

Southern Poverty Law Center



Updated Submission of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)
United Nations Universal Periodic Review of the United States of America
53rd Session of the Universal Periodic Review
4th Cycle (November 2-13, 2026)

The Southern Poverty Law Center was founded in 1971 with the goal of making the promise of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement a reality for everyone. Through litigation, policy advocacy, education, and community organizing, SPLC works to combat racial inequity across the Deep South and beyond, with a focus on eliminating poverty, protecting voting rights, fighting hate and extremism, and ending unjust punishment.

I. Introduction.

1. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) submits this updated, supplementary report to provide information regarding violations of applicable international human rights standards in the United States of America in the areas of the criminal legal system, voting rights, and racial discrimination.

II. Voting Rights.

2. Laws Restricting Access to Voting. Since our previous report, Congress has continued in its failure to adopt new voting rights legislation, such as the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (JLVRAA) and Freedom To Vote Act (FTVA), to restore protections degraded by Supreme Court decisions. Instead, the president and far-right conservatives in Congress are continuing their efforts to pass the “Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act” (SAVE Act) and the SAVE America Act, which would disenfranchise millions of eligible voters who would be unable to produce the documentation these proposed laws would require.¹ The proponents of the SAVE and SAVE America Acts are promoting false allegations of non-citizen voting² and other forms of virtually non-existent voter fraud³ to support this legislation. President Trump has also issued an Executive Order that purports to impose new restrictions on voter identification and voting by mail.⁴

More than 4 million people in the US – disproportionately Black – are already denied the right to vote due to a prior felony conviction.⁵ In January 2026, a federal district court held that the State of Virginia violated the law that readmitted it to the Union following the Civil War by disenfranchising people – potentially hundreds of thousands – for convictions of crimes that were not common law felonies at the time of the readmission.⁶ Several other states, including those in the SPLC’s Deep South region, were readmitted under the same requirements,⁷ and should immediately restore the right to vote for all who have been wrongfully disenfranchised.

2.A. Suggested Recommendations.

- Adopt legislation, including the JLVRAA and the FTVA, to fully restore the protections of the Voting Rights Act and continue to enforce federal voting rights legislation throughout the US.
- Take all necessary measures to restore voting rights to persons convicted of a criminal offense who have completed their sentence of incarceration or are on parole.

- Immediately restore the voting rights of all persons disenfranchised for criminal convictions in violation of the Readmission Acts.

3. Racially discriminatory redistricting. The updating of voting maps across the United States typically takes place every ten years, following the results of the US Census.⁸ While this redistricting is supposed to make adjustments in representation that account for demographic changes identified by the census, many states have regularly seized the opportunity to make changes that are racially discriminatory and fail to recognize the growth in non-white populations.⁹ Following the 2020 census, these practices led to numerous lawsuits across the US, many of which resulted in states being required to draw new maps that offered more opportunities for Black and Brown voters to elect candidates of their choice.¹⁰ Between now and June 2026, the US Supreme Court will issue a decision in *Louisiana v. Callais*, a major case about equal representation for Black voters in Louisiana and the role of race in redistricting in which a group of white voters argued that, in drawing a new court-ordered map to replace a racially discriminatory one, Louisiana lawmakers improperly considered race in violation of the US constitution.¹¹ The Court is now considering the constitutionality of both Louisiana's congressional map and Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, which has for decades protected fair representation for communities of color. In 2025, President Trump explicitly called for state legislatures controlled by conservatives to undertake new, mid-decade redistricting for the express purpose of ensuring that Republicans would not lose seats in – and possibly control of – the House or Senate in the 2026 mid-term elections.¹² Several “red” states have heeded this call, leading some “blue” states to do the same in an effort to counter them.

3.A. Suggested Recommendations.

- Provide adequate funding for the administration of elections in each state.
- Adopt legislation, including the JLVRAA and the FTVA to strengthen and modernize election systems nationwide.
- Restore effective enforcement of voting rights laws to protect against the racially discriminatory drawing of voting maps.

