his past and [likely future](#) administration appointees, it is in the words of Heritage Foundation president Kevin Roberts, a plan for "[institutionalizing Trumpism](#)." Trump has returned the compliment, [saying](#) of Roberts (and Heritage) that he's "doing an unbelievable job, he's bringing it back to levels we've never seen ... thank you Kevin."

Project 2025's plans are set forth in an 887-page document entitled "[Mandate for Leadership: the Conservative Promise](#)." It details a program to consolidate power in the executive branch, deconstruct the federal administration, and strip remaining agencies of their independence. It proposes to dismantle the Departments of Justice and State; eliminate the Departments of Homeland Security, Education, and Commerce; radically repurpose other agencies; and eviscerate the professional civil service. Project 2025 is complemented by other 2025 planning efforts by, for example, the [America First Policy Institute](#), the [Center for Renewing America](#), and the [Conservative Partnership Institute](#).

Trump and his associates are reportedly discussing building an administration around loyalists who would "[stretch legal and governance boundaries](#)." Among those *Axios* [reports](#) to be under discussion for senior government posts are Stephen Miller, Kash Patel, Steve Bannon, and Jeffrey Clark, who is currently under indictment in Georgia for his role in the fake electors scheme.

We ignore leaders who promise dictatorship—and those who enable them—at our own peril. To see what America might become under Trump's authoritarian aspirations, we should look at the regimes of other contemporary autocrats, such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who Trump admires and [frequently praises](#). Trump has been [mirroring recent autocratic moves in Hungary and elsewhere](#). Orbán packed the judiciary to place that branch of government squarely under his control; rewrote election laws to retain his legislative majority; censored the press; used law enforcement to persecute his enemies; and changed Hungary's constitution to help achieve his autocratic goals. The United States, [like many other functioning democracies](#), is not immune from backsliding and lurching toward autocracy.

Because past is prologue, it is also important to analyze relevant data points from the first Trump administration. We include considerable indicators of autocratic tendencies from 2017-2021, such as Trump's calling for the Department of Justice to prosecute his political enemies, claiming that Article II of the Constitution gave him the authority to do "anything I wanted," shamelessly violating the Constitution's Emoluments Clause to use his government position to enrich himself and his family, and many more. That all culminated in the attempted interruption of the peaceful transfer of power following the 2020 election.

Trump's followers are getting the message. On February 22, 2024 at the CPAC conference, right-wing political activist [Jack Posobiec said](#), "Welcome to the end of democracy. We're here to overthrow it completely. We didn't get all the way there on January 6 but we will endeavor to

get rid of it and replace it with this right here,” raising his fist. (Some media reports [state](#) he was holding up a small crucifix.) Posobiec has been described as “[a Trump favorite](#),” and Trump in 2020 [tweeted](#), “That’s right Jack. Keep up the good work!” in response to a Posobiec tweet informing his followers that the then president read his feed. When Trump spoke at the end of that same CPAC conference on February 24, he did not repudiate Posobiec’s comments. On the contrary, he too seemed to condone the January 6 attack, calling the perpetrators who have been sentenced to prison for their crimes that day “[hostages](#).” He also attacked the functioning of American democracy and positioned himself as a strongman savior, stating, “Our country is being destroyed. And the only thing standing between you and its obliteration is me.”

Below we organize Trump’s and his allies’ autocratic plans by topic, providing full citations to their comments and the factual record. We also offer some potential solutions to address the threat both now and should it come to pass in 2025. That will be considerably expanded in future editions and as we have noted, this full Threat Tracker will continue to be updated regularly.

For public reference, we have also created a [searchable data set](#) of all of Trump’s Truth Social posts, which we will also update regularly. They are an important source for tracking the scope of his plans, although we have also drawn information from hundreds of other sources as shown in the links supporting each entry herein.

If you think we have missed something, please send recommendations to [lte@justsecurity.org](mailto:lte@justsecurity.org).

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## I. Day 1 Dictatorship Promise: Immigration

- [Dec. 6, 2023, Davenport, Iowa](#): Sean Hannity asked Trump whether Trump intended to abuse power or break the law, to which Trump answered, “Except for day one. I want to close the border, and I want to drill, drill, drill.” Trump then immediately doubled down on the exchange, describing it for the audience using the word “dictator” – “He [Hannity] says, ‘You’re not going to be a dictator, are you?’ I said: ‘No, no, no, other than day one. We’re closing the border, and we’re drilling, drilling, drilling. After that, I’m not a dictator.’”
  - [Dec. 11, 2023, New York](#): Less than one week later, Trump tripled down on his dictator comment. “I said I want to be a dictator for one day. You know why I wanted to be a dictator? Because I want a wall, and I want to drill, drill, drill.”
- Trump’s proposed immigration policies go far beyond securing the border and limiting illegal immigration. He has embraced ordering unlawful immigration roundups and travel bans, using the military domestically to purge undocumented immigrants, violating the Constitution’s guarantee of birthright citizenship, and prosecuting American officials and organizations who don’t comply with his policies.
- Trump has [repeated](#) his [promise](#) to “[carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.](#)” His plan will significantly restrict both legal and illegal immigration by expanding and toughening draconian immigration and asylum measures introduced by his previous administration, causing millions of undocumented immigrants to be kicked out of the country even after years or decades of having lived here. His proposed policies will see individuals [rushed “through the system, stripping due process protections from them, eliminating any access to legal services, and really transforming this into an assembly line deportation machine.”](#) according to the American Immigration Council’s policy director.
- Trump and team seek to [broadly abuse existing statutes to avoid congressional scrutiny.](#) Despite acknowledging the array of lawsuits that would arise from his planned immigration policies, Stephen Miller, the former White House advisor who oversaw Trump’s border efforts during the first administration, expressed defiance. He said that Trump’s second term would [utilize a “blitz” of tactics to overwhelm immigration lawyers](#) that sought to challenge the lawfulness of policies. To ensure deportations are “radically more quick and efficient,” Miller said, the Trump team would bring in “[the right kinds of attorneys](#) and the right kinds of policy thinkers” willing to carry out Trump’s ideas.

- Although federal law [generally prohibits](#) the [military from domestic law enforcement](#), Trump’s proposed immigration policies rely heavily on the military to assist law enforcement to purge undocumented immigrants via raids.
  - As reported by *The New York Times*, *Axios*, and *The Hill*, Trump’s policies call for using military funds to hold undocumented detainees in [newly built military-style camps](#), to get around any refusal by Congress to appropriate the funds, as he did in his first term to spend more on the wall than Congress had authorized. Trump’s proposal calls for U.S. [Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(ICE\) agents to be sent into the streets](#) to arrest millions, [assisted by agents reassigned](#) from the [FBI, DEA and DHS](#) as well as [deputized local police officers and state National Guard soldiers](#) voluntarily provided by Republican-run states.
  - [April 27, 2023, Manchester, NH](#), Trump said: “We will use all necessary state, local, federal, and military resources to carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.” (emphasis added)
  - [Stephen Miller described the camps](#) as “vast holding facilities that would function as staging centers” for immigrants as their cases progress through the system. The camps would be built “on open land in Texas near the border.” “He said the military would construct them under the authority and control of the Department of Homeland Security. While he cautioned that there were no specific blueprints yet, he said the camps would look professional and similar to other facilities for migrants that have been built near the border.”
  - [Stephen Miller said](#) that the Trump administration [would again](#) try to [overturn](#) the [Flores settlement](#), which forbids the government from indefinitely holding children.
  
- Trump plans to invoke the Insurrection Act at the border and use the military to detain migrants.
  - Confirming late last year Trump’s plan to invoke the Act, Stephen Miller said, [“Bottom line...President Trump will do whatever it takes.”](#)
  - In May 2019, multiple senior Trump administration officials confirmed the president’s intent to use [“tremendous powers”](#) under the Act to remove immigrants.
  - In [February 2019](#), Trump was reportedly “a few sentences away” from using the military to “forcibly expel” migrants from a caravan heading toward the southern border, according to a book by Miles Taylor, Trump’s then chief of staff at the Department of Homeland Security.
  
- Trump has pledged to invoke the [Alien Enemies Act](#), which applies only where there is a declared war with or a threat of invasion by a foreign nation, to speedily and unilaterally deport from the United States all suspected gang members, drug dealers or cartel members, circumventing ICE deportation processes and due process.
  - [Nov. 4, 2023, Florida Freedom Summit](#): Trump said, “This is a bomb that’s waiting to happen...And I will invoke the Alien Enemies Act to remove all known

and suspected gang members, like MS-13, drug dealers and Cartel members from the United States.”

- [Sept. 20, 2023, Dubuque, IA](#), Trump said: “I’ll...invoke immediately the Alien Enemies Act to remove all known or suspected gang members...the drug dealers, the cartel members from the United States, ending the scourge of illegal alien gang violence once and for all.”
- [June 25, 2023, Twitter](#): The Trump campaign posted, “Invoke the Alien Enemies Act to remove all known or suspected Gang Members, drug dealers, or Cartel Members from the U.S.” The post was [reposted by Stephen Miller](#), who added, “Huge. Trump pledging to invoke Alien Enemies Act to remove the cartel invaders from the United States.”
- [June 24, 2023, Washington, DC](#): Trump said, “I will invoke the Alien Enemies Act...to remove all known and suspected gang members, drug dealers, or cartel members from the United States.”
- Trump has said he plans to reimpose and expand his administration’s previous [predominantly Muslim country travel ban](#).
  - [July 7, 2023, Iowa](#): Trump said, “When I return to office, the travel ban is coming back even bigger than before and much stronger than before. We don’t want people blowing up our shopping centers. We don’t want people blowing up our cities. And we don’t want people stealing our farms.”
  - [Oct. 17, 2023, Newsweek op-ed](#), Trump said: “we are going to expand each and every ban to keep America safe. We aren’t bringing in anyone from Gaza or Syria or Somalia or Yemen, or Libya, or anywhere else that threatens our security.”
  - [Oct. 16, 2023, Clive, Iowa](#): Trump said, “As I’ve already said many, many times before, I will immediately reinstate and expand the wildly successful Trump travel ban...We aren’t bringing in anyone from Gaza, Syria, Somalia, Yemen, or Libya, or anywhere else that threatens our security.”
  - [Sept. 20, 2023, Iowa](#): Trump said he would “expand” the ban “even further to keep Radical Islamic Terrorists out of our country.”
- Trump plans to use ideological purity tests for immigrant applicants and to deport resident aliens—foreign nationals who are in the U.S. legally. In pledging to disqualify immigrants who sympathize with Islamic terrorists, Trump has lumped in groups he characterizes as communists, Marxists, and fascists. Trump’s “[strong ideological screening](#)” reportedly will be [led by U.S. consular officials](#), with screening to include [searching social media accounts](#) (a practice that [began under the Trump administration](#)). Note that ICE and top White House lawyers under the former Trump administration concluded that ideological screenings on foreign nationals would be [illegal to implement](#).
  - [Oct. 17, 2023, Newsweek op-ed](#), Trump said: “Next, we will implement strong ideological screening for all immigrants to the United States. No longer will we allow dangerous lunatics, haters, bigots, and maniacs to get residency in our country. If you empathize with Radical Islamic terrorists and extremists, you’re disqualified. If you want to abolish the state of Israel, you’re disqualified. If you



- support Hamas or the ideology behind Hamas, you're disqualified. And if you're a Communist, Marxist, or Fascist, you are disqualified.”
- [Oct. 17, 2023, Newsweek op-ed](#), Trump said: “Under my administration, we will proactively send ICE to pro-jihadist demonstrations to enforce our immigration laws and remove the violators from our country.”
  - [Oct. 16, 2023, Iowa](#): Trump said, “Next we will implement strong ideological screening of all immigrants to the United States. No longer will we allow dangerous lunatics, haters, bigots, and maniacs to get residency in our country. We're not gonna let them stay here. We're...gonna have the largest deportation effort in history.”
  - [Oct. 16, 2023, Iowa](#): Trump said, “If you empathize with Radical Islamic terrorists and extremists, you're disqualified. You're just disqualified. If you want to abolish the state of Israel, you're disqualified. If you support Hamas or the ideology that's having to do with that, or any of the other really sick thoughts that go through people's minds, very dangerous thoughts. You're disqualified if you're a Communist, a Marxist, or a Fascist, other than the people that are already here you are, of which many are in the Biden administration, you're disqualified. We'd like to get them out too. Maybe we'll work on that.”
  - [Oct. 16, 2023, Iowa](#): Trump said, “We'll aggressively deport resident aliens with jihadist sympathies. We have to.”
  - [Sept. 20, 2023, Iowa](#): Trump said he would use existing law to “expand” his travel ban and “deny entry” into the U.S. for “communists and Marxists.”
  - [June 24, 2023, Washington, DC](#): Trump said he would use Section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act to “order my government to deny entry to all communists and all Marxists.” “Those who come to enjoy our country must love our country.” “We're going to keep foreign, Christian-hating communists, Marxists and socialists out of America.” Trump also said that there was a need for a “new law” to address Americans he characterizes as communists and Marxists but didn't elaborate any further.
- Trump [again](#) said he plans to [end birthright citizenship](#) for babies born in the United States to undocumented parents, in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment.
    - [June 10, 2023, Georgia GOP Convention](#): “We're going to do an Executive Order Day One, so important, ending automatic citizenship for children of illegal aliens.”
    - [May 30, 2023, video posted on X](#): “As part of my plan to secure the border on Day 1...I will sign an executive order making clear to federal agencies that under the correct interpretation of the law, going forward, the future children of illegal aliens will not receive automatic U.S. citizenship.”
    - [Oct. 29, 2018, Axios interview](#): “It was always told to me that you needed a constitutional amendment. Guess what? You don't.” “You can definitely do it with an Act of Congress. But now they're saying I can do it just with an executive order.” “We're the only country in the world where a person comes in and has a baby, and the baby is essentially a citizen of the United States ... with all of those

benefits.” “It’s ridiculous. It’s ridiculous. And it has to end.” “It’s in the process. It’ll happen...with an executive order.”

