

# ABUSES OF POWER:

## A Chronological Record of the Trump Administration's Illegal Actions, Constitutional Violations, and Defiance of the Courts

January 20, 2025 – March 2026

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Sources: Federal court rulings, congressional reports, Just Security, Lawfare, ACLU, CBPP, AP, NPR, CNN, NBC, PBS NewsHour, Wikipedia (Legal Affairs), SCOTUSblog

### AT A GLANCE: SCALE OF LEGAL CHALLENGES (January 2025 – March 2026)

<b>233+</b> Active federal lawsuits against the administration	<b>700+</b> Cases where judges found immigration policies likely violate law	<b>127</b> Lawsuits filed in first 2 months alone	<b>\$340M+</b> Cost of National Guard city deployments
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Sources: Just Security Litigation Tracker; Lawfare; Senate Armed Services Committee; NYU Law

## INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

From the first day of President Donald Trump's second term, his administration moved at an unprecedented pace to assert executive power beyond its constitutional and statutory limits. Within two months, 127 lawsuits had been filed against the administration, according to NYU data. By early 2026, more than 233 active federal cases were challenging executive actions. Judges appointed by presidents of both parties — Republicans and Democrats alike — found numerous constitutional and statutory flaws in the administration's actions.

This report organizes those actions chronologically by subject area, with special emphasis on two particularly alarming patterns:

- The deliberate targeting of Democratic-led “blue” states and cities through discriminatory denial or withholding of federal funding, troop deployments, and selective law enforcement — as a political weapon against citizens and officials who oppose the administration.
- The deployment of National Guard troops and federal law enforcement to Democratic cities under the guise of immigration enforcement — widely viewed by legal scholars, courts, and civil liberties organizations as an unconstitutional effort to militarize domestic policing and test the use of military force as a tool of political intimidation.

"I have the right to do anything I want to do. I'm the president of the United States. If I think our country is in danger, and it is in danger in these cities, I can do it."

— President Trump, explaining his power to deploy troops to American cities, Cabinet Meeting, August 26, 2025

## SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE OVERREACH & SEPARATION OF POWERS

January 2025 – Ongoing

### 1.1 The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) and Unauthorized Government Restructuring

On January 20, 2025, Trump signed Executive Order 14158 creating the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), placing Elon Musk — a private citizen with no Senate confirmation — in operational control. DOGE immediately began accessing sensitive government data systems, directing mass layoffs, and shutting down agencies and programs created by Congress without legislative authorization.

#### Court Findings

- U.S. District Judge Theodore Chuang (Maryland) found that Trump and Musk likely violated the constitutional separation of powers and the Appointments Clause when they ordered the closure of USAID, ruling that Musk was "performing the duties of the USDS administrator" without proper appointment.
- U.S. District Judge William Alsup (San Francisco) found that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) illegally directed six federal agencies — including Treasury and Defense — to terminate thousands of probationary employees en masse, ordering their reinstatement.
- U.S. District Judge Susan Illston granted a preliminary injunction blocking further mass reductions in force, writing: "Congress creates federal agencies, funds them, and gives them duties that — by statute — they must carry out."
- Coalitions of unions, local governments (including Chicago, Baltimore, and Harris County, Texas), and nonprofits filed broad lawsuits arguing the workforce cuts violated the Constitution because "Congress has not authorized them."

#### Key Events

**February 2025:** DOGE shuttered USAID headquarters; a judge found this violated the Appointments Clause and appropriations statutes.

**February–March 2025:** Mass firing of ~220,000 probationary federal workers. Agencies were directed to use a template email falsely claiming the firings were "for performance reasons." Courts found this illegal.

**March 2025:** Two separate federal judges ordered reinstatement of fired probationary workers, calling the process unlawful. The administration attempted to delay and obstruct reinstatement.

**May 2025:** Judge Illston issued a broader preliminary injunction pausing all DOGE-directed reductions in force; the administration appealed.