III. Racial Discrimination.

4. Since our previous report, the Trump administration has continued and escalated its efforts to erase gains made since the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Those gains, enshrined in U.S. civil rights laws, helped ensure that all Americans could

access equal opportunity and participate fully in the democracy, regardless of race. For more than six decades, these laws and the protections they guaranteed have laid the foundation for more equitable schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods. While the laws remain in place, the administration has systematically dismantled the federal government's enforcement mechanisms that gave them power—hollowing out agencies and directing them to serve the narrow interests of the administration's base.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission — the agency charged with enforcing federal workplace anti-discrimination laws — now prioritizes so-called “reverse discrimination” complaints by white Americans¹³ while scaling back investigations related to historically marginalized people based on their race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity. The administration has moved to reinterpret federal civil rights law to strip funding from schools with diversity initiatives¹⁴ and eliminate federal grants to Hispanic-serving institutions,¹⁵ arguing that both are discriminatory. It has threatened federal prosecution against private employers who promote diversity¹⁶ and warned that federal funding for nonprofits that support DEI efforts could be withdrawn for what it labels “illegal discrimination.”¹⁷ The president has also signed an executive order attempting to end birthright citizenship, a constitutional guarantee established in the aftermath of slavery.¹⁸ That effort would deny citizenship to U.S.-born children of immigrants.

The Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division, the unit charged with enforcing civil rights laws nationwide, has shrunk by roughly 70%,¹⁹ destroying its capacity to investigate and prosecute bias. DOJ has also withdrawn its voting rights cases in Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas,²⁰ retreating from challenges to laws that restrict access to the ballot. More than half of the Department of Education's regional civil rights offices have been closed,²¹ and more than 10,000 investigations have been abandoned.²² The Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity has been slashed by 65%,²³ and the President's budget request for FY2027 eliminates funding to local nonprofits that investigate housing discrimination.²⁴ The administration has also dismantled the Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, which helped to ensure that taxpayer dollars do not subsidize discrimination.²⁵ Shortly before this report was submitted, the President issued an Executive Order²⁶ requiring that federal contractors certify that they do not engage in what the White House deems “illegal DEI” efforts, and directing that federal agencies review contractors' compliance to terminate contracts and even pursue False Claims Act litigation against those that do not

capitulate.

Taken together, these policies do more than dismantle programs—they attack the very foundation of equality and justice in the United States. By weakening and dismantling civil rights protections, the administration is threatening to unleash a new era of unchecked discrimination, putting the rights and opportunities of historically marginalized communities across the country at risk.

4.A. Suggested Recommendations.

- Rescind executive orders, guidance, and policies that attempt to reinterpret civil rights laws to weaken protections or target equity programs
- Restore federal agencies charged with enforcing civil rights laws to their true mission – upholding the original intent of civil rights laws, preventing discrimination, and guaranteeing equal opportunity for all – and provide adequate funding and staffing to carry out that mission.
- Strengthen civil rights laws to ensure that they cannot be weaponized as tools to advance white supremacy.

5. **Prevention of Hate and Extremism.** The influence of hate and extremist groups, and individuals who espouse their ideologies, on the laws and policies of the US government has reached unprecedented levels. As the SPLC warned in the early days of the Trump administration, many of the individuals appointed to high-level positions in the executive branch have associations with hate or extremist groups and have espoused racist, antisemitic, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ, or other hateful rhetoric.²⁷ Most recently, President Trump attempted to install Jeremy Carl, a white nationalist with a history of espousing racist and antisemitic ideologies, as Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations. Mr. Carl was forced to withdraw his nomination following a Senate confirmation hearing during which he continued to assert white nationalist, anti-immigrant positions.²⁸ In addition, far-right members of Congress who control the proceedings of Congressional committees have called numerous people affiliated with anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ, and other extremist groups to testify before Congress on many important issues.²⁹

5.A. Suggested Recommendations.

- Implement recommendations to combat hate speech and hate crimes made by the CERD and Human Rights Committee during US treaty reviews.
- Publicly condemn ideologies of hate, white supremacy, and white nationalism, and ensure they are not supported or promoted by government officials.

- Vigorously enforce hate crime laws and require all law enforcement agencies receiving federal funds to participate in federal reporting programs.