- Trump has pledged to terminate all work permits and housing benefits for undocumented immigrants.
  - [Nov. 4, 2023, Florida Freedom Summit](#): Trump said, “On day one I will shut down this travesty and terminate all work permits for illegal aliens and demand that Congress send me a bill outlawing all welfare payments to illegal migrants of any kind.”
  - [Nov. 1, 2023, campaign video](#): Trump said, “I will reinstate my action making illegals ineligible for public housing.”
  - [Nov. 1, 2023, campaign video](#): Trump said, “We will terminate all work permits for illegal aliens, and I will demand that Congress send me a bill blocking any future president from abusing his power to distribute welfare benefits in this manner.”
- Trump has vowed to prosecute charities, nonprofits and aid organizations that support immigration and asylum.
  - [Nov. 4, 2023, Florida Freedom Summit](#), Trump said: “And for any radical left charity, non-profit or so called aid organizations supporting these caravans and illegal aliens, we will prosecute them for their participation in human trafficking, child smuggling and every other crime we can find.”
- Trump said he intends to use criminal penalties for bureaucrats who do not comply with his “total ban on ... using taxpayer dollars to free illegal aliens.”
  - [Dec. 21, 2022, Truth Social](#): Trump posted, “NO AMNESTY! Our border is open because Joe Biden has ordered it to be open and because Biden has broken the law and torn it into shreds. He has shredded our system, and he is destroying our Country. We need a total ban on Biden using taxpayer dollars to free illegal aliens — and criminal penalties for administrative noncompliance, which happens every single minute of every single day.”
- Those permitted a temporary stay on humanitarian grounds [would lose that status and be deported](#), including tens of thousands of the Afghans evacuated during the 2021 Taliban takeover and granted entry to the United States. Also, Afghans who hold special visas granted for their help to U.S. forces would be rechecked to check if they really did offer support.
- Trump has refused to rule out the possibility of reimplementing his highly-criticized policy that separated families at the southern border.
  - [May 11, 2023, Goffstown, NH](#): During a CNN Town Hall, Trump said, “Well, when you have that policy, people don’t come. If a family hears they’re going to be separated, they love their family, they don’t come. So I know it sounds harsh,” Pressed further by the moderator, Trump resisted giving a firm answer. “We have



to save our country,” he said. “When you say to a family that if you come we’re going to break you up, they don’t come.”

- Stephen Miller said Trump plans to again [try to end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals \(DACA\)](#), an Obama-era program that provides protection from deportation and grants work to those who were brought unlawfully to the United States as children. In June 2020, in a 5-4 opinion, the [Supreme Court blocked Trump’s attempt to end DACA](#) on procedural grounds.
- Trump wants to [refuse asylum claims by reimposing Title 42](#), a policy [he used during Covid-19](#) by claiming that migrants carry infectious diseases like tuberculosis and other communicable diseases.
  - [June 30, 2023, Moms for Liberty Event](#), Trump said, “And I will use Title 42...to end the child trafficking crisis by returning all trafficked children to their families in their home countries immediately.”
- Key former figures in the Trump administration who would likely be back at the decision-making table have given glimpses into their immigration-related plans.
  - Trump’s former key immigration adviser, Stephen Miller, is [expected](#) to play a “[senior role](#)” in Trump’s administration, pushing ahead on reinvigorating the administration’s previous hard stance on immigration and asylum issues. Miller [wielded](#) great [influence over](#) Trump’s previous immigration policies. Only days after Trump took office in 2017, Miller began [gathering a group of bureaucrats perceived to be loyal to Trump](#) to start drafting executive orders; and in [recent interviews](#) he has essentially [boasted](#) that he would move even faster and more forcefully, again [recruiting swathes of loyalist lawyers](#). Note that Miller also leads the conservative legal group “[America First Legal](#),” which “[has a board seat with Project 2025](#).”
    - [NYT, Nov. 1, 2023](#), Miller said: “Any activists who doubt President Trump’s resolve in the slightest are making a drastic error: Trump will unleash the vast arsenal of federal powers to implement the most spectacular migration crackdown...The immigration legal activists won’t know what’s happening.”
    - [NYT, Nov. 1, 2023](#), Miller said: “Mass deportation will be a labor-market disruption celebrated by American workers, who will now be offered higher wages with better benefits to fill these jobs.” “Americans will also celebrate the fact that our nation’s laws are now being applied equally, and that one select group is no longer magically exempt.”
    - [Axios, Aug. 21, 2023](#), Miller said: “The first 100 days of the Trump administration will be pure bliss — followed by another four years of the most hard-hitting action conceivable.”
    - [Axios, Aug. 21, 2023](#), Miller said: Being in lockstep with Trump’s immigration goals would be “non-negotiable priority” for any applicant hoping to secure a spot in Trump’s administration.

- Tom Homan, former Acting Director of ICE under the Trump administration, [recounted](#) a meeting he had with Trump soon after he announced his 2024 campaign.
  - [NYT, Nov. 1, 2023](#), Homan said: I “agreed to come back” in a second Trump term and would “help to organize and run the largest deportation operation this country’s ever seen.”
  - [Fox News, Dec. 17, 2023](#), Homan said in an interview with Fox News, “People say, ‘How are you going to remove millions?’ The answer is: One at a time.” “No one’s off the table. If you’re in the country illegally in violation of immigration law, you are a target.” “It’s going to have to result in a historic — the biggest ever — deportation operation in the history of this country. That’s what happens. When you’ve got historic illegal immigration, well, that means you’ve got a historic removal program. That’s just the way it is. If we’re going to enforce our laws, that’s the way it is.” “We’re not going to turn a blind eye to them if they’re in the country illegally. We take them into custody. That’s our job. So, it isn’t like we walk through a neighborhood looking for people who look different from us. These are targeted enforcement operations.”
- Trump has continued to use inflammatory and xenophobic rhetoric against immigrants whom he says seek to “invade” and “poison” the United States.
  - [Jan. 5, 2024, Sioux Center, IA](#): Trump said: “But a vote for Donald Trump in these caucuses is a vote to secure our border. It’s a vote to stop the invasion of millions of people from parts unknown. We don’t even know where the hell they come from. They come from parts unknown.”
  - [Nov. 8, 2023, Hialeah, FL](#): Trump said: “Anybody ever hear of Hannibal Lecter? “He was a nice fellow. But that’s what’s coming into our country right now.”
  - [September 2023 interview with \*The National Pulse\*](#), Trump said that immigration into the United States is “poisoning the blood of our country.” “Nobody has any idea where these people are coming from, and we know they come from prisons. We know they come from mental institutions and insane asylums. We know they’re terrorists. Nobody has ever seen anything like we’re witnessing right now. It is a very sad thing for our country. It’s poisoning the blood of our country. It’s so bad, and people are coming in with disease. People are coming in with every possible thing that you could have.”
  - [March 13, 2023, Davenport, IA](#), Trump said: “And I said, ‘This is an invasion of our country.’ And it is, by the way. This is an invasion of our country, what’s coming across our border. It’s no different than soldiers. And they’re bringing a lot of different problems than soldiers would bring. They’re not bringing merely bullets. They’re bringing plenty of them, but they’re causing tremendous problems for our country. And it’s a problem that we may have a very, very long...Unless we do something quickly, and we have to do it smart, and we have to work with law enforcement to do it properly, it’s not going to be easy, but

- they're hurting our country. They're killing the blood, the lifestream of our country, and we're going to do something about it.”
- [March 5, 2023, CPAC](#), Trump said: “Other countries are emptying out their prisons, insane asylums and mental institutions and sending all of their problems right into their dumping ground: the U.S.A...We have complete chaos. Fentanyl is pouring in. Families are being wiped out, destroyed, and there's death everywhere, all caused by incompetence.”
  - [Nov. 14, 2022, Mar-a-Lago](#), Trump said: “Our Southern border has been erased, and our country is being invaded by millions and millions of unknown people...We're being poisoned.”
- Trump has claimed that unnamed South American countries are releasing their mentally ill patients into the United States—a claim that has been widely [rebuffed](#).
    - [March 5, 2023, CPAC](#), Trump said: “Anybody see Silence of the Lamb[s]? That's where they come from. Insane asylum. That's a stronger word than a mental institution. And they're putting them into our country”
    - [Nov. 8, 2023, Hialeah, FL](#): Trump said: “Anybody ever hear of Hannibal Lecter? He was a nice fellow. But that's what's coming into our country right now.”
    - [April 14, 2023, National Rifle Association speech](#): Trump said: “I read a story not long ago where a man who takes care of a large segment of people in a mental institution in a South American country, a doctor, sounded like a great man actually, he said he no longer has anything to do. He used to work 24 hour days. He said, ‘All of our patients have been released into the United States of America.’ And this is what we have. This is what we've allowed to happen. And we can't allow this to happen because we will not have a country any longer. We can't allow it to happen.”
    - [April 27, 2023, NH](#), Trump said: “Why do you want people from prisons and mental institutions and insane asylums? That's a step above, that's Silence of the Lamb type....There was a story recently about a psychologist. Or psychiatrist. But a psychologist who worked in mental wards in South America. And he said, ‘I worked 24...’ – a good man – he worked 24 hours a day taking care of very mentally ill people. And he was sitting there reading a newspaper and they asked him, ‘what – what's he doing?’ He said, ‘I have no more work. The people have all been let go into the United States.’ Can you believe [it]? This is what we're doing.”
    - [March 2023, Waco, TX](#), Trump said: “Other countries are emptying out their prisons and sane asylums and mental institutions and sending their most heinous criminals to the United States. And who can blame them? Who can blame them? These are very smart people, the presidents and the heads of these countries, presidents, prime ministers, and dictators, I know them all. But they're very smart, very streetwise, and they're sending their criminals to live in the United States. We're talking about mental institutions and prisons. Think of it. And they're all coming in.” He continued: “I read a story recently, where a doctor in a mental institution, in a certain country in South America is saying, ‘My whole life, I've

been so busy taking care of people, but now, I have no people to take care of, because they're all being sent into the United States.' And I said, 'How stupid are we? How stupid are we? How stupid are we?'"

- Miller told the *NYT* that Trump would use [coercive diplomacy to induce other countries to assist](#) with his immigration plans, making cooperation a condition of any other bilateral engagement. Trump would rely heavily on Mexico to [revive](#) the “[Remain in Mexico](#)” policy, though it’s [unclear whether Mexico would agree](#). He would also [renegotiate deals with Central America, including Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador](#)—and potentially other countries—to send regional migrants there shortly after they arrive in the United States as “safe third countries.” Despite previous similar agreements only covering migrants who had previously passed through a third country, [federal law](#) does not require such passing and Trump would seek to make those deals without that requirement, in part as a deterrent.

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## II. **Day 1 Dictatorship Promise: Energy and the Environment**

- Trump’s dictator-for-a-day comments were also tied to his energy and environmental policies.
  - [Dec. 11, 2023](#): Trump said: “I said I want to be a dictator for one day. You know why I wanted to be a dictator? Because I want a wall, and I want to drill, drill, drill.”
  - [Dec. 6, 2023, Iowa](#): Hannity asked Trump whether Trump intended to abuse power or break the law, to which Trump answered “Except for day one. I want to close the border, and I want to drill, drill, drill.” Trump then immediately doubled down on the exchange, describing it for the audience using the word “dictator” – “He [Hannity] says, ‘You’re not going to be a dictator, are you?’ I said: ‘No, no, no, other than day one. We’re closing the border, and we’re drilling, drilling, drilling. After that, I’m not a dictator.’”
  - [Jan. 23, 2024, NH](#): “In the first year, they’re going to be reduced by 50% because we are going to drill, baby drill, drill, baby drill. Inflation is going to come way down, but in the first year, your energy costs are going down by 50%.”
  - [Feb. 9, 2024, NRA speech, PA](#): “We’re gonna drill, baby, drill. That’s what we’re gonna do[...]. We’re gonna drill, baby, drill. We’re gonna get our prices down.”
  - [Feb. 4, 2024, “Sunday Morning Futures”](#): In response to a question on the other ways he intends to reduce inflation, Trump said, “Well, among other things, it’s drill, drill, drill, yes.” Responding to “What else?,” Trump said: “It’s drill, drill, drill... There is no [sic] else. You have to get the oil.”
  - [Jan. 27, 2024, Las Vegas](#): Trump said: “[If I had been president] there wouldn’t have been an attack on Ukraine, and we wouldn’t have had any inflation. Inflation was caused by energy, by fuel, by oil going to \$100 and \$110 a barrel.” “That’s

what caused inflation, and we're going to bring it down because we're going to go drill, baby, drill. We drill, baby, drill. We're bringing it way down." "His inflation that he [Biden] caused and would've been so easy not to. All it was, is energy. Remember this, gasoline, fuel, oil, natural gas went up to a level that it was impossible."