**July 2025:** The Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, stayed Illston's injunction on procedural grounds, clearing the way for the administration to proceed with downsizing — but without ruling on the merits.

#### NOTE ON SCALE

At least 75,000 federal employees accepted deferred resignation; thousands more were fired outright. There is no final official count.

The Senate minority staff estimated that by mid-2025, more than 30,000 workers had been formally terminated across federal agencies.

Cities including Chicago, Baltimore, and San Francisco joined lawsuits, citing disruption to federal services their residents depend on.

### 1.2 Birthright Citizenship Executive Order

On January 20, 2025, Trump signed Executive Order 14160 seeking to end birthright citizenship for children born in the United States to parents who are undocumented immigrants or on temporary visas. Legal scholars immediately identified this as a direct violation of the Fourteenth Amendment, which grants citizenship to "all persons born or naturalized in the United States."

### **Court Response**

- Multiple federal district courts issued preliminary injunctions blocking the order, calling it a straightforward violation of the Fourteenth Amendment and the Supreme Court's 1898 ruling in *U.S. v. Wong Kim Ark*.
- The Supreme Court agreed in 2025 to take up the case on the merits — a decision expected in 2026.
- The Supreme Court's June 2025 ruling in *Trump v. CASA* limited the scope of nationwide injunctions, meaning future injunctions may only protect named plaintiffs — a significant procedural victory for the administration.

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## **1.3 Unlawful Funding Freeze & Impoundment of Congressional Appropriations**

In late January 2025, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a sweeping memo effectively freezing broad categories of federal funding pending review. This directly violated the Impoundment Control Act of 1974, which prohibits the executive branch from unilaterally withholding congressionally appropriated funds.

### **Court Actions**

- U.S. District Judge John McConnell ordered the administration to "immediately cease" impeding disbursement of federal funds, finding the government had directly violated his court order.
- A coalition of 22 attorneys general presented evidence that FEMA continued restricting more than 215 federal grants despite a court order blocking the freeze. Judge McConnell found "undisputed evidence" that the agency "essentially imposed an indefinite categorical pause on payments" in direct violation of the injunction.
- The administration argued FEMA was "merely implementing a manual review process" — the court rejected this characterization.

## SECTION 2: TARGETING POLITICAL OPPONENTS — THE RULE OF LAW UNDER ATTACK

March 2025 – Ongoing

### 2.1 Executive Orders Targeting Law Firms: Retaliation Against the Legal Profession

Between February and April 2025, President Trump signed a series of executive orders targeting major law firms that had represented his political opponents or worked with prosecutors who investigated him. The orders suspended security clearances, restricted access to federal buildings, and directed agencies to terminate contracts with the firms.

#### Targeted Firms and Justifications Given

- Perkins Coie: Targeted for advising Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign and commissioning opposition research.
- Paul, Weiss: Targeted because a former attorney had helped prosecute Trump in the Manhattan DA's office.
- Jenner & Block: Targeted for hiring former Mueller prosecutor Andrew Weissmann.
- WilmerHale: Targeted for employing Robert Mueller before and after his special counsel role.
- Susman Godfrey: Targeted for representing Dominion Voting Systems in its defamation suit against Fox News.
- Covington & Burling: Targeted because a partner represented Jack Smith pro bono.

#### Court Outcomes

- Four separate federal judges — appointed by both Republican and Democratic presidents — struck down these orders as unconstitutional.
- Judge Beryl Howell (Obama appointee) called the Perkins Coie order "an unprecedented attack" on the legal system, "null and void," and invoked Shakespeare: "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers."
- Judge Richard Leon (Bush appointee) found the WilmerHale order created a "constitutional harm" with "no doubt" of unconstitutional retaliation.
- Judge John Bates (Bush appointee) ruled the Jenner & Block order likely violated the First, Fifth, and Sixth Amendments.
- Judge Loren AliKhan found the Susman Godfrey order resulted from a "personal vendetta" and was "a shocking abuse of power."