IV. **Attacks on Non-Governmental Organizations.**

6. The Trump administration and far-right lawmakers are engaged in a wide-ranging attack on nonprofit organizations that engage in work that opposes their policies or is otherwise disfavored. The targeting of nonprofit organizations that oppose the rollback of civil rights laws, draconian immigration enforcement, and other policies that are detrimental to human rights is being used to punish and silence such opposition. Alarming, national security and counter-terrorism concerns and mechanisms are being abused to target these NGOs. Several efforts have been made to pass legislation that would give a political appointee the authority to unilaterally designate a nonprofit as “terrorist-supporting” and to revoke its tax-exempt nonprofit status without due process,³⁰ including currently pending bills in the House and Senate.³¹ Some state governors and legislatures are also pursuing similar actions at the state level.³²

The White House has issued executive orders³³ and memoranda³⁴ targeting nonprofit organizations that engage in politically disfavored work, labeling such organizations as “antifa” and “domestic terrorist” organizations. As a result of these EOs and memos, the Attorney General directed the US Department of Justice to collect information on and investigate nonprofit organizations that engage in “opposition to law and immigration enforcement; extreme views in favor of mass migration and open borders; adherence to radical gender ideology, anti-Americanism, anti-capitalism, or anti-Christianity,” and ordered the Federal Bureau of Investigation to develop a list of such organizations. Most recently, the FBI’s 2027 Budget Request³⁵ contains a section on Domestic Terrorism which, in part, states that the FBI is leading a 10 agency “Joint Mission Center” “to counter DT and organized political violence by integrating intelligence, operational support, and financial analysis to proactively identify networks and prosecute domestic terrorist and related criminal actors.” Like NSPM-7, the budget request describes domestic terrorism as being related to “views associated with anti-Americanism, anti-capitalism, and anti-Christianity; support for the overthrow of the U.S. Government (USG); extremism on migration, race, and gender. and hostility towards those who hold traditional American views on family, religion, and morality.”

Right-wing members of Congress have specifically targeted the Southern Poverty Law Center. Most recently, in December of 2025, the House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on the Constitution, conducted a hearing entitled “Partisan and Profitable: The SPLC’s Influence on Federal Civil Rights Policy.”³⁶ Witnesses called by the majority included two representatives of organizations that had been designated by the SPLC as hate or extremist groups,³⁷ and a reporter for The Daily Signal wrote a book critical of the SPLC.³⁸

6.A. Suggested Recommendations.

- Adopt legislation that provides safeguards to prevent the targeting of NGOs, for political purposes or otherwise, for the exercise of their rights to free speech and association and ensures robust due process protections for any nonprofit organization whose tax-exempt status is threatened.

¹ [The SAVE Act: A Danger for Voters and For Democracy](#), Southern Poverty Law Center, 2025; [SPLC Urges Senate to Reject the SAVE America Act](#), Southern Poverty Law Center, March 26, 2026.

² Michael Waldman, [Noncitizen Voting Is Already Illegal – and Vanishingly Rare](#), Brennan Center, April 17, 2024.

³ Linda Qui, [Fact-Checking Republicans’ Misleading Claims About Problematic Elections](#), New York Times, April 6, 2026.

⁴ [Ensuring Citizenship Verification and Integrity in Federal Elections](#), The White House, March 31, 2026.

⁵ Christopher Uggen, et al., [Locked Out 2024: Four Million Denied Voting Rights Due to a Felony Conviction](#), The Sentencing Project, October 10, 2024.

⁶ [Opinion](#), *King v. Youngkin*, Civil Action No. 2:23 cv 408 in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia.

⁷ Alon Goldfinger, [The Readmission Acts: Reconstruction’s Forgotten Voting Rights Statutes](#), 56 Columbia Hum. Rts L. Rev. 1 (2025).

⁸ Lily Kincannon, et al., [What to Know About Redistricting and Gerrymandering](#), Bipartisan Policy Center, August 8, 2025.

⁹ Fred McBride and Kate Donovan, [SPLC forms partnership to make data publicly available in gerrymandering fights](#), Southern Poverty Law Center, August 22, 2025.

¹⁰ Jack Genberg, [How the Supreme Court blocked Alabama’s effort to dilute Black voting power](#), Southern Poverty Law Center, July 6, 2023; [Redistricting in the Courts](#), Brennan Center.

¹¹ Dwayne Fatheree and Caitlin Cruz, [Redistricting war pales in shadow of pending Supreme Court “Callais” decision](#), Southern Poverty Law Center, January 2, 2026.

¹² David A. Lieb, [Trump Urged mid-decade redistricting. One-third of states have now looked at reshaping House seats](#), Associated Press, January 7, 2026.

¹³ [Post by Andrea Lucas](#), Chair of the EEOC, X.com, December 17, 2025.

¹⁴ [Title VII Certification Letter](#), US Department of Education, April 3, 2025.