- Trump plans to violate statutory requirements by using administrative agencies within the executive branch to promulgate rules that prevent oversight and regulation required by Congress.
  - For instance, Congress passed the bipartisan Toxic Substances Control Act in 2016, but [Trump's EPA illegally](#) withheld chemical safety studies where public disclosure was required, violated the law's requirements to review new chemicals, and refused to ask companies to disclose data required under the law.
  - He has embraced violating, in similar fashion, the [Endangered Species Act](#), the [Clean Water Act](#), and the [Clean Air Act](#).
  - Trump engaged in "a very aggressive attempt to rewrite our laws and reinterpret the meaning of environmental protections," [said Hana V. Vizcarra](#), a staff attorney at Harvard's Environmental and Energy Law Program.
  - With respect to Trump's Day One Dictator promise, Ed Crooks, Vice Chair for the Americas at Wood Mackenzie, [said the comments](#) point to the potential use of executive actions and rule changes "to lighten the regulatory burden on oil and gas companies."
  
- Trump has called global warming a "hoax."
  - [March 21, 2022, Fox Business](#): Trump called climate change a "hoax," explaining, "In my opinion, you have a thing called weather, and you go up, and you go down. If you look into the 1920s, they were talking about a global freezing, okay? In other words, the globe was going to freeze. And then they go global warming. Then they couldn't use that because the temperatures were actually quite cool. And many different things. So now they just talk about climate change. The climate's always been changing."
  - Trump has [repeatedly changed his position](#) on climate change and global warming. He has called global warming a "[canard](#)," a "[make-believe problem](#)," and a "[big scam](#)," [as well as blaming the Chinese for creating the concept of global warming to hurt American manufacturing](#). But he has also described climate change as "[Nothing's a hoax. It's a very serious subject](#)."
  - The Project 2025 agenda calls for a [radical reversal on climate change and clean energy policies](#):
    - "The next Administration should eliminate the Climate Hub Office and withdraw from climate change agreements that are inimical to the prosperity of the United States."
    - "Support repeal of massive spending bills like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which established new programs and are providing hundreds of billions of

dollars in subsidies to renewable energy developers, their investors, and special interests, and support the rescinding of all funds not already spent by these programs.”

- “The next conservative Administration should rescind all climate policies from its foreign aid programs.”
- Trump has called for repealing the energy and environment provisions within the Inflation Reduction Act.
  - [Jan. 16, 2024, Laconia, NH](#), Trump said: “On Day One, I will end Crooked Joe Biden’s insane electric vehicle mandate.”
- Trump has called for dismantling the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
  - [March 3, 2016](#): During the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump said, “Department of Environmental Protection: We are going to get rid of it in almost every form. We’re going to have little tidbits left. But we’re going to take a tremendous amount out.”
  - As [The Guardian detailed](#), Trump’s 2024 plan includes “systematically dismantling” the EPA, including cutting funding, rolling back regulations, forging closer ties to the fossil-fuel industry, and loosening fuel economy standards.

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### III. **Subverting the Rule of Law to Protect Himself from Prosecution**

- Trump has constantly attacked the criminal and civil cases against him. If re-elected, Trump could order the Department of Justice to drop the criminal prosecutions against him in Washington, DC regarding subverting the 2020 presidential election (the January 6th case) and in South Florida regarding the retention of large volumes of government documents (the Mar-a-Lago documents case). As president, Trump could try to dismiss the federal prosecutions during the appeals process even after he was convicted. Further, he could also try to pardon himself and other co-conspirators/potential cooperators. Also, Trump has threatened to interfere with the state prosecutions against him in New York and Georgia by retaliating against state officials involved with those prosecutions, including prosecutors, judges, judicial staff, and witnesses.
  - [Aug. 4, 2023, Truth Social](#), Trump wrote the day after pleading not guilty in the January 6th case: “IF YOU GO AFTER ME, I’M COMING AFTER YOU!”
  - [Sept. 21, 2023, Truth Social](#), he called for Congress to shut down the federal government in order to “defund these political prosecutions against me and other Patriots.”
  - [June 10, 2023, Georgia GOP Convention](#): Responding to the DOJ’s Mar-a-Lago indictment, Trump said: “This is a sick nest of people that needs to be cleaned out immediately. Get them out.”
  - [November 14, 2023, Truth Social](#): Trump reposted that New York Attorney General Letitia James and Judge Arthur Engoron, who is overseeing the New



York corporate fraud trial, should be placed under "CITIZENS [sic] ARREST FOR BLATANT ELECTION INTERFERENCE AND HARASSMENT."

- [November 10, 2023, Truth Social](#): Trump posted on social media that NY AG James "should be prosecuted" for bringing the case against him.
- [October 17, 2023, Truth Social](#): Trump said during a video posted on social media that the state of New York should "intercede and stop" the Office of the NY Attorney General's prosecution of the Trump Organization for fraud.
- [October 16, 2023, Truth Social](#): Trump shared a link of AG James' home address while accusing her of a "MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE AND ELECTION INTERFERENCE ALL WRAPPED UP IN ONE!" [Earlier in 2023](#), James revealed she had received death threats for pursuing the case against Trump.
- Trump considered pardoning himself during his first term and has not ruled out doing so if re-elected.
  - [Sept. 14, 2023, "Meet the Press"](#): Trump said it's "very unlikely" he would pardon himself if he won a second term in 2024 but declined to rule out a personal pardon if re-elected.
  - Trump discussed pardoning himself in the final days of his presidency, stating, "[I could've pardoned myself](#)" but that he decided against it. He claims he said, "The last thing I'd ever do is give myself a pardon," but other accounts suggest that several attorneys, including White House counsel Pat Cipollone and Attorney General Bill Barr, [dissuaded Trump from pardoning himself](#) after he brought it up several times.
  - At the end of his first term, [Trump considered granting pardons](#) to his three oldest children—Don Jr., Ivanka, and Eric Trump—as well as his son-in-law Jared Kushner.
- Trump has argued that he is above the law as president and has claimed complete immunity from prosecution.
  - [Jan. 18, 2024, Truth Social](#): Trump wrote, "A PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES MUST HAVE FULL IMMUNITY, WITHOUT WHICH IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM/HER TO PROPERLY FUNCTION. ANY MISTAKE, EVEN IF WELL INTENDED, WOULD BE MET WITH ALMOST CERTAIN INDICTMENT BY THE OPPOSING PARTY AT TERM END. EVEN EVENTS THAT "CROSS THE LINE" MUST FALL UNDER TOTAL IMMUNITY, OR IT WILL BE YEARS OF TRAUMA TRYING TO DETERMINE GOOD FROM BAD...ALL PRESIDENTS MUST HAVE COMPLETE & TOTAL PRESIDENTIAL IMMUNITY, OR THE AUTHORITY & DECISIVENESS OF A PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES WILL BE STRIPPED & GONE FOREVER."
  - [Jan. 27, 2024, Truth Social](#): Trump wrote, "IF IMMUNITY IS NOT GRANTED TO A PRESIDENT, EVERY PRESIDENT THAT LEAVES OFFICE WILL BE IMMEDIATELY INDICTED BY THE OPPOSING PARTY. WITHOUT COMPLETE IMMUNITY, A PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PROPERLY FUNCTION!"

- [Jan. 9, 2024, Truth Social](#): Trump wrote, “IF A PRESIDENT DOES NOT HAVE IMMUNITY, THE COURT WILL BE ‘OPENING THE FLOODGATES’ TO PROSECUTING FORMER PRESIDENTS. AN OPPOSING HOSTILE PARTY WILL BE DOING IT FOR ANY REASON, ALL OF THE TIME!”
- [Jan. 9, 2024, Washington, DC](#): Shortly after oral argument in his immunity appeal in the DC Circuit, Trump told the press, “I feel that as a president, you have to have immunity, very simple.” “You can’t have a president without immunity.” “You have to have, as a president, you have to be able to do your job.”
- [Jan. 9, 2024](#): Trump’s legal team argued before the DC Court of Appeals that a president could direct SEAL Team Six to assassinate his political opponent and be immune from prosecution.
- [Jan. 8, 2024, Truth Social](#): “Of course I was entitled, as President of the United States and Commander in Chief, to Immunity.”

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#### **IV. Persecuting his Perceived Political Enemies**

- Trump has vowed to use the Justice Department to investigate and criminally punish President Biden and his family.
  - [Jan. 8, 2024, Truth Social](#): “If I don’t get Immunity, then Crooked Joe Biden doesn’t get Immunity [...] Joe would be ripe for Indictment. By weaponizing the DOJ against his Political Opponent, ME, Joe has opened a giant Pandora’s Box.”
  - [Aug. 15, 2023](#): Trump said, “[A]s soon as I am reelected, I will appoint a real special counsel, or maybe you’ll call him a special prosecutor, whatever you want to call it ... to look at all of these bribes, kickbacks, and other crimes, as well as the shameless attempt at a coverup. Justice will be done. The Biden crime family will be looked at. We have to get there first, we have to win the election. They’re trying to step in my way at every path because the one person they don’t want to run is Donald Trump. But when we get there, the Biden crime family will pay a price like other people are being forced to pay. And that price will be very, very substantial.”
  - [Aug. 5, 2023, South Carolina GOP event](#), Trump said: “From the first day in office, I will appoint a special prosecutor to study each and every one of the many claims being brought forth by Congress concerning all of the crooked acts, including the bribes from China and many other countries, that go into the coffers of the Biden crime family.”
  - [June 13, 2023, Bedminister, NJ](#): “I will appoint a real special prosecutor to go after the most corrupt president in the history of the United States of America, Joe Biden, and the entire Biden crime family.”
    - [June 27, 2023, Concord, NH](#), Trump said: “I will appoint a real special prosecutor to investigate the Biden bribery and crime ring.”



- Trump has sympathized with January 6 rioters and vowed to pardon some of them. “[H]e has [also fundraised for them](#), befriended their families and collaborated on a song that became a surprise iTunes hit.”
  - [May 10, 2023, CNN town hall, NH](#), Trump promised as President to pardon “a large portion” of people convicted in connection with January 6. “I am inclined to pardon many of them.” “I can't say for every single one, because a couple of them, probably they got out of control.” “I will most likely – I would say it will be a large portion of them.” He also said that rioters “were there proud. They were there with love in their heart. That was an unbelievable – and it was a beautiful day.”
  - [Nov. 2, 2023, Houston](#), Trump called the people serving prison sentences for crimes committed in connection with January 6: “J6 hostages, not prisoners. I call them the hostages, what's happened. And it's a shame.”
  - [Jan. 13, 2023, Real America's Voice interview](#), Trump said: “I think it's a disgrace what's been happening, and so many of these people are great patriots.”
- Trump harshly criticized the prosecutions of political allies [Paul Manafort](#), his former campaign chairman, and campaign adviser [Roger Stone](#). He later [pardoned Manafort](#) for bank and tax fraud, and he [commuted Stone's sentence](#) for lying to Congress, obstruction of justice, and witness tampering, to [name just a few](#) examples.
- As president, Trump tried to influence DOJ investigations despite knowing that he was not supposed to do so.
  - He publicly [demanded the DOJ investigate](#) the FBI for its investigation into his campaign's contacts with Russia.
    - [May 20, 2018, Twitter](#): “I hereby demand, and will do so officially tomorrow, that the Department of Justice look into whether or not the FBI/DOJ infiltrated or surveilled the Trump Campaign for Political Purposes - and if any such demands or requests were made by people within the Obama Administration!”
  - He publicly called for an investigation into Nancy Pelosi and her alleged links to Russia.
    - [March 3, 2017, Twitter](#): “I hereby demand a second investigation, after Schumer, of Pelosi for her close ties to Russia, and lying about it.”
  - In March 2017, he [publicly ridiculed Attorney General Jeff Sessions](#) for recusing himself from the Russia investigation and asked him to reverse his decision.
  - In the [summer](#) of 2017, Trump asked Sessions to [“reverse his recusal so that Sessions could direct the Department of Justice to investigate and prosecute Hillary Clinton”](#) (Mueller Report).
  - He [claimed the Mueller investigation was “an illegal investigation”](#) and that “there never should have been a special counsel.”
  - He called for the [Justice Department to investigate Hillary Clinton](#) for “all of the dishonesty.”