#### Additional Harm: Pay-to-Play Arrangements

- At least nine other firms — not yet targeted by executive orders — preemptively agreed to provide approximately \$1 billion in pro bono legal services to the administration, including: Paul Weiss (\$40M), Skadden (\$100M), Kirkland & Ellis (\$125M), Latham & Watkins (\$125M), Simpson Thacher (\$125M), and others.
- Legal ethics experts raised serious concerns about firms pledging work to the government in exchange for avoiding punishment, warning it resembles extortion or coercion.
- As of early March 2026, the DOJ dropped its appeals of all four unconstitutional rulings, then in a stunning reversal, immediately sought to revive those same appeals within 24 hours.

"To rule otherwise would be unfaithful to the judgment and vision of the Founding Fathers!"  
— Judge Richard Leon, in striking down Trump's executive order targeting WilmerHale, May 2025

"Lawyers must stick to the party line, or else."

— Judge Beryl Howell, describing the message sent by the Perkins Coie executive order

## 2.2 Targeting Prosecutors, Judges, and Oversight Officials

The administration engaged in a pattern of retaliating against or threatening those responsible for legal oversight, including federal judges, special counsels, and prosecutorial officials.

- U.S. District Judge John Coughenour publicly described the administration's actions as unconstitutional on multiple occasions, particularly regarding immigration enforcement without due process.
- The DOJ brought what a federal court found to be potentially vindictive criminal prosecution against Kilmar Abrego Garcia — a man the administration had illegally deported — immediately after being compelled by courts to return him to the U.S. A district judge found "some evidence" the prosecution "may be vindictive."
- The administration filed criminal charges against former FBI Director James Comey, former National Security Advisor John Bolton, New York Attorney General Letitia James, and others widely seen as political opponents, according to the Lawfare Litigation Tracker.
- The DOJ pursued prosecution of Congressional candidate Katherine Abughazaleh and Representative LaMonica McIver, raising separation of powers concerns.
- A government attorney, Erez Reuveni, was fired after refusing to sign an appellate brief in the Abrego Garcia case because he believed its assertions were untrue — raising concerns about pressure on government lawyers to make false representations to courts.

## 2.3 Targeting Independent Agencies & the Press

- Executive Order 14215 ("Ensuring Accountability for All Agencies") sought to extend presidential control over independent agencies including the Federal Election Commission, widely condemned as an unconstitutional power grab. Lawsuit filed February 28, 2025.
- The Associated Press was banned from White House press pool events (Oval Office, Air Force One) after it continued using the name "Gulf of Mexico" instead of the administration's preferred "Gulf of America." A federal court case (AP v. Budowich) is ongoing.
- NPR and PBS both filed federal lawsuits after facing defunding threats and content-based restrictions.
- Election executive order (March 25, 2025): Trump directed federal agencies to change election rules, a power the Constitution reserves to the states and Congress. A court blocked the key provision on April 24, 2025, ruling Trump lacks authority to direct the independent Election Assistance Commission.

## SECTION 3: IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT AS A PRETEXT FOR MILITARIZING DOMESTIC POLICING

January 2025 – March 2026

### 3.1 The Alien Enemies Act Deportations: Defying Court Orders

On March 15, 2025, the Trump administration invoked the Alien Enemies Act (AEA) of 1798 — a wartime statute — to deport 238 Venezuelans, including 137 under the AEA, to El Salvador's notorious CECOT mega-prison without due process. A federal judge had issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) requiring the administration to pause these removals. The administration flew the deportation planes to El Salvador anyway, with Judge James Boasberg later finding the government "acted in bad faith."