¹⁵ [US Department of Education Ends Funding to Racially Discriminatory Discretionary Grant Programs at Minority-Serving Institutions](#), US Department of Education, September 10, 2025.

¹⁶ Memorandum, [“Ending Illegal DEI and DEIA Discrimination and Preferences”](#), US Attorney General Pamela Bondi, Department of Justice, February 5, 2025.

-
- ¹⁷ Memorandum, "[*Guidance for Recipients of Federal Funding Regarding Unlawful Discrimination*](#)," US Attorney General, Department of Justice, July 29, 2025.
- ¹⁸ [*Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship*](#), The White House, January 20, 2025.
- ¹⁹ Ryan Lucas, [*70% of the DOJ's Civil Rights Division lawyers are leaving because of Trump's reshaping*](#), NPR, May 19, 2025.
- ²⁰ Hansi Lo Wang, [*Under Trump, the Justice Department is stepping away from some voting rights cases*](#), NPR, March 31, 2025.
- ²¹ Naaz Modan, [*Half of OCR eliminated after Trump Education Department layoffs*](#), K-12 Dive, March 12, 2025.
- ²² Jennifer Smith Richards and Jodi S. Cohen, [*Dept. of Education Halts Thousands of Civil Rights Investigations Under Trump*](#), Truthout, February 15, 2025.
- ²³ Debra Kamin, [*Trump Appointees Roll Back Enforcement of Fair Housing Laws*](#), New York Times, September 22, 2025.
- ²⁴ [*Budget of the US Government for Fiscal Year 2027*](#), Office of Management and Budget, at 32.
- ²⁵ Kevin J. White, [*Trump Administration Eliminates OFCCP Funding, Reshaping Enforcement Landscape for Federal Contractors*](#), Hunton, July 15, 2025.
- ²⁶ [*Addressing DEI Discrimination by Federal Contractors*](#), The White House, March 26, 2026.
- ²⁷ [*The Trump Cabinet's War on Our Rights*](#), Southern Poverty Law Center; Cassie Miller, [*Bigoted beliefs, racist ties found among some of President Trump's appointees*](#), Southern Poverty Law Center, March 6, 2025.
- ²⁸ Jacob Wendler, [*Trump pick for State Department drops out after drawing heat for comments about "white culture"*](#), Politico, March 10, 2026.
- ²⁹ E.g., Andrew Arthur, [*Center for Immigration Studies*](#) (anti-immigrant), Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Border Security and Immigration, Hearing on "[*Biden's Betrayal: Criminal Aliens in America*](#)," July 22, 2025; Lorcan Price, [*Alliance Defending Freedom*](#) (anti-LGBTQ), House Committee on the Judiciary, Hearing on "[*Europe's Threat to American Speech and Innovation*](#)," September 3, 2025; Kurt Miceli, Do No Harm, House Committee on Education and Workforce, Subcommittee on Education and Workforce Development, Hearing on "[*Restoring Excellence: The Case Against DEI*](#)," (anti-LGBTQ)" May 21, 2025.
- ³⁰ [*Joint Letter of Civil Society Organizations Opposing HR 9495*](#), November 18, 2024.
- ³¹ [*HR 6800*](#) (119th Congress); [*S 3554*](#) (119th Congress).
- ³² E.g., [*Executive Order*](#) designating certain groups, including the Council on American-Islamic Relations, as "terrorist organizations," Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, December 8, 2025; Douglas Soule, [*Florida lawmakers advance domestic terrorism designation bill despite constitutional concerns*](#), WLRN.org, February 26, 2026.
- ³³ [*Executive Orders Affecting Charitable Nonprofits*](#), National Council of Nonprofits, updated March 26, 2026.
- ³⁴ Memorandum NSPM-7, "[*Countering Domestic Terrorism and Organized Political Violence*](#)," The White House, September 25, 2025.
- ³⁵ [*FY 2027 FBI Budget Request to Congress*](#), US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation.
- ³⁶ House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on the Constitution and Limited Government, [*Partisan and Profitable: The SPLC's Influence on Federal Civil Rights Policy*](#), December 16, 2025.
- ³⁷ SPLC Extremist Files: [*Family Research Council*](#) (anti-LGBTQ); SPLC Extremist Files: Turning Point USA.
- ³⁸ [*Tyler O'Neill bio*](#), The Daily Signal.