- [Nov. 3, 2017, Twitter](#), Trump said: “Everybody is asking why the Justice Department (and FBI) isn’t looking into all of the dishonesty going on with Crooked Hillary & the Dems. New Donna B book says she paid for and stole the Dem Primary.” “At some point the Justice Department, and the FBI, must do what is right and proper. The American public deserves it!”
    - In April 2018, Trump told White House counsel Donald McGahn that [he wanted the Justice Department to prosecute Clinton](#).
  - He [urged FBI Director James Comey to drop an investigation into Michael Flynn](#), his first National Security Advisor and staunch political ally.
  - [Trump understood he was not supposed to get involved with Justice Department investigations](#): “[B]ecause I am the President of the United States, I am not supposed to be involved with the Justice Department. I’m not supposed to be involved with the FBI. I’m not supposed to be doing the kind of things I would love to be doing and I am very frustrated by it.”
- Trump claimed in an interview with the *New York Times* in December 2017 to have [“an absolute right to do what I want with the Justice Department.”](#)
- Trump signaled he would [end the independence of the Department of Justice](#). Russell Vought, Trump’s former director of the Office of Management and Budget and [potential](#) White House chief of staff in a second Trump administration, [wrote](#) in a statement that the Justice Department was “ground zero for the weaponization of the government against the American people.” He added, “Conservatives are waking up to the fact that federal law enforcement is weaponized against them and as a result are embracing paradigm-shifting policies to reverse that trend.”
- Trump has talked about investigating and removing federal, state, and local prosecutors.
  - [June 10, 2023, GOP Convention, GA](#), Trump called Jack Smith and others at the Justice Department “a sick nest of people that needs to be cleaned out immediately.”
  - [April 27, 2023, Manchester, NH](#), Trump promised to use the Justice Department to investigate local prosecutors and attorneys general: “On Day One of my new administration, I will direct the D.O.J. to investigate every radical district attorney and attorney general in America for their illegal, racist-in-reverse enforcement of the law.”
  - [Aug. 5, 2023, South Carolina GOP event](#), Trump said: “But to investigate every radical DA and AG, and they all coordinate, you know, the Democrats. They all coordinate with the DOJ. But we’re gonna investigate every single one in America for their illegal racist-in-reverse enforcement of the law.”

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## V. Draconian Abortion Access Crackdown

- Trump recently [signaled his support](#) for a national abortion ban.
  - [Feb. 16, 2024](#): Trump reportedly said in a private conversation that such a ban would prohibit abortions starting at 16 weeks, “Know what I like about 16? It’s even. It’s four months.”
  
- *The New York Times* has [assessed](#) that “Allies of former President Donald J. Trump and officials who served in his administration are planning ways to restrict abortion rights if he returns to power that would go far beyond proposals for a national ban or the laws enacted in conservative states across the country.”
  - According to the *New York Times*, “Some of their proposals would rely on enforcing the [Comstock Act](#).” Leaders of the effort [include](#) “Jonathan F. Mitchell, [the legal force behind a 2021 Texas law](#) that found a way to effectively ban abortion in the state.” Mitchell, who represented Mr. Trump before the Supreme Court in the Colorado ballot case, [“indicated that anti-abortion strategists had purposefully been quiet about their more advanced plans, given the political liability the issue has become for Republicans.”](#)
  - “[T]he plans described by former Trump administration officials, allies and supporters [propose circumventing Congress and leveraging the regulatory powers of federal institutions](#), including the Department of Health and Human Services, the Food and Drug Administration, the Department of Justice and the National Institutes of Health.”
  
- The Project 2025 agenda would roll back abortion access expansions under the Biden administration and go even further by restricting abortion medication.
  - Project 2025 also [proposes using the Comstock Act](#) of 1873 to ban mail delivery of abortion pills.
  - Project 2025 [proposes holding doctors criminally liable](#) for sending abortion pills and patients criminally liable for using the pills.
  - Project 2025 [proposes an executive order](#) that would roll back a Biden-era policy allowing some VA hospitals to offer the procedure.
  - Project 2025 [proposes rolling back the expansion of HIPAA](#) privacy rules to cover abortions.
  
- Trump took credit for overturning *Roe v. Wade* and helping states institute abortion bans.
  - [May 17, 2023, Truth Social](#): “After 50 years of failure, with nobody coming even close, I was able to kill Roe v. Wade, much to the “shock” of everyone, and for the first time put the Pro Life movement in a strong negotiating position over the Radicals that are willing to kill babies even into their 9th month, and beyond. Without me there would be no 6 weeks, 10 weeks, 15 weeks, or whatever is finally agreed to. Without me the pro Life movement would have just kept losing. Thank you President TRUMP!!!”
  
- Anti-abortion groups with ties to Trump and the conservative movement have plans to use the presidency to limit abortion access.



- Anti-abortion group Students for Life wants the EPA to label [abortion pill mifepristone as a “forever chemical”](#) to increase rules around its use.
- Trump has expressed support for punishing women that receive abortions, though he later walked back his comments.
  - [March 30, 2016](#): Trump said in an interview that “there has to be some form of punishment” for women who receive abortions if it is banned.

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## VI. **Purging Federal Employees**

- As [Democracy Forward](#) explains, “Our nation’s career civil servants — federal employees who serve the public regardless of the political affiliation of the President or partisan divides in Congress — are foundational to American democracy... Anti-democratic, far-right organizations and activists have voiced increasingly alarming threats against the civil service — ultimately threatening democracy itself.”
- Trump’s [Agenda47](#) plan has been described as a [“continuation of the fascist and other authoritarian policies Trump put in place during his first regime but now made even more extreme and cruel.”](#) The Agenda47 plan includes:
  - Gutting the federal bureaucracy and consolidating federal power under his direct control, Trump and his advisors plan to centralize the distributed powers of government agencies by installing loyalists in leadership positions using ideological pre-screening, reclassifying tens of thousands of civil service employees as political appointees, purging civil servants within the national security and intelligence apparatus, and subjecting independent agency actions to presidential review.
    - Trump [has said](#) he plans to reissue [“Schedule F.”](#) the 2020 executive order that gave him the [authority to fire](#) tens of thousands of federal employees, and in a [March 2023 video](#) promised to [“wield that power very aggressively.”](#)
      - [March 12, 2022, SC](#): “We will pass critical reforms making every executive branch employee fireable by the president of the United States.”
      - As [noted](#) by Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, “Trump, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and [various](#) prominent Republicans have all endorsed reviving the Schedule F initiative if elected in 2024, and in their recently released [Project 2025](#) report, the Heritage Foundation identified Schedule F as a key piece of a future presidential transition effort.”
    - [March 2023, CPAC](#): Trump said, “I will fire the unelected bureaucrats and shadow forces who have weaponized our justice system like it has never been weaponized before.”

- [March 21, 2023](#), Trump said: “We will clean out all of the corrupt actors in our National Security and Intelligence apparatus, and there are plenty of them. The departments and agencies that have been weaponized will be completely overhauled so that faceless bureaucrats will never again be able to target and persecute conservatives, Christians, or the left’s political enemies.”
- Trump allies are already employing [ideological purity and loyalty pre-screening](#), including [these vetting questions](#), in preparation for the 2025 administration.
  - In 2020, the Presidential Personnel Office, under the leadership of Trump aide John McEntee, began conducting [“loyalty tests.”](#) including one-on-one interviews with “hundreds of ... political appointees across federal agencies” in order to “root out threats of leaks and other potentially subversive acts.”
    - Trump has [tasked John McEntee with serving as the head of vetting for “Project 2025.”](#) the Trump Campaign transition team, and pre-vetting all political appointees to confirm that they are loyal to Trump.
  - Installing temporary “acting” officials in senior government roles to avoid Senate confirmation. During Trump’s presidency, he made [unprecedented use of the “acting” designation](#), and has signaled that he may do so again.
    - [Jan. 6, 2019](#), “I have acting, and my actings are doing really great. ... I sort of like acting. It gives me more flexibility, do you understand that?”
  - Requiring federal employees to take a new civil service test on their understanding of the U.S. Constitution to gain employment.
    - [April 14, 2023](#), Trump said, “Finally, I will require every federal employee to pass a new Civil Service test demonstrating an understanding of our Constitutional limited government. This will include command of due process rights, equal protection, Free Speech, religious liberty, federalism, the Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable search and seizure—I know all about that at Mar-a-Lago, don’t I— and all the other constitutional limits on federal power.”
- Trump has vowed to subject independent agency action to presidential review.
  - [April 14, 2023](#): Trump said, “Next, I will bring the independent regulatory agencies, such as the FCC and the FTC, back under Presidential authority, as the Constitution demands. These agencies do not get to become a fourth branch of government, issuing rules and edicts all by themselves. And that’s what they’ve been doing. We will require that they submit any regulations they are considering for White House review.”
- [Trump has promised](#) to attack the so-called “deep state” and dismantle the “administrative state” by ending the independence of federal agencies.

- [Jan. 28, 2023, New Hampshire Annual GOP Meeting](#): Trump said, “We will root out the deep state and stop the weaponization of federal agencies because there’s a weaponization like nobody’s ever seen. We will use every tool at our disposal.”
- In reference to the FBI and DOJ, [Trump said](#), “We must conduct a top to bottom overhaul to clean out the festering rot and corruption of Washington DC.”
- Trump has promised to [aggressively wield power to remove](#) who he characterizes as rogue bureaucrats and corrupt actors within the national security apparatus.
- Trump has said he “plans to” require all agency actions to be [subject to White House review](#).
- Trump plans to [install lawyers who will bless his radical agenda](#).
- Trump has wrongly claimed that the Constitution gives the president the power to do whatever he wants. .
  - [June 19, 2019](#), Trump said: “I had absolutely Article II powers. I could’ve done anything I wanted. I don’t even bring it up because we don’t even get there. Absolutely, I have Article II. We could have used that instead. I wouldn’t even have to bother talking to you about all the other things. I wouldn’t have to talk to you about conflicts. I could have fired [Special Counsel Robert] Mueller for conflicts. I could have fired anybody.”
  - [July 23, 2019](#), Trump said: “Then I have an Article 2, where I have the right to do whatever I want as President. But I don’t even talk about that.”

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## **VII. Rigging Elections and Promoting Harmful Election Conspiracy Theories**

- Trump has spent much of the past three years falsely claiming that the 2020 election was stolen and perpetrating baseless and harmful conspiracy theories about election fraud. If he returns to the White House, he is likely to continue his assault on American elections.
  - If he were reelected as president, he has said that he would [“go down and indict” a rival presidential contender to keep them “out of the election.”](#)
- Trump has endorsed the baseless theory that the vice president can block certification of the electoral votes.
  - [December 20, 2022, Truth Social](#): Trump wrote, “I don’t care whether they change The Electoral Count Act or not, probably better to leave it the way it is so that it can be adjusted in case of Fraud, but what I don’t like are the lies and ‘disinformation’ put out by the Democrats and RINOS. They said the Vice

President has ‘absolutely no choice,’ it was carved in ‘steel,’ but if he has no choice, why are they changing the law saying he has no choice?” He [continued](#), “...Simply put, it is because the Vice President did have a choice, and looking back at it now, the 2020 Voting Fraud was far greater than anyone thought possible, with even our Government, through the FBI, changing the results of the Election by millions and millions of votes.” [Adding](#), “In other words, John Eastman and others were correct in stating that the Vice President of the United States had the right to do what should have been done. The only reason this change is being promulgated is to reform The Electoral Count Act so that the VP cannot do what they powerfully said he couldn’t do, but if it couldn’t be done, why are they making this law change? The whole thing is one big Scam!”

- Trump has supported election-deniers who have contested the results of and echoed his baseless conspiracy theories about the 2020 presidential election.
  - Trump is supporting [Michael Whatley for RNC chair](#). Whatley worked with top election denier Jim Womack’s group, North Carolina Election Integrity Team.
  - Trump supported [Kari Lake](#), who has refused to acknowledge her loss in the 2022 race for Arizona’s Governor and is now running for U.S. Senate.
  - For Speaker of the House, [Trump supported Rep. Mike Johnson](#), who according to the Brennan Center for Justice was [“the congressional architect of the effort to overturn the 2020 presidential election.”](#)
- Trump has made outlandish claims about automatic voter registration and mail ballots, often claiming they hurt Republicans.
  - Trump has opposed automatic voter registration because it would be a [“disaster for the Election of Republicans, including your favorite President, ME!”](#)
  - Trump has [criticized the use of mail ballots](#), calling it “out of control” and “a whole big scam” and making wild claims that “MILLIONS OF MAIL-IN BALLOTS WILL BE PRINTED BY FOREIGN COUNTRIES.”
  - [Sept. 25, 2023, Truth Social](#), Trump wrote: “Pennsylvania is at it again! The Radical Left Governor, Josh Shapiro, has just announced a switch to Automatic Voter Registration, a disaster for the Election of Republicans, including your favorite President, ME! This is a totally Unconstitutional Act, and must be met harshly by Republican Leadership in Washington and Pennsylvania.”

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## VIII. **Rejecting the Constitution**

- Trump has suggested that he would seek a third term, in violation of the 22nd Amendment.
  - [Jan. 14, 2024](#), Trump said: “We have a good chance of staying for four years ... four years and beyond.”

- [Aug. 17, 2020](#), Trump said, “We are going to win four more years.” ““And then after that, we’ll go for another four years because ... they spied on my campaign. We should get a redo of four years.” He made [similar comments](#) at different times during the 2020 presidential campaign.
- However, Trump has almost made comments saying that [he would not seek a third term](#).
- Trump called for the “termination” of provisions of the Constitution, provisions that he did not identify, as part of his claim to overturn the 2020 election.
  - [Dec. 3, 2022, Truth Social](#): “A Massive Fraud of this type and magnitude allows for the termination of all rules, regulations, and articles, even those found in the Constitution. Our great ‘Founders’ did not want, and would not condone, False & Fraudulent Elections!”
  - [Two days later](#), Trump denied that he suggested terminating the Constitution, posting, “The Fake News is actually trying to convince the American People that I said I wanted to ‘terminate’ the Constitution. This is simply more DISINFORMATION & LIES.”
- Trump has [promised](#) to issue an [executive order giving him “impoundment authority”](#) to withhold funds appropriated by Congress—power that he could use to override Congress’s budget authority and subvert the Constitutional separation of powers.