#### The CECOT Deportations: What Happened

- 238 men were deported to CECOT (Terrorism Confinement Center), described by a federal judge as "one of the most notoriously inhumane and dangerous prisons in the world that, by design, deprives" those held there of basic rights.
- A Bloomberg investigation found approximately 90% of the deported Venezuelans had no U.S. criminal record beyond traffic or immigration violations.
- Evidence used to label individuals as gang members frequently consisted of tattoos — including one man's "autism awareness" tattoo honoring his brother and another's crown tattoos honoring a Venezuelan holiday pageant.
- El Salvador's government told the United Nations that "jurisdiction and legal responsibility" for those sent to CECOT from the U.S. rested with El Salvador — effectively placing them beyond U.S. court reach.
- The Supreme Court found, 7-2, that the administration violated the due process rights of Venezuelan detainees by providing only 24 hours' notice of removal, with no information on how to challenge the order, and no Spanish translation.

#### The Kilmar Abrego Garcia Case: A Defining Confrontation

Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a Salvadoran man with a 2019 court order specifically protecting him from deportation to El Salvador, was nonetheless deported there on March 15, 2025. The administration called it an "administrative error" but refused to return him.

- The Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the government must "facilitate" Abrego Garcia's return from El Salvador.
- The administration refused to comply for nearly two months before returning him — and then immediately filed criminal smuggling charges against him based on a 2022 Tennessee traffic stop where he received only a warning. A federal judge found some evidence the prosecution "may be vindictive."
- Government attorney Erez Reuveni was fired for refusing to sign a brief containing assertions he believed were false.
- As of early 2026, the administration sought to deport Abrego Garcia again — potentially to a third country such as South Sudan or Libya.
- Judge Paula Xinis described the administration's conduct as an "illegal act" and expressed "increasing frustration" with the Justice Department's non-compliance.

"These men suffered brutal abuse and torture because the Trump administration treated due process as optional."

— ACLU attorney Lee Gelernt, representing Venezuelan deportees, February 2026

## 3.2 National Guard Deployments to Democratic Cities: Military Force as Political Weapon

Beginning in June 2025, President Trump deployed National Guard troops and federal law enforcement agents to major Democratic-led cities, repeatedly over the explicit objections of state governors and local officials. Courts and legal scholars found these deployments to violate the Posse Comitatus Act, constitutional limits on federal power, and basic norms prohibiting military policing of civilians.

### City-by-City Timeline

**June 2025 — Los Angeles, California:** Following protests against immigration raids, Trump deployed 2,000 National Guard troops to Los Angeles over the objection of Governor Gavin Newsom. In September 2025, U.S. District Judge Charles Breyer ruled the administration had violated the Posse Comitatus Act, writing there “was no rebellion, nor was civilian law enforcement unable to respond to the protests and enforce the law” — and that the rationale for deployment was “contrived.”

**September 2025 — Portland, Oregon:** Trump announced deployment of 200 National Guard troops to Portland, calling it “war-ravaged” — a characterization Oregon officials and a Trump-appointed federal judge flatly rejected. Oregon’s attorney general filed an emergency lawsuit. A federal judge temporarily blocked the deployment. The Ninth Circuit signaled it might allow it to proceed.

**October 2025 — Chicago, Illinois:** Trump sought to deploy 300 National Guard troops (including troops federalized from Texas) to Chicago-area ICE facilities. Local officials challenged it as an attempt to punish political opponents and as violating the 10th Amendment and the Posse Comitatus Act. A federal district judge found “no credible evidence that there is a danger of rebellion” and blocked the deployment.

**October 2025 — Chicago (continued):** Customs and Border Protection and ICE agents with automatic weapons and full combat gear patrolled Chicago tourist districts. An investigation was launched into what Broadview police called an “unprovoked attack” by ICE on a TV news van — agents allegedly fired a chemical munition at a WBBM-TV Chicago news truck.

**November 2025 — Memphis & North Carolina:** The administration deployed federal troops across North Carolina, including to Democratic-led Charlotte, over residents’ objections.