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## IX. **Demonizing Americans with Whom He Disagrees**

- On Nov. 15, 2023, while announcing his 2024 presidential bid, Trump said in a speech at Mar-a-Lago, [“the gravest threats to our civilization are not from abroad, but from within.”](#)
- He has called those who don’t support his reelection [“demonic forces, abolishing and demolishing—and happily doing so—our country.”](#)
  - He later described the opposition as [“Marxist, fascist, and communist tyrants who want to smash our Judeo-Christian heritage.”](#)
- [Nov. 11, 2023, Claremont, NH Veterans Day Event](#): Trump vowed to “root out” his political opponents, calling them “vermin,” echoing fascist dictators like Hitler and Mussolini.
- [March 6, 2023, CPAC conference](#): Trump said, “If those opposing us succeed, our once beautiful U.S.A. will be a failed country that no one will even recognize. A lawless, open-borders, crime-ridden, filthy, communist nightmare. That’s what it’s going and that’s where it’s going ... Either they win or we win. And if they win, we no longer have a country.”

- [Oct. 22, 2023, Truth Social](#), Trump said: “Democrat politicians, mainstream media personnel and Hollywood actors and producers are brazen unapologetic Communists”

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## X. Trump’s Effusive Praise of Autocrats

- Trump has long praised many autocratic leaders, including:

### *Russian President Vladimir Putin*

- [March 25, 2023, Waco, Texas](#): “President Putin: Smart. Very smart people.”
- [May 3, 2019, Twitter](#): “Had a long and very good conversation with President Putin of Russia. As I have always said, long before the Witch Hunt started, getting along with Russia, China, and everyone is a good thing, not a bad thing....”
- [July 18, 2018, Twitter](#): “So many people at the higher ends of intelligence loved my press conference performance in Helsinki. Putin and I discussed many important subjects at our earlier meeting. We got along well which truly bothered many haters who wanted to see a boxing match. Big results will come!”
- [March 21, 2018, Twitter](#): “I called President Putin of Russia to congratulate him on his election victory (in past, Obama called him also). The Fake News Media is crazed because they wanted me to excoriate him. They are wrong! Getting along with Russia (and others) is a good thing, not a bad thing.....”
- [Sept. 7, 2016](#): “The man has very strong control over a country. Now, it’s a very different system and I don’t happen to like the system, but certainly in that system, he’s been a leader. Far more than our president has been a leader.”
- [Dec. 20, 2016](#): “Great move on delay (by V. Putin) - I always knew he was very smart!”

### *Chinese President Xi Jinping and Chinese leadership*

- [Feb. 4, 2024, Fox News](#), “I want China to do great. I do. And I like President Xi a lot. He was a very good friend of mine during my term.”
- [March 25, 2023, Waco, Texas](#): “President Xi: Smart, top of his game.”
- [Nov. 18, 2023, Fort Dodge, Iowa](#): “A man who looks like a piece of granite, right? He’s strong like granite. He’s strong. I know him very well, President Xi of China. ... He runs 1.4 billion people with an iron hand. ... I got along well with Putin. That’s a good thing.”
- [June 30, 2019](#): “And I like President Xi a lot. I consider him a friend, and – but I like him a lot. I’ve gotten to know him very well. He’s a strong gentleman, right? Anybody that – he’s a strong guy, tough guy.”
- In John Bolton’s White House [memoir](#), he recalled that “[a]t the opening dinner of the Osaka G-20 meeting in June 2019, with only interpreters present, Xi had



- explained to Trump why he was basically building concentration camps in Xinjiang. According to our interpreter, Trump said that Xi should go ahead with building the camps, which Trump thought was exactly the right thing to do. The National Security Council's top Asia staffer, Matthew Pottinger, told me that Trump said something very similar during his November 2017 trip to China."
- [April 2, 2019](#): "President Xi, who is a strong man, I call him King, he said, 'But I am not King, I am president.' I said, 'No, you're president for life and therefore, you're King.' He said, 'Huh. Huh.' He liked that."
  - [April 12, 2018](#): "I had President Xi, who's a friend of mine, who's a very, very good man."
  - In 1990, Trump said [China had shown the "power of strength"](#) when its troops killed hundreds, possibly thousands, of pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square the year before. "When the students poured into Tiananmen Square, the Chinese government almost blew it. Then they were vicious, they were horrible, but they put it down with strength," Trump said. "That shows you the power of strength. Our country is right now perceived as weak ... as being spit on by the rest of the world."
    - During the 2016 presidential debates, Trump [said](#) of his prior comment, "I was not endorsing it. I said, 'that is a strong, powerful government' ... it was a horrible thing. It doesn't mean at all I was endorsing it."

#### *North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un*

- [June 30, 2023, Philadelphia](#): "We did a fantastic job with Kim Jong-un. You know, I got along with him very well. The fake news said, 'it's terrible that he gets along with him.' I said, 'Really? It's not terrible, it's a very good thing.' You know, it's a positive thing."
- [May 27, 2019](#): "Well, first of all, let me say that I think that Kim Jong-un, or Chairman Kim, as some people say, is looking to create a nation that has great strength economically. I think he's very much – I talk to him a lot about it, and he's very much into the fact that – he believes, like I do, that North Korea has tremendous economic potential like perhaps few other developing nations anywhere in the world."
- [April 11, 2019](#): "Kim Jong Un has been, really, somebody that I've gotten to know very well and respect, and hopefully — and I really believe that, over a period of time, a lot of tremendous things will happen."
- [Sept. 29, 2018](#): "And then we fell in love. Okay. No really. He [Kim] wrote me beautiful letters. And they're great letters. We fell in love."
- [Sept. 24, 2018](#): "Chairman Kim has been really very open and terrific, frankly. And I think he wants to see something happen. So we have done — I think, mutually, we've done very well with respect to North Korea."
- In [August 2018](#), Trump wanted to invite Kim Jung-un to the White House. "I should meet with Kim Jong Un. We should invite him to the White House," John Bolton's White House memoir recalled Trump saying.

- [June 15, 2018](#), Trump said of Kim Jong-un, “He speaks and his people sit up at attention.” “I want my people to do the same.” Later that day, Trump told reporters, “I was kidding,” “You don’t understand sarcasm.”

#### *Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán*

- [Nov. 18, 2023, Fort Dodge, Iowa](#): “One of the strongest leaders, Viktor Orbán from Hungary ... he’s a very strong man, very strong, powerful man, and one of the most respected leaders in the world. It’s tough. No games, right? Hungary.”
- [Oct. 24, 2023, New Hampshire](#): “There’s a man, Viktor Orbán, did anyone ever hear of him? He’s probably, like, one of the strongest leaders anywhere in the world. He’s the leader of Turkey.” [Note that Orbán is the leader of Hungary, not Turkey.]

#### *Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan*

- [June 29, 2019, Osaka, Japan](#): “President Erdogan. He’s tough, but I get along with him. And maybe that’s a bad thing, but I think it’s a really good thing.”
- [June 29, 2019, Osaka, Japan](#): “Well, thank you very much. It’s my honor to be with a friend of mine, somebody I’ve become very close to, in many respects, and he’s doing a very good job: the President of Turkey”
- [Sept. 21, 2017, New York](#): “Thank you very much. It’s a great honor and privilege — because he’s become a friend of mine — to introduce President Erdoğan of Turkey. He’s running a very difficult part of the world. He’s involved very, very strongly and, frankly, he’s getting very high marks.”

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### **XI. Enriching Himself and His Family**

- The Constitution’s [Foreign Emoluments Clause](#) protects against foreign interference in our political system by ensuring the President and other federal officeholders do not have financial entanglements with other countries. President Trump repeatedly violated the Emoluments Clause while in office and is likely to repeat such violations if he continues to commingle his private business with his public service.
  - [A 2017 lawsuit](#) filed by Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington detailed violations from (i) entities owned by foreign governments leasing Trump property, (ii) foreign government officials patronizing Trump properties, including staying at a Trump hotel, (iii) broadcasters owned by foreign governments paying for broadcast rights for Trump’s “The Apprentice” television show, and (iv) property interests tied to foreign governments outside of the United States.
    - The lawsuit was dismissed as moot after Trump left office without resolving the merits of the alleged legal violations.

- As the [Brennan Center for Justice described](#), Trump violated the Foreign Emoluments Clause “from day one, in part because he never truly relinquished his businesses, and in fact could ‘withdraw profits’ from his not-so-blind trust whenever he pleased. This presented ongoing conflicts of interest.”
- Trump abused his office for the financial benefit of his family.
  - As the [Boston Globe reported](#), Trump “exploited loopholes to build a White House rife with nepotism,” including hiring his daughter Ivanka and her husband Jared Kushner as senior advisors.
  - Although neither Ivanka nor Kushner took a salary for their positions, their [financial disclosures reveal](#) they earned between \$172 million and \$640 million in outside income while working in the White House.
- Use of political contributions to pay for personal expenses (e.g. legal) and to enrich himself and his family members.
  - Trump has a history of enriching himself from political donations. He [was forced to repay millions to donors](#) who were tricked into signing up for recurring payments.
  - In [January 2024](#) alone, Trump’s leadership political action committee (PAC), Save America, spent around \$ 2.9 million in legal consulting costs, with around half a million dollars going to the law firm of John Lauro, the lawyer representing Trump in the Jan. 6 case. Save America also owes another \$1.9 million in outstanding legal costs.
  - Trump’s [legal costs for 2023](#) set his political fundraising committees back over \$50 million, [millions more than the committees made](#) in the same year.
  - [In 2022](#), Trump spent around \$10 million of his PAC’s money to fund his personal legal bills, according to federal election filings.

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## **XII. Creating an Unconstitutional Criminal Justice System**

- [Feb. 17, 2024, MI](#): “I’m also going to indemnify all police officers and law enforcement officials throughout the United States to protect them from being destroyed by the radical left... You can stop that in one day, in one hour. If you got really nasty and really tough. Once they [criminals] see things happening that they never thought would happen to them. And I mean tough. It’ll all stop overnight.”
- As early as 2017, Trump and his administration have supported the death penalty for those who deal drugs, drawing inspiration from “zero tolerance” drug policies in some Asian countries and elsewhere. In addition to Trump’s broader 2024 campaign agenda to tackle drug cartels, Trump’s newly proposed criminal justice policies [intend to legislate](#) for draconian sentencing measures.

- [Nov. 14, 2023, Mar-a-Lago](#): Trump said that he would be asking Congress for legislation to introduce the death penalty for human traffickers and “everyone who sells drugs, gets caught selling drugs, to receive the death penalty for their heinous acts. Because it’s the only way.”
- [Nov. 11, 2023, New Hampshire](#): Trump said: “President Xi in China controls 1.4 billion people, with an iron hand, no drug problems, you know why they have no drug problems?” “Death penalty for the drug dealers.” “You want to solve your drug problem, you have to institute a meaningful death penalty for... a drug dealer.”
- [June 20, 2023, Fox News](#): Trump warned that the county might not be ready for the “only way” to stop drug selling: “the death penalty,” making reference to China and Singapore. “That’s the only way you’re going to stop it.” “If you want to get rid of it – now, I don’t know that this country is ready for it. I just don’t know... You know, every time I say it, I sort of like – it’s – it’s not easy to say the death penalty.”
- [March 19, 2018, New Hampshire](#): Trump said: “But if we don’t get tough on drug dealers, we’re wasting our time, just remember that, we’re wasting our time. And that toughness includes the death penalty.”
- [Early 2018](#), Trump was speaking behind closed doors on how drug dealers were as bad as serial killers and all deserved the death penalty. He would reference countries such as Singapore and the Philippines.
  - “He says that a lot ... He says, ‘When I ask the prime minister of Singapore do they have a drug problem [the prime minister replies,] ‘No. Death penalty’,” [said](#) a source who’d spoken at length to Trump about the matter.
  - “He often jokes about killing drug dealers... He’ll say, ‘You know the Chinese and Filipinos don’t have a drug problem. They just kill them’,” a senior administration official told [Axios](#).
- [April 29, 2017](#), Trump congratulated Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte for doing “an unbelievable job on the drug problem” in the Philippines, according to a leaked transcript of the conversation.
- A new Trump administration would justify shoplifters being shot as they leave stores.
  - [Oct. 29, 2023, CA](#), Trump said: “We will immediately stop all of the pillaging and theft. Very simply: If you rob a store, you can fully expect to be shot as you are leaving that store,” Trump said, before again loudly shouting, “shot,” for emphasis. “The word that they shoot you will get out within minutes and our nation, in one day, will be an entirely different place,” he added. “There must be retribution for theft and destruction and the ruination of our country.”

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### **XIII. Wielding the Military to Suppress Civil Dissent**

- Trump has [signaled](#) that he will again seek to [use the Insurrection Act to suppress domestic dissent and violence](#)—[primarily in](#) Democratic-run cities and states—with work on the plan being led by Jeffrey Clark, and likely to include draft executive orders. The proposal is an [“immediate priority”](#) of Project 2025, and he and his associates have been drafting plans to potentially invoke the Insurrection Act on Trump’s [first day](#) in office, in order to police any public protests against him.
  - [March 13, 2023, Iowa](#), Trump complained about being prevented during his presidency from using the military to address violence in primarily Democratic cities and states. Describing New York City and Chicago as [“crime dens.”](#) [he said](#): “We can not let it happen any longer. And one of the other things I’ll do, because you know, you’re supposed to not be involved in that. You have to be asked by the governor or the mayor to come in. The next time I’m not waiting. One of things I did was let them run it, and we’re gonna show how bad a job they do. Well, we did that. We don’t have to wait any longer. We need to get crime out of our cities.”
- Trump and those close to him considered invoking the Insurrection Act at least twice before: to [crack down on Black Lives Matter protests in Washington DC](#) and later in an effort to [stay in office after losing the presidency in 2020](#).
  - [Sept. 10, 2020, Fox News](#), Trump said in response to how he would stop potential riots on election night if he won: “We’ll put them down very quickly if they do that. We have the right to do that, we have the power to do that if we want.” “Look, it’s called insurrection. We just send in and we do it, very easy. I mean, it’s very easy. I’d rather not do that because there’s no reason for it, but if we had to we’d do that and put it down within minutes.”
  - [May 30, 2020, Twitter](#): Trump posted that if demonstrators had breached the White House perimeter, they would “have been greeted with the most vicious dogs, and most ominous weapons, I have ever seen.”
  - [June 1, 2020, Rose Garden](#), Trump threatened to deploy the military in response to protesters clashing with law enforcement outside the White House and across the nation amid demonstrations following the death of George Floyd:

*Today, I have strongly recommended to every governor to deploy the National Guard in sufficient numbers that we dominate the streets. Mayors and governors must establish an overwhelming law enforcement presence until the violence has been quelled.*

*If a city or a state refuses to take the actions that are necessary to defend the life and property of their residents, then I will deploy the United States military and quickly solve the problem for them.*

*I am also taking swift and decisive action to protect our great capital, Washington, D.C. What happened in this city last night was a total disgrace. As we speak, I am dispatching thousands and thousands of*

*heavily armed soldiers, military personnel, and law enforcement officers to stop the rioting, looting, vandalism, assaults, and the wanton destruction of property.*

*We are putting everybody on warning: Our seven o'clock curfew will be strictly enforced.*

- Former Defense Secretary Mark Esper [wrote in his memoir](#) that President Trump asked whether demonstrators gathering around the White House following the death of George Floyd could be shot. “Can’t you just shoot them? Just shoot them in the legs or something?”

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#### **XIV. Undermining America’s Stature Abroad and Eroding International Alliances**

- Trump did not criticize Vladimir Putin’s jailing of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny or question Navalny’s highly-suspicious death on Feb. 16, 2024 while in Russian custody. Instead, Trump repeatedly compared himself to Navalny by suggesting his ongoing legal problems were the result of political persecution.
  - [Feb. 18, 2024, Truth Social](#): “Biden:Trump::Putin:Navalny.”
  - [Feb. 19, 2024, Truth Social](#): “The sudden death of Alexei Navalny has made me more and more aware of what is happening in our Country. It is a slow, steady progression, with CROOKED, Radical Left Politicians, Prosecutors, and Judges leading us down a path to destruction. Open Borders, Rigged Elections, and Grossly Unfair Courtroom Decisions are DESTROYING AMERICA. WE ARE A NATION IN DECLINE, A FAILING NATION! MAGA2024”
- Trump has long threatened [to leave NATO](#). He has long criticized NATO and suggested he would seek to leave the military alliance, and also suggested that the U.S. would help defend a NATO ally only if certain conditions are met, usually financial. His [campaign website contains a single sentence on Agenda47 and NATO](#): “Finally, we have to finish the process we began under my Administration of fundamentally reevaluating NATO's purpose and NATO's mission.”
  - [Feb. 10, 2024, Conway, SC](#): Trump boasted that while president he had once told a counterpart of a “big” NATO country that if that country failed to satisfy its “bills,” the United States would not protect the country from a Russian invasion and would in fact “encourage” Russia “to do whatever the hell they want.”
    - [March 2023, CPAC Conference](#): Trump bragged to the crowd that he had told NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg and other NATO ally leaders that he would not protect them from Russia if they were “delinquent” in spending. “This was a round table with nobody in the room, but the presidents, prime ministers, and dictators, okay? Some of them are all the same, but they stood up and he stood up and said, ‘Sir, can I ask you a



question? If we don't pay up and if we get attacked by Russia, will you protect us, sir?' I said, 'Now you're not paid up, right?' 'That's right.' 'You're delinquent, right?' 'Yes.' 'I will not protect you from Russia.' 'Sir, we'll send you a check tomorrow, sir. We'll send you a check tomorrow. It'll be sent by overnight mail, sir, I promise you'll have it tomorrow.'"

- He made [similar comments in July 2023](#) during a Fox News interview.
- Since late summer 2023, [Trump has been privately touting](#), "NATO on standby," drawing inspiration from a February 2023 Center for Renewing America [policy brief](#), titled "Pivoting the US Away from Europe to a Dormant NATO." He has also made clear that the ranks of a second administration would not be "NATO lovers."
- In his 2000 book, "The America We Deserve," Trump [wrote](#) that "[p]ulling back from Europe would save this country millions of dollars annually."
- [July 20, 2016](#): Trump said he would come to the aid of a NATO ally attacked by Russia only after reviewing whether they had "fulfilled their obligations to us."
- [In July 2018](#), Trump questioned whether he would come to the defense of NATO ally Montenegro.
- [During the 2018 NATO summit](#), those present said that Trump warned that the U.S. would "go it alone" if allies, particularly Germany and Canada, did not meet their defense budgets for next year. He had [similar conversations](#) with his administration officials.
- [In July 2018](#) he denounced the E.U. as a "foe" because of "what they do to us in trade."
- [At a rally in 2018](#), Trump said that he had threatened NATO allies with leaving if all countries did not spend 2% of their GDP on defense.
- [In August 2019](#), Trump said, "I don't give a shit about NATO," according to John Bolton, Trump former National Security Advisor.
- Trump has said that he would [consider recognizing Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea](#), and somehow [settle the war "in 24 hours"](#), adding that he would have in fact prevented the war from breaking out by [making a deal in which Ukraine simply ceded to Russia its eastern territories](#), despite Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy having made clear he would never do so.
- As early as early 2020, Trump was asking his aides and top administration officials if they could [shoot missiles into Mexico to "destroy the drug labs"](#) and take out drug cartels, in violation of international law.
  - Trump's defense secretary [Mark Esper recounts Trump asking](#) him if: "We could just shoot some Patriot missiles and take out the labs, quietly," adding that "no one would know it was us." Trump raised the idea to Esper at least twice during 2020, asking whether they could blame another country for it.
  - [January 2023](#), a policy video on the Trump campaign website titled, "President Donald J. Trump Declares War on Cartels," saw Trump promise to "deploy all

necessary military assets, including the U.S. Navy, to impose the full Naval embargo on the cartels” and demand the Department of Defense “to make appropriate use of special forces, cyber warfare, and other overt and covert actions to inflict maximum damage on cartel leadership, infrastructure, and operations.” Trump’s administration would also designate cartels as foreign terrorist organizations, a move he [previously considered](#).

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## **XV. Discriminating Against LGBTQ+ Americans**

- [June 2023](#), speaking on transgender people in sports, Trump said: “These people are sick; they are deranged.”
- Trump believes gender transition among youth is “[left wing gender insanity](#)” and said he would pass a bill establishing that there are “[only two genders](#).” Specifically, he plans to use the powers of the federal government to reduce gender transition at any age and to ban the use of hormone therapies and surgeries for gender transition among youth.
  - Trump plans to announce that medical facilities providing hormone therapies or surgeries for transition will be deemed non-compliant with federal health and safety regulations, resulting in the loss of federal funding, including Medicaid and Medicare. Additionally, he aims to urge Congress to ban hormonal and surgical treatments for transgender minors across all 50 states.
    - [June 30, 2023, Moms for Liberty Event](#), Trump said, “On Day One, I will sign an executive order instructing every federal agency to cease the promotion of sex or gender transition at any age. They’re not gonna do it anymore. I will declare that any hospital or health-care provider that participates in the chemical or physical mutilation of minor youth no longer meets federal health and safety standards—they will be terminated from receiving federal funds effective immediately.”
    - [Agenda47, Feb. 1, 2023](#): “I will declare that any hospital or health-care provider that participates in the chemical or physical mutilation of minor youth will no longer meet federal health and safety standards for Medicaid and Medicare and will be terminated from the program immediately.”
- Trump intends to revoke gender affirming care.
  - [Agenda47, Feb. 1, 2023](#): “The Left wing gender insanity being pushed in our children is an act of child abuse. On day one, I will revoke Joe Biden’s cruel policies on so-called gender affirming care. Ridiculous. A process that includes giving kids puberty blockers, mutating their physical appearance and ultimately performing surgery on minor children. Can you believe this? I will sign a new executive order instructing every federal agency to cease all programs that promote the concept of sex and gender transition at any age. I will then ask Congress to permanently stop federal taxpayer dollars from being used to

promote or pay for these procedures...No serious country should be telling its children that they were born with the wrong gender, a concept that was never heard of in all of human history. Nobody's ever heard of this. What's happening today. It was all when the radical left invented it just a few years ago."

- Trump has called for establishing that there are only two genders through the Department of Education and legislation.
  - [June 30, 2023, Moms for Liberty Event](#), "I will also take historic action to defeat the toxic poison of gender ideology, to restore the timeless truth that God created two genders: male and female."
  - [Agenda47, Feb. 1, 2023](#): "My Department of Education will inform states and school districts that if any teacher or school official suggest to a child that they could be trapped in the wrong body, they will be faced with severe consequences. I will ask Congress to pass a bill establishing that the only genders recognized by the United States government are male and female, and they are assigned at birth." "The bill will also make clear that Title 9 prohibits men from participating in women's sports."
- Trump refers to gender affirming care as "child sexual mutilation" and says he will impose a national ban..
  - [Agenda47, Feb. 1, 2023](#): I will "pass a law prohibiting child sexual mutilation in all 50 states."
  - [Agenda47, Feb. 1, 2023](#): "The left-wing gender insanity being pushed at our children is an act of child abuse. Very simple. Here's my plan to stop the chemical, physical and emotional mutilation of our youth."

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## **XVI. Attacking the Free Press**

- Trump has a [long and bitter history with the media](#), especially those he disagrees with, and has made no apologies for his pointed criticism of certain news outlets. He has recently called their actions "treason" and vowed to investigate them if he returns to office.
  - [Sept. 24, 2023, Truth Social](#): "They are almost all dishonest and corrupt, but Comcast, with its one-side and vicious coverage by NBC NEWS, and in particular MSNBC, often and correctly referred to as MSDNC (Democrat National Committee!), should be investigated for its 'Country Threatening Treason.; Their endless coverage of the now fully debunked SCAM known as Russia, Russia, Russia, and much else, is one big Campaign Contribution to the Radical Left Democrat Party. I say up front, openly, and proudly, that when I WIN the Presidency of the United States, they and others of the LameStream Media will be thoroughly scrutinized for their knowingly dishonest and corrupt coverage of people, things, and events. Why should NBC, or any other of the corrupt &

dishonest media companies, be entitled to use the very valuable Airwaves of the USA, FREE? They are a true threat to Democracy and are, in fact, THE ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE! The Fake News Media should pay a big price for what they have done to our once great Country!”

- [Jan. 15, 2024. Truth Social](#): Trump has called the mainstream the “LameStream Media, which is merely a subsidiary of the Democrat [sic] Party.”
- As President, [Trump proposed ending federal funding](#) for nonpartisan media, e.g. NPR & PBS, which exist to ensure Americans have universal access to educational and informational programming.
- In December 2023, [former Trump Pentagon official Kash Patel vowed](#) in an interview with Steve Bannon that a second Trump administration would prosecute people in the media who “helped Joe Biden rig presidential elections.” “We’re gonna come after you ... we’re putting you all on notice.”
- Trump would attack federal whistleblowers.
  - Trump’s Agenda47 plan calls for a [“major crackdown on government leakers who collude with the media to create false narratives, pressing criminal charges when appropriate.”](#)
  - In 2019, in connection with asking Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to investigate then-Vice President Biden, [Trump compared the people who gave information to the whistleblower to spies](#) and said the U.S. should “handle” them like they did “in the old days,” a reference to capital punishment.

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## **XVII. Spreading Disinformation and Conspiracy Theories on Public Health**

- Trump [spent decades](#) spreading dangerous misinformation about public health and disease, a practice that continued throughout his administration, [especially in connection with COVID-19](#).
- Going back to the early 1990s, Trump repeated and spread myths about HIV transmission and has embraced baseless conspiracy theories about vaccines.
  - In 1993 during the AIDS/HIV crisis, while on [The Howard Stern Show](#), Trump said that people who knew they were HIV-positive intentionally spread the virus: “they go out on a rampage on purpose” from “anger [and] hatred.”
  - [In 2015, Trump linked childhood vaccines with autism and as a candidate in 2016, Trump met with anti-vaccine activists.](#)
- During the COVID-19 epidemic, Trump was the “single largest driver” of coronavirus misinformation and conspiracy theories, responsible for 38% of false and baseless

medical information related to the pandemic, [according to researchers at Cornell University](#) who analyzed 38 million articles about COVID-19.

- Although the Trump administration [played a role in helping to develop](#) the COVID-19 vaccine (albeit a smaller role than Trump claims), Trump also played a critical part in [spreading false information about miracle cures](#), including suggesting that [injecting disinfectant](#) into one's body could help fight the virus.
- Trump has called for a curtailment of research into mis- and disinformation.
  - [December 15, 2022](#): "I will sign an executive order banning any federal department or agency from colluding with any organization, business or person to censor, limit, categorize or impede the lawful speech of American citizens. I will then ban federal money from being used to label domestic speech as mis- or disinformation."