**November–December 2025 — New Orleans, Louisiana:** Trump announced plans to send National Guard troops to New Orleans. 350 Louisiana Guard troops arrived December 30, 2025, for New Year’s celebrations — local officials clarified they would not assist with immigration enforcement.

**January 2026 — Minneapolis–St. Paul, Minnesota:** Intensified immigration crackdowns targeted the Somali American community. Federal agents fatally shot two individuals during operations, including Alex Pretti. Minnesota, Minneapolis, and St. Paul sued the Department of Homeland Security. Attorneys general from 19 states plus D.C. filed friend-of-court briefs. A top federal judge ordered the acting ICE director to appear in court personally.

### Supreme Court Ruling: A Major Loss for the Administration

On December 23, 2025, the Supreme Court rejected the Trump administration’s emergency request to deploy National Guard troops in Illinois in a 6-3 decision.

- The Court ruled that the administration had “failed to identify a source of authority that would allow the military to execute the laws in Illinois.”
- The Court held that the federal law invoked by Trump (Title 10) requires the Guard to be called up only if regular military forces could legally execute the laws — but they cannot under the Posse Comitatus Act for domestic law enforcement.
- Justices Alito, Thomas, and Gorsuch dissented.
- The ruling cast doubt on the legality of similar deployments in Portland, Memphis, Los Angeles, and other cities.
- Illinois Governor JB Pritzker called the ruling “an important step in curbing the Trump Administration’s consistent abuse of power and slowing Trump’s march toward authoritarianism.”

**LEGAL FRAMEWORK VIOLATED**

Posse Comitatus Act (1878): Prohibits use of federal military forces for domestic law enforcement.

10th Amendment: Reserves powers not delegated to the federal government to the states.

Title 10, U.S.C. §12406: Allows presidential federalization of the Guard only where regular military could legally act — courts found that bar was not met.

Insurrection Act (1807): The one route Trump could invoke to bypass these limits — but he has not formally done so, choosing instead less transparent legal justifications courts have repeatedly rejected.

### 3.3 The 287(g) Program: Building a Nationwide Police-Immigration Enforcement Network

Under the second Trump administration, the 287(g) program — which deputizes state and local police as immigration agents — expanded dramatically. By September 2025, DHS reported training or in-process-of-training more than 10,000 officers under the street-level enforcement model.

- As of early 2026, at least 32% of Americans — approximately 77.2 million people — live in a county with a law enforcement agency participating in the program, according to the ACLU.
- The ACLU's Deputized for Disaster report documented widespread racial profiling, civil rights violations, and community harm resulting from the program's expansion.
- Federal agents arrested people for alleged immigration violations without warrants, including U.S. citizens.
- Federal agents in Chicago arrested individuals who recorded their actions.
- The administration proposed using 287(g) agreements on university campuses, causing some students to withdraw from college.
- In response, New Mexico, Maine, and Maryland enacted legislation banning 287(g) agreements; six other states had already prohibited participation.
- Federal law enforcement was described by the ACLU as operating to "blur the lines of law and accountability that limit federal law enforcement, the military, and state and local police to their proper roles."

## SECTION 4: THE TARGETING OF BLUE STATES — WEAPONIZING FEDERAL FUNDING

January 2025 – March 2026

A consistent and escalating pattern throughout the Trump administration's second term has been the targeted withholding, cancellation, or threatened removal of federal funding from states and cities that voted Democratic in 2024 — in what legal experts, state officials, and federal courts have characterized as politically discriminatory and unconstitutional.

### 4.1 Sanctuary City Funding Threats

Trump's January 20, 2025 Executive Order 14159 directed the DOJ and DHS to take enforcement actions against "sanctuary jurisdictions" — places that limit cooperation with federal immigration agents. Courts have repeatedly blocked these efforts.