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## **XVIII. Embracing Christian Nationalism**

- Trump allies are [preparing to infuse](#) "Christian nationalism" in a second Trump administration.
- Russell Vought, Trump's former director of the Office of Management and Budget, [is a Christian nationalist](#) and possible chief of staff in a second Trump presidency. Vought wants Christian nationalism to be front and center in a second Trump administration.
  - Vought leads the Center for Renewing America (CRA), an influential conservative group creating plans for a second Trump presidency. From their [website](#), their mission statement is "to renew a consensus of America as a nation under God with unique interests worthy of defending that flow from its people, institutions, and history, where individuals' enjoyment of freedom is predicated on just laws and healthy communities."
  - In the [CRA annual report](#), Trump commented, "Russell Vought did a fabulous job in my administration, and I have no doubt he will do a great job in continuing our quest to make America great again"
  - [March 22, 2021, Newsweek Op-Ed by Vought](#): "My own definition of 'Christian nationalism' would be this: An orientation for engaging in the public square that recognizes America as a Christian nation, where our rights and duties are understood to come from God and where our primary responsibilities as citizens are for building and preserving the strength, prosperity and health of our own country. It is a commitment to an institutional separation between church and state, but not the separation of Christianity from its influence on government and society. It is a belief that our participation in the political system can lead to beneficial outcomes for our own communities, as well as individuals of all faiths."

- Vought is close with Christian nationalist William Wolfe, an activist [who said in a deleted X post](#) that schools should no longer teach sex education, and that surrogacy and no-fault divorce should be ended.
  - [X post from Vought, Jan. 25, 2023](#): “I’m proud to work with @William\_E\_Wolfe on scoping out a sound Christian Nationalism. Both he & @wokal\_distance are VFs @amrenewctr . @ConceptualJames is there no room for Christians who are also nationalists to be in an anti-woke coalition? My take below”

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## **XIX. Politicizing Education & Censoring Disfavored Ideas**

- Eliminating or depleting the Department of Education, as he has [previously tried to do](#).
  - [Sept. 2023](#): Trump said, “We’re going to end education coming out of Washington, DC. We’re going to close it up – all those buildings all over the place and people that in many cases hate our children. We’re going to send it all back to the states.”
  - [March 2023. Iowa](#), Trump vowed to cut federal funding to any school covering any subject he finds “inappropriate,” including critical race theory, transgender issues, or “any other inappropriate racial, sexual or political content on our children.”
  - [August 2022. CPAC Texas](#): Trump said, “Across the country, we need to implement strict prohibitions on teaching inappropriate racial, sexual and political material to America’s schoolchildren in any form whatsoever. And if federal bureaucrats are going to push this radicalism, we should abolish the Department of Education.”
- Trump said he would [use the college accreditation process to attack diversity, equity, and inclusion policies](#) at higher education institutions because “radical Left accreditors [ ] have allowed our colleges to become dominated by Marxist Maniacs and lunatics.”
- Trump said he would [direct DOJ to pursue civil rights cases against schools](#) that engage in affirmative action and diversity policies—what he calls “racial discrimination”—and will impose fines equal to the entire amount of a school’s endowment.
- Trump has [vowed to fire federal employees](#) who he claims have engaged in “domestic censorship” based on his belief that “a sinister group of Deep State bureaucrats, Silicon Valley tyrants, left-wing activists, and depraved corporate news media have been conspiring to manipulate and silence the American People.”

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## **XX. Condoning Anti-Semitism**



- In 2022, [Trump had dinner with Nick Fuentes and Kanye West](#). Fuentes is a white supremacist who has professed [his love for Hitler](#) and [denied the Holocaust, comparing Jews murdered in concentration camps to cookies in an oven](#). West has a history of [praising Hitler and Nazis](#), [denying the Holocaust](#), and [spreading anti-Semitic conspiracy theories](#).
- After a 2017 rally in Charlottesville, Virginia organized by white supremacists where neo-Nazis marched shouting anti-Semitic slogans, [Trump said “there were very fine people on both sides.”](#)
- [Trump has suggested that Jewish Americans are loyal to Israel over the United States](#), saying to them that Israel is “your country” and Benjamin Netanyahu “your prime minister.”
- [Trump has called Jewish Americans “very disloyal to Israel” for supporting Democrats.](#)
- During the 2016 campaign, [Trump tweeted a picture calling Hilary Clinton](#) the “Most Corrupt Candidate Ever” with a red Jewish star and \$100 bills in the background, an anti-Semitic image with white-supremacist origins.
- Another 2016 Trump campaign ad featured [several prominent Jewish figures while warning against “global special interests.”](#)

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## **XXI. Bipartisan Actions to Counter Autocratic Threats**

The literature of how to prevent and address autocratic onset is vast. One of the authors of this Tracker has co-authored a comprehensive guide to this subject globally and to the relevant scholarly literature—the Brookings Institution’s [“The Democracy Playbook.”](#) Important recent contributions specifically addressing Trump’s threats for 2025 have been made by [Protect Democracy](#), [Democracy Forward](#), and many others.

In future editions of this tracker, we will attempt to catalog those and other suggestions and to comprehensively address how best to respond to the growing threats of autocratic and anti-democratic efforts. For the moment, we offer some preliminary thoughts toward a comprehensive theory of the case. We group those preliminary suggestions into three periods of time: the pre-election period from present through November 5, 2024; the transition period from November 5, 2024 to January 20, 2025; and the period from January 20, 2025 onward.

Following those three sections, we summarize some of the more substantial recommendations that have been made by others. Because those recommendations tend to cut across all three of the time periods we isolate, we present those additional recommendations as separate sections rather than trying to slice and dice them into our three periods.

## A. Preliminary Suggestions: Present through November 5, 2024

The current administration can and should take proactive measures to put in place additional federal regulatory or executive order frameworks that impose legal limitations on the Executive's invocation of the Insurrection Act and other emergency powers. While statutory reform may or may not be realistic in 2024, legislative proposals can inform possible executive action. There is a rich body of existing scholarship upon which regulations and executive orders can draw.

[Advocates have proposed statutory language](#) that would toughen the legal framework for the utilization of military, paramilitary, and DOJ powers by more precisely delineating what are valid triggering circumstances for the Act and what particular range of responses would be authorized. Legal scholars have also [warned](#) of the potential for abuse with existing authorities and [proposed](#) legal reforms to address such risks.

Similar steps should be considered with respect to the full range of threats set forth in this Tracker. While executive orders or regulations could be reversed by an incoming Trump or other future administration, such rollbacks would be subject to the requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act, other legal review, and then litigation. Thus, such internal executive branch regulations would serve both to sound the alarm if they were violated and to impose [possible impediments](#) to autocratic action. Regulations were impactful in the past in slowing and stopping illegal and authoritarian moves. For instance, [lawsuits early in Trump's presidency forced executive agencies to comply](#) with Obama-era rules which helped counteract egregious policies such as Trump's [first travel ban targeting Muslim countries](#) in January 2017.

Attempts at congressional intervention should not be written off, despite apparent congressional gridlock and in particular House control by allies of Trump and supporters of his autocratic tendencies. It is worth looking at whether there could be any appetite for particular individual [provisions from the Protecting Our Democracy Act](#) (PODA), such as: preventing abuse of the pardon power; enforcing the Emoluments Clause; preventing abuse of the National Emergencies Act; preventing political interference into the DOJ; protecting whistleblowers; enforcing congressional subpoenas; limiting a president's ability to evade advice and consent through installation of long-term acting officials; and increasing accountability for online election advertising. A recent book by one of the authors of this Tracker, "[Overcoming Trumpery](#)", highlights those and other solutions to preventing nepotism and conflicts of interest, safeguarding the DOJ from being hijacked for political ends, and preventing foreign interference in the American democratic process (Chapters 2-4).

In order to have any hope of consideration, solutions would need to be more narrowly crafted and framed in conservative, and even MAGA, terms. Conservatives of all stripes have long articulated hostility to excessive executive power, such as Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) attempting, during the Trump administration, to require greater congressional assent for a president's declaration of national emergency. So it might be possible to at least mull narrowly crafting some bipartisan reforms. Indeed, some in Congress may view these as necessary to address possible overreach by a Democratic administration, either today or in the future. After all, the

far-right fear (however unfounded) of autocratic moves by their political opponents is intense. So the possibility of bipartisan legislative solutions should not be altogether discounted.

### **B. Preliminary Suggestions: November 5, 2024 through January 20, 2025**

Should there be hesitation to make bold regulatory moves in the pre-election period, such reforms might be considered in the transition period should we be facing the threat of autocratic takeover in January 2025. That would be less than optimal, because they would be seen as last-minute changes and might be easier to unwind legally and politically. But it would be better than nothing.

Depending upon its makeup, Congress could also move on a package of anti-autocratic legislative reforms in the short interregnum between when the new Congress is seated on January 3 and when the president is sworn in on January 20. Indeed, it is not too soon to begin preparation of such a package that could achieve bipartisan support. It could include some of the remedies noted in the section above.

This package should also include narrowly crafted provisions clarifying standing for state attorneys general and “private attorneys general”—that is, other plaintiffs with strong equities in responding to wrongdoing—to seek federal court review of particularly egregious autocratic conduct.

### **C. Preliminary Suggestions: January 20, 2025 and Onward**

Nonpartisan civil society organizations, and affected individuals and enterprises, will have a critical role to play in meeting every illegal action with legal action as they did in 2017 and following. Another front line of defense, as it has been both with respect to both [Democratic](#) and [Republican](#) administrations, are the above mentioned state attorneys general. So are the many other state and local government officials who may have legal standing to bring cases, or have other parts to play.

To take some examples from Trump’s first administration, [fifteen states](#), including Washington and Alaska, had standing to challenge the Trump administration on drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Harris County, which faced chemical explosions at some of its plants, was the only Texas local government to join an [effort in challenging the Trump EPA](#) for rolling back chemical safety rules. [Fourteen state attorneys general supported](#) a lawsuit to prevent federal ICE agents from conducting arrests in and around state courthouses. Cities in Indiana [successfully defended](#) their status as sanctuary cities. And on and on—the examples are legion.

Many more suggestions for 2025, and indeed for all three of the time periods we have identified, follow in the discussion of remedies others have suggested.

### **D. Democracy Playbook Recommendations**

In their report, [The Democracy Playbook](#), Eisen et al. recommend the following 10 commitments for countering democratic backsliding and the advent of autocracy. The following summary is drawn from the Executive Summary to the linked report (see pp. 4-15), and the page numbers refer to the body of the report. The following include both steps which can be undertaken immediately and in the future; at the federal, state and local level; and even from international election observers and the like.

### **COMMITMENT 1: Strengthen and Ensure Election Security, Integrity, Transparency, and Voting Access**

Preventing authoritarianism will start at the ballot box by securing Americans' exercise of their right to vote. State Actors can commit to investing "in the people, administrative framework and election management bodies (EMBs), electoral jurisprudence, and systems required for the technological security, transparency, and accountability of election counting, voter registration, and political campaign networks" (see p. 23).

Political opposition groups can "make a commitment to contest acts of nondemocratic actors, within the bounds of democratic norms, who aim to sow distrust in elections. Opposition leaders may also choose to pursue more extreme institutional measures available to them such as investigations, impeachment processes, votes of no confidence, and recall referendums and/or deploy extra-institutional tools like protests, strikes, or boycotts" (see p. 39).

International actors can "commit to observe elections together under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) or other international umbrellas to meet basic standards of universal access, equality, fairness, freedom, transparency, accountability, and privacy in voter submission" (see p. 87).

Nonprofit and civil society actors can "strengthen nonpartisan election monitoring and increase efforts to restore citizen trust and confidence in both the electoral process and the overall foundations of democracy, transparency, and accountability, including by engaging the broader public audience" (see p. 36). They can also "enhance collaboration with independent media to counter disinformation and ensure citizens can access transparent and truthful information as part of electoral processes" (see p. 80).

### **COMMITMENT 2: Advance Rule of Law and Impartial Justice (Commitments for State Actors)**

Branches of the government, or even individual offices, can take steps now to enact codes to promote oversight and independence. Government ethics and transparency mechanisms can "enhance citizen trust in, and access to, the operation of government under law. With respect to the judicial system, that means establishing codes of conduct, opening up courtrooms by producing publicly available transcripts of proceedings in a timely fashion, taking steps to ensure that sealed documents are minimized, and placing cameras in courtrooms" (see p. 32).

### **COMMITMENT 3: Depoliticize Democratic Processes**

Our politicians, on both sides of the aisle, must use language that condemns autocracy to meet the challenges of the moment. "Political actors should uphold international laws and institutional obligations and use their political power with restraint. But when norms break down, further legal

mechanisms should be considered” (see p. 26). “Political parties, through their capacity to influence coalitions and internal leadership roles, should limit leaders who espouse anti-democratic sentiment or positions or who evince a disregard for human rights” (see p. 28).

Nonprofit and civil society actors can “model the responsible behavior civil society groups wish to see among their elected leaders in terms of good governance structure, rhetoric, and public positions” (see p. 44). They can also “carry out activities, including with targeted and increased support from domestic and international partners, to depolarize democracy, strengthen resiliency, and create space for common ground among political actors” (see p. 46).