- Previous administration efforts to defund sanctuary cities (Trump's first term) were consistently struck down in courts.
- In January 2026, Trump stated publicly: "Starting February 1, we're not making any payments to sanctuary cities or states having sanctuary cities." Courts continued to block these efforts.
- January 29, 2025: The Department of Transportation issued an order requiring states and localities to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement as a condition of transportation funding.
- March 25, 2025: FEMA withheld preparedness-grant money until states complied with immigration-cooperation conditions.

### 4.2 The Five-State Funding Freeze (January 2026)

In January 2026, the administration froze child care, social services, and TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) funding to California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota, and New York — all Democratic-led states. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities called it illegal and unsupported by evidence.

- Illegal because the administration failed to identify any specific noncompliance or follow statutory requirements for how alleged mis-expenditures must be investigated before funds are withheld.
- The administration's letters to the five states cited a general regulation that "cannot supersede the more specific requirements of the TANF statute," which requires identifying specific noncompliance before withholding.
- The CBPP noted the freeze "could be a prelude to a much larger effort by the Administration to withhold or place new requirements on federal funds going to states based on their political leanings."

### 4.3 Targeted Review of 14 Democratic States (January 2026)

In January 2026, OMB Director Russell Vought issued a directive to almost all federal departments requesting comprehensive data on all grants, loans, contracts, and awards going to 14 states and Washington, D.C.

- All 14 states voted for Kamala Harris in the 2024 election; 12 have Democratic governors.
- States included: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington, and Vermont.
- The CBPP president stated the effort "seems to have callously discarded" the idea that presidents govern for all Americans, calling it "a harmful and shameful escalation of the Admin's corrupt politicization of basic governance."
- The memo explicitly stated it "does not involve withholding funds" — but simultaneously implied such withholdings were the goal, as it acknowledged needing to avoid "violat[ing] any court order."

### 4.4 The \$7.6 Billion Green Energy Grant Cancellations (October 2025)

On October 1, 2025 — the first day of a government shutdown — OMB Director Vought posted on X announcing the cancellation of nearly \$8 billion in energy grants to 16 states that voted for Kamala Harris in 2024.

- The 321 award cancellations covered 223 projects including electrical grid upgrades and methane reduction efforts.
- Vought openly stated the rationale: “Nearly \$8 billion in Green New Scam funding to fuel the Left’s climate agenda is being cancelled.” He then listed only Democratic-voting states.
- Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) called it “naked and brazen corruption” and “all states represented by Democrats in the Senate.”
- In December 2025, the Trump administration’s Justice Department acknowledged in a court filing that it considers it legal to withhold funding based on partisan politics.
- The Harvard Law Review noted in February 2026 that plaintiffs in *Wright v. Paul* had presented strong evidence the terminations “intentionally targeted DOE awardees in Blue States... in order to punish states and citizens for their political views.”

"Let's open our eyes. This isn't a functioning democracy any longer when — in the middle of a high stakes funding fight — the President illegally suspends federal projects in states run by Democrats as a way to punish the political opposition."

— Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT), October 1, 2025

#### 4.5 New York City Infrastructure Funding Freeze (\$18 Billion)

In October 2025, OMB Director Vought announced a freeze of approximately \$18 billion in federal funding for two major New York City infrastructure projects. This was done the same day as the \$8 billion green energy cancellations — as part of what critics described as a coordinated effort to use the government shutdown as cover for politically motivated defunding of Democratic areas.

#### 4.6 National Guard Deployments as Punishment for Blue States

As detailed in Section 3, the pattern of National Guard and federal law enforcement deployments also served as a mechanism to target Democratic-governed states and cities:

- A Stateline analysis of federal crime data found that Trump’s National Guard deployments had not — with one exception — targeted the nation’s most violent cities. Deployments went to Chicago, Portland, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and other Democratic-led cities with declining crime rates.
- Local elected and law enforcement officials in Portland, Los Angeles, Chicago, Memphis, New Orleans, and Washington, D.C. noted that crime statistics before the deployments showed falling — not rising — violent and property crime rates.
- Chicago, Illinois, and Portland, Oregon sued the administration, arguing the deployments were intended to punish political opponents.
- Courts in multiple cases agreed that the administration’s stated justifications were “contrived” (Judge Breyer on Los Angeles) or unsupported by “credible evidence” (Judge Perry on Chicago).

## SECTION 5: VIOLATIONS OF DUE PROCESS & CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

January 2025 – Ongoing

### 5.1 Anti-DEI Executive Orders: First and Fifth Amendment Violations

On January 20 and 21, 2025, Trump signed two executive orders declaring DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) programs “illegal” and ordering their elimination from the federal government and threatening private companies, universities, and nonprofits.

- A federal court found the orders “impermissibly target the expression of views supportive of equity, diversity and inclusion and violate the First and Fifth Amendments.”
- The court noted the orders are “antithetical to federal anti-discrimination law” because ensuring equity and diversity is “in some contexts arguably a requirement of federal anti-discrimination law.”
- The Termination Provision, Certification Provision, and Enforcement Threat Provision were all found unconstitutional.
- The court found the orders imposed “content-based viewpoint discrimination” by conditioning federal funding on compliance with the administration’s ideology.
- The administration created a list of more than 250 words (including “accessible” and “woman”) to be removed from government websites.

### 5.2 Voting Rights Executive Order (March 25, 2025)

President Trump signed an executive order directing federal agencies to change rules for federal elections, including requiring documentary proof of citizenship for voter registration.

- The Constitution gives states, not the president, the power to regulate elections.
- More than 21 million Americans lack access to documents that would be required under the order.
- On April 24, 2025, a federal court ruled Trump lacks authority to direct the independent Election Assistance Commission and blocked the measure.
- The Campaign Legal Center filed suit on behalf of LULAC, Secure Families Initiative, and the Arizona Students’ Association.

### 5.3 Immigration Detention Without Due Process

The administration implemented a policy of mandatory immigration detention that multiple courts found violated due process rights.

- As of November 2025, at least 225 judges had ruled in more than 700 cases that the administration’s mandatory detention policy was a likely violation of law and the right to due process, according to Politico.
- The administration summarily revoked the visa registrations of hundreds of foreign students (F-1 visa holders), prompting more than 100 lawsuits and 50 restraining orders from dozens of federal judges. The government reversed its decision on or about April 25, 2025.
- Arrests were documented in churches, courthouses, and medical facilities — locations traditionally protected from civil immigration enforcement.
- Federal agents arrested people for alleged immigration violations without warrants, including individuals who turned out to be U.S. citizens.

### 5.4 Defiance of Specific Court Orders: A Pattern of Non-Compliance

Lawyers challenging the Trump administration alleged violations or defiance of court orders on multiple distinct occasions:

- Alien Enemies Act deportations (March 15–16, 2025): The administration flew deportation flights to El Salvador while a TRO was in effect. Judge Boasberg found the government "acted in bad faith" and was considering contempt proceedings before the Supreme Court altered jurisdiction.
- FEMA funding freeze: Despite a court order blocking the funding freeze, a coalition of 22 attorneys general presented evidence that FEMA continued restricting more than 215 grants. Judge McConnell ordered the administration to "immediately cease" violations.
- Abrego Garcia: The Supreme Court unanimously required the administration to "facilitate" his return; the government refused meaningful compliance for nearly two months.
- ICE operations in Portland and Chicago: Multiple instances where federal agents continued operating in defiance of or immediately after injunctions were issued.
- South Sudan deportations: The Supreme Court allowed deportations to continue even as it acknowledged individuals had no connection to that country — a decision that drew a blistering dissent from Justice Jackson, who invoked the cartoon "Calvin and Hobbes" to describe what she called "Calvinball jurisprudence."