#### **COMMITMENT 4: Enhance Democratic Safeguards on Technology**

Online speech is more profitable the more polarizing it is. State actors should “commit to establishing a common democratic agenda for regulating private industries that have an impact on democratic discourse and processes through close cooperation on regulatory efforts around data protection, content moderation, and export control reform” (see p. 25). Social media companies specifically should “support[ ] narrowly tailored, targeted government regulations that do not infringe on users’ right to free speech—focusing on mechanisms like political advertising and reduction of disinformation prevalence measures” (see p. 59). They should “intensify[ ] cooperation with other platforms to share best practices” and “establish[ ] better information with independent researchers and universities” (see p. 59).

#### **COMMITMENT 5: Strengthen Civil Society and Independent Media**

The press has a significant role to play in checking abuses of power, by determining what it will cover and how the coverage should play out. Since critics accused the press of awarding Trump too much coverage in 2016, [many outlets are now going too far in the opposite direction](#) and refraining from covering his recent autocratic outbursts. The media should “strengthen professional development, training, and education to provide a pipeline to up-and-coming media actors able to notice and resist threats to the industry” (see pp. 49, 70). They should “practice media self-scrutiny and develop a robust media criticism community. Such a community could increase public trust, and thus public support, through the transparent and constructive questioning of the relationship between journalists, politicians, and advertisers” (see p. 50).

“External actors, including international donors, NGOs, and government officials should forcefully respond to government attacks on NGOs and independent media. That includes issuing systematic, coordinated, and high-level responses to government authorities’ restrictions on NGO activities and the work of free media, while taking steps to avoid the perception that activities are solely externally driven” (see p. 69). “NGOs should train and be prepared to use diverse and varied nonviolent tactics to increase the pressure on government and attract more people to participate” (see p. 46).

#### **COMMITMENT 6: Avoid Toxic “Otherization” Politics**

With Project 2025, radical autocratic ideas have shaped the Overton window of American politics. Autocratic ideas must instead be unacceptable as part of our politics. “Those on both sides of critical issues should create space in the public square for legitimate and respectful debate. For example, there is a legitimate debate over migration levels that is very different from tolerating the anti-migrant and often anti-Muslim rhetoric that frequently uses xenophobic language to exploit refugee and migration crises” (see p. 28). “While substantive debates on

policy issues should be welcomed, democratic actors must try to limit the extent to which debates over toxic identity politics weaken the trust of citizens in democratic governance and institutions, and serve as fuel to empower extremists. This effort needs to be matched with a focus on local, rural, and urban-level integration—as well as a posture that eschews hateful rhetoric” (see p. 28). “There must be a full lifecycle approach—from recruitment through return to civilian life—to preventing and mitigating the scourge of white nationalist, extremist, and other anti-democratic ideologies that exhibit a disregard for basic human rights” (see p. 44).

We must “tailor efforts to rural and underserved areas that are highly susceptible to radicalization due to a systemic lack of access to NGO and government support systems, thus allowing for anti-democratic extremist actors to fill the gap in community needs while promoting anti-democratic sentiment” (see p. 59). This includes “provid[ing] additional funding towards preemptive measures to prevent radicalization (see pp. 59, 69).

“Democracies should enhance coordination on migration and refugee crises, as well as increase humanitarian support for civil society organizations and municipalities that are working to house and assist refugees” (see p. 88). Private sector actors can “seek affirmative ways to help protect democracy, including through activism, philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, and helpful rhetoric” (see p. 55).

#### **COMMITMENT 7: Prioritize Anti-Corruption and Anti-Kleptocracy Initiatives**

Key to preventing democratic backsliding is upholding the obligations enshrined in the U.S. Constitution. During Trump’s first term, he was able to violate the Emoluments Clause, for example. Instead, we need to “agree to regulate the role of money in politics to retain trust in the democratic system through the creation of such mechanisms as public financing of campaigns, disclosure requirements for donations, and limits on the amount of campaign donations” (see p. 26). This includes pledging that “corruption-related financial crimes are not deprioritized” and promising to “provide whistleblower protections and incentives” (see p. 89).

#### **COMMITMENT 8: Demonstrate that Democracies Can Deliver a Better Standard of Living (State Actors)**

There must be an affirmative message about how democracy benefits people. That means committing to policies of inclusive growth that tackle economic inequality and that improve well-being and opportunity across all demographic lines, including race, class, and geography” (see p.44).

“Such pro-growth policies for left-behind areas include extending broadband access, providing investment capital for new and small businesses, and using both transportation investment and regulatory policy to address rural-urban imbalances. Policies should address the unique needs of each area by elevating existing community assets and collaborations that bolster local economies” (see p. 68).

#### **COMMITMENT 9: Strengthen Democracy via Multilateral Institutions**

Multilateral institutions can “pledge to use conditionality more aggressively—both punitive and incentive-based—against backsliding democracies and malign actors,” including “cutting funding to the worst offenders” (see p. 86). “International organizations should pledge to invest in and expand capabilities for monitoring disinformation campaigns emanating from foreign actors”



(see p. 81).

## **COMMITMENT 10: Deepen a Broad-Based Global Coalition of Democracies**

Those who support democracy anywhere support democracy everywhere. That means “democracies should commit to increase coordination and cooperation with each other in defense of the key elements of the multilateral order, including strengthening standing local, regional, or global democratic institutions and frameworks or expanding or creating new mechanisms for advanced democratic collaboration” (see p. 87).

### **E. Protect Democracy Recommendations**

In their report, the [The Authoritarian Playbook for 2025](#), Protect Democracy recommends the following ten steps (see pp. 65-69):

#### **1. Create pro-democracy coalitions before the crisis arrives.**

“Now is the time to build stronger and deeper pro-democracy coalitions that are educated about what’s at stake and prepared to act together. Blunting a full-on autocratic government takeover will require courts, Congress, agency officials, states, and municipalities to act as checks against abuse of power. But, institutions often struggle to do this on their own. We’ll need to bolster them, and the best way to do that is through broad coalitions — whether of civic groups, advocacy organizations, business interests, faith groups, or otherwise. Building coalitions is time-consuming and requires legwork to establish respect and develop alignment.”

#### **2. Take anti-democratic ideas and promises seriously.**

“The voting public must know what is at stake in the next election and beyond. Public communicators, whether they hold jobs in the news media, campaigns, non-profit advocacy, corporate public affairs, or some other outward-facing positions, should focus on explaining how autocratic rule will impact their audiences and communities. That means focusing less on the horseshoe elements of political stories and refraining from ‘both sides’ coverage that fails to explain the unique authoritarian threat. As New York University journalism professor [Jay Rosen](#) has encapsulated the need, we must all focus on ‘not the odds, but the stakes.’”

#### **3. Keep a broad pro-democracy movement united against the acute, big-picture autocratic danger.**

“Authoritarians will exacerbate ... divisions, pitting vulnerable groups against each other. The pro-democracy coalition must stay focused on what unites us — protecting the ability to resolve policy disagreements through a democratic process. As Poland showed recently, and Belgium and Finland showed in the early 20th century, the way to overcome autocratic movements is for people committed to democracy from the left, center, and right to put their traditional differences aside to come together to defend democracy.”

#### **4. Support Republicans that stand firm for democratic institutions.**

“The authoritarian movement in America has been made possible with support from the Republican Party. At the same time, Republican officials and affiliated interest groups can have an outsized impact in checking the authoritarian faction. As scholars Daniel Ziblatt and Steven Levitsky [have explained](#), it’s essential for pro-democratic actors in the authoritarian-dominated party not just to offer tacit criticism of autocratic actions but to ‘expel antidemocratic extremists from their ranks, refuse to endorse their candidacies, eschew all collaboration with them and, when necessary, join forces with ideological rivals to isolate and defeat them.’ The pro-democracy coalition must be willing partners to support and nurture those relationships with pro-democracy Republicans that can produce meaningful change.”

#### **5. Rally around non-partisan, independent public servants.**

“Our democracy depends on millions of dedicated public servants doing their jobs to deliver services, uphold the law, and keep the public informed. Through their commitment to the rule of law, these civil servants, election officials, judges, and court employees are a first line of defense against an autocratic government ... that is why among the autocratic faction’s first moves in power will be to dismantle the civil service and independent law enforcement and replace them with regime loyalists.

Independent public servants are the bulwark standing between the authoritarian and the American people; we may frequently disagree with them or be frustrated by what they do (or don’t do), but we must safeguard their vital roles. We must also help them when they speak out against authoritarianism, providing material resources and other forms of support in lawful ways when they risk their livelihoods or safety to do the right thing.”

#### **6. Uphold the rule of law and democratic institutions, and always repudiate violence.**

“[P]ro-democracy actors must always condemn political violence. This also means respecting lawful court orders, avoiding aggressive presidential executive actions that stretch constraints on abuse of power, and refusing to tolerate corruption.”

#### **7. Protect the first targets and arrange to advocate for the most vulnerable.**

“A central tenet of the autocratic playbook is to target vulnerable people and populations to deflect from an autocrat’s failures and consolidate support. Community groups, civic and industry associations, and state and local governments should articulate agreements to support each other in times of need. We might think of this as the NATO Article V approach — ‘an attack against one ... is an attack against all.’ As with NATO, such alliances and agreements can create a deterrent effect that will make it harder for an autocrat to single out members.”

#### **8. Evaluate security at the community, household, and personal level.**

“Members of the pro-democracy coalition should be ready to address potential threats to their personal security, families, and workplaces. Practical safety preparedness includes protecting private personal information, evaluating online security vulnerabilities, and training for the

unexpected. We should also identify people in our households, neighborhoods, and communities who may require additional support and develop plans in advance to help them should the need arise.”

### **9. Work to protect free and fair elections in 2026 and 2028.**

“An autocrat in the White House will cause immense damage to our democratic institutions and hurt an enormous number of people, but the 2026 midterms will not be far away. We can expect the autocratic faction to continue to seek to suppress the right to vote, undermine confidence in election systems, and explore ways to nullify votes for opposing candidates.

We need to make substantial investments in all available strategies to protect free and fair elections in 2026 and 2028 so that ‘we the people’ have a chance to hold the authoritarian faction accountable and vote it out of office. Those cycles may also be an opportunity for the pro-democracy coalition to come together to support solid pro-democracy candidates committed to upholding our Constitution and the rule of law.”

### **10. Continue building the democracy of tomorrow.**

“In many ways, our democracy hangs in the balance over the next 12 months. American civil society must focus aggressively during that time on the defensive work of protecting a free and fair election in 2024, limiting the likelihood the autocratic faction prevails, and preparing for an autocrat in the White House in 2025.

Alongside these defensive efforts to protect our democracy, however, we must also work to build the resilient and inclusive democracy of tomorrow. That includes strengthening our checks and balances and rule of law institutions, reforming our electoral systems and political parties to make our democracy more representative and authoritarian resistant, enabling the democratic participation of those who have been historically excluded, bridging divides, and enhancing civic engagement.”

## **F. Democracy Forward Recommendations**

As discussed above, with Trump’s plan to eliminate civil servant jobs en masse, a [Democracy Forward report](#) draws attention to specific threats including relocating federal agencies, shortening the disciplinary process, attacking public sector unions, utilizing buyout programs, terminating employees for past work, impounding appropriated funds, and utilizing the National Security Act of 1947. The report notes that countermeasures targeting these main weak points can be taken—and have begun.

“The pro-democracy community has started to respond. In November of 2023, 26 organizations joined with Democracy Forward to submit comments in support of the Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM) proposed rule: Upholding Civil Service Protections and Merit System Principles. The proposed rule is intended to counter a return of the so-called ‘Schedule F’ efforts, which was a proposal at the end of the Trump administration to reclassify large numbers

of civil servants into positions from which they could be readily terminated. The far right is already planning to re-issue Schedule F should it gain control of the federal executive branch. It is crucial now to put in place safeguards against future attacks on the civil service. While preparing for Schedule F is necessary, it is not sufficient to respond to the wide-ranging threats from anti-democratic actors. Their systematic planning must be met with a comparable response. Other serious threats remain.”

“Identifying threats is the first step toward effectively countering them. Addressing these threats will require a thoughtful and coordinated response by the many institutions, policymakers, and communities dedicated to advancing democracy and the ability of the government to be responsive to the needs of people and communities. Some of these proposals can be forestalled by proactive actions. Others can be challenged in court if they come to fruition.”

### **G. Atlantic Council/International Center on Nonviolent Conflict Recommendations**

In their report, [“Fostering a Fourth Democratic Wave.”](#) Atlantic Council and ICNC recommend that in building democratic solidarity, “the United States and its allies could establish a new standing body, such as D-10 or a broader coalition of democracies, with a mandate to develop strategy and coordinate execution of joint efforts to support democracy and counter authoritarian efforts. The informal working group, or new standing body, would engage perspectives from every major region to identify threats and develop solutions to address them.”

“The US government should elevate supporting democracy to be a central factor in foreign policy decision-making. The president should direct the national security agencies and the national security advisor to weigh implications for democracy in all major foreign policy decisions. In addition, the president should issue a National Security Strategy or directive for supporting democracy overseas. Such a directive would send a strong signal to US allies and authoritarian regimes that the United States is committed to supporting democracy overseas.”

“The United States should establish a government-wide working group to develop a tiered framework of escalating responses to violent repression. The United States should work with leading democracies to build a framework for collective action centered around enforcement of this tiered approach.”

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