## SECTION 6: THE COURTS & THE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

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### 6.1 Judicial Resistance Across Party Lines

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the administration's legal record is that the resistance has not come from judges of any single political party. Federal judges appointed by Republican and Democratic presidents alike found the administration's actions unconstitutional.

- Multiple analyses by academic scholars and The New York Times found that both Republican and Democratic judicial appointees identified constitutional and statutory flaws in Trump administration policies.
- In the law firm cases, four judges appointed by Bush (Leon, Bates), Obama (Howell), and Biden (AliKhan) all ruled against the administration in permanent injunctions.
- In the Chicago National Guard case, a Biden-appointed district judge (Perry) and ultimately a 6-3 Supreme Court majority blocked the deployment.
- The Trump-appointed federal judge in Oregon temporarily blocked the Portland deployment, finding the "rebellion" justification unsupported.

### 6.2 The Supreme Court's Role: Procedural Wins for the Administration

While the administration suffered many defeats in lower courts, the conservative Supreme Court majority allowed numerous administration actions to proceed on procedural and jurisdictional grounds without ruling on their constitutional merits.

- June 2025: *Trump v. CASA* — The Supreme Court ruled that nationwide injunctions cannot be issued by district courts, making it much harder to obtain broad relief against unconstitutional actions.
- The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the administration in 20 of 24 emergency docket cases in 2025. It ruled against the administration in 4.
- In multiple cases, the conservative justices used "highly technical and narrow procedural decisions to avoid directly confronting the Trump administration and its seemingly unconstitutional actions," according to the Center for American Progress.
- The National Guard Chicago case (December 2025) was a significant exception — the Court ruled 6-3 against the administration on the merits, finding no statutory authority for the deployment.

### 6.3 Contempt and Non-Compliance: A New Frontier

While no member of the Trump administration has been held in contempt of court as of early 2026, the legal machinery for such proceedings has been engaged:

- Judge Boasberg stated the government "acted in bad faith" in the Alien Enemies Act deportations and was considering contempt proceedings before the Supreme Court shifted jurisdiction.
- At least four judges expressed formal concerns about the Trump administration's compliance with court orders.
- Judge McConnell issued a direct order to "immediately cease" violations of his funding injunction after finding undisputed evidence of non-compliance.
- In the Abrego Garcia case, Judge Xinis described the government's responses to court orders as essentially telling the court "to pound sand."
- The Brennan Center notes that while courts have not yet held a sitting president in contempt, they have held and fined government agencies for noncompliance, and the legal tools to do so remain available.

## CONCLUSION: A PATTERN OF POWER WITHOUT ACCOUNTABILITY

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The record compiled in this report reflects not a series of isolated missteps, but a deliberate and systematic effort to expand presidential power beyond constitutional limits, punish political opponents using the instruments of government, and militarize domestic law enforcement as both a practical tool and a political signal.

The administration has targeted Democratic-led states and cities with funding cuts, troop deployments, and prosecutorial actions that courts have repeatedly found to be retaliatory, unconstitutional, or otherwise unlawful. It has used immigration enforcement not merely as policy but as a pretext for deploying military-style forces in jurisdictions that oppose the president politically, and courts have found these justifications to be “contrived.”

What makes this record especially alarming is not only the breadth of constitutional violations found by courts, but the administration’s increasingly open acknowledgment that these actions are intentional. The OMB director publicly listed only Democratic-voting states when announcing \$8 billion in grant cancellations. The DOJ argued in federal court that it is constitutional to withhold funding based on partisan politics. The president told a cabinet meeting: “I have the right to do anything I want to do.”

The federal judiciary, at great institutional cost, has provided the primary line of resistance. But the administration’s willingness to defy, delay, and circumvent court rulings — while a conservative Supreme Court majority often avoids ruling on the merits — raises questions about the long-term durability of judicial checks. As the Center for American Progress warned, “the damage being done to the nation will take years to undo but may well be irreversible.”

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