

JANUARY 6 SCORECARD | 2024

WESTERN
STATES
CENTER

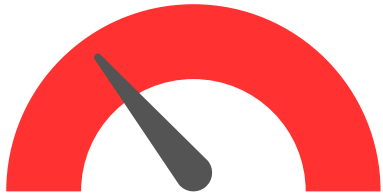


Analyzing Threats to Democracy

In the three years since the January 6 insurrection, communities, elected officials, and democratic institutions have been grappling with the ongoing threat to our democracy from bigoted and anti-democracy movements. Some progress has been made toward strengthening democracy's resilience against these threats. However, the United States is ill-prepared to face the grave threats to our democracy and our institutions. Our country stands before an inflection point: will we work toward an inclusive, multiracial democracy, or will we slide further into increasing political violence and authoritarianism? **We have rated U.S. progress in this arena on a scale of 1 (inadequate) to 10 (sufficient).** While democratic institutions and civil society have worked to shore up their resilience since the crisis of the insurrection, there are still many strategies, from legislation to civil litigation to funding civic action, that have not been adequately explored at federal, state or local levels. That's why we have included recommendations—not only for the federal government, but for state and local leaders, civil society, and more. We all have a stake in inclusive democracy, and we all have a role in defending it.

JANUARY 6 SCORECARD

3



SUPPORTING LOCAL
DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS TO
RESIST ANTI-DEMOCRACY
ASSAULTS

6



ENFORCING CONSEQUENCES
FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO
THREATEN DEMOCRACY

3



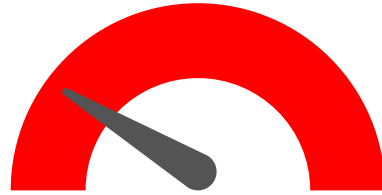
ADDRESSING WHITE
NATIONALISM WITHIN THE
MILITARY AND FEDERAL LAW
ENFORCEMENT

5



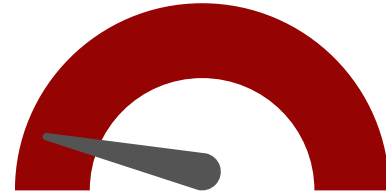
PROTECTING ELECTIONS

2



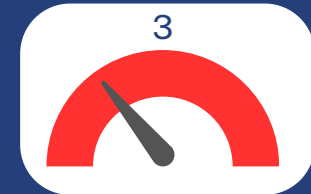
CREATING POLITICAL
PRESSURE TO REJECT BIGOTRY
AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

1



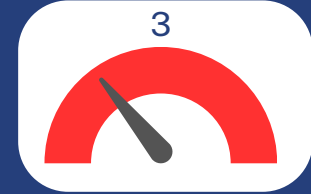
PROTECTING INDIVIDUALS AND
COMMUNITIES FROM BIGOTED
AND ANTI-DEMOCRACY
THREATS AND HARASSMENT

SUPPORTING LOCAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS TO RESIST ANTI- DEMOCRACY ASSAULTS



Public schools, libraries, municipalities, and other local community institutions are facing extensive threats—to their staff, their ability to meet their basic institutional goals, and their mandate to serve the entire community. Local democratic institutions that are the backbone of our democracy have become the key targets of bigoted movements as their supporters threaten elected officials, adopt book bans, and curtail inclusive education initiatives. The wins on this issue have largely been at the ballot box, where everyday people have defeated anti-democracy candidates, defended library boards, and stood up to proposals targeting education. Professional and civil society organizations have also drawn attention to the issue and offered recommendations and resources, but legislation regarding threats to local leaders has primarily focused on election officials and excluded other civil servants and local elected officials. Despite significant national attention to the threats and harassment that local elected officials are receiving, there has been little state or federal action to ensure that harassment does not limit who can safely hold public office, and in the past three academic years, state laws limiting inclusive education were signed in 25 states. People of color, women, and LGBTQ+ people have been pushed out of leadership roles again and again, with little support from law enforcement.

SUPPORTING LOCAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS TO RESIST ANTI- DEMOCRACY ASSAULTS



Recommendations:

- Federal agencies should offer financial assistance and technical support to local democratic institutions and their staff to enable them to more robustly protect their operations in the face of bigoted and anti-democracy threats and violence, including improved reporting mechanisms, scenario planning, security protocols for individuals, de-escalation training for frontline staff, and more.
- Organizations that support candidates for office can offer better training for prospective elected officials about security, anti-democracy tactics, and ways to respond.
- Impacted elected and civic officials can support each other by creating formal and informal networks to share experiences and provide aid and public backing to those currently dealing with threats and intimidation.
- Political and civic leaders must jointly and vocally reject book bans and other dangerous and exclusionary state legislation that erodes democratic freedoms, preventing further shifting of political norms toward authoritarianism.

ENFORCING CONSEQUENCES FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO THREATEN DEMOCRACY



The January 6 investigation is the largest law enforcement investigation in American history, with over 1,000 people charged to date. Key leaders of anti-democracy groups such as the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys will spend years behind bars for their role in the insurrection. This investigation is playing a crucial role in defending the rule of law against threats to democracy, and while it is having an impact, legal consequences are not being enforced as robustly at the state and local level. As a result, anti-democracy figures have not slowed their activity, and are acting with impunity in many cases. In Idaho, the white nationalists who targeted North Idaho Pride Alliance's event in 2022 received no more than a slap on the wrist. J6ers are seen as heroes in anti-democracy circles and few have repented, with many attempting to capitalize on their newfound fame by running for office and building power at the local level. At the federal level, Trump Administration officials are currently on trial for their attempts to undermine the 2020 election, but that has not slowed down Trump's 2024 election push. Prosecutors must aggressively ensure consequences for crimes by anti-democracy actors at the local and state level, and civil society should dedicate significant resources to civil suits, a critical tool in the arsenal for democracy. Anti-democracy leaders like Ammon Bundy and Patriot Front are facing suits for their actions, in the wake of the successful suit against the white nationalist organizers of the deadly Unite the Right rally in 2017.

ENFORCING CONSEQUENCES FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO THREATEN DEMOCRACY



Recommendations:

- Government and civil society organizations can support more civil suits against anti-democracy figures and groups.
- Civil society organizations and elected officials should thoroughly explore federal and state constitutional protections against insurrectionists running for office.
- Corporations must consider re-instating freezes on funds for candidates who supported the insurrection, especially those who had sworn an oath to support the Constitution as elected officials.
- State and local prosecutors must aggressively prosecute crimes committed by neo-Nazis and other anti-democracy actors in order to guard against impunity.

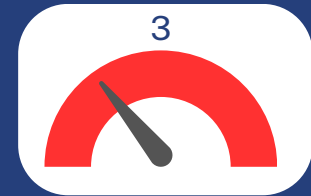
ADDRESSING WHITE NATIONALISM WITHIN THE MILITARY AND FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT



Extremism in the military and other law enforcement and government agencies is a longstanding issue, and its urgency has only grown in the wake of the insurrection. At least 80 insurrectionists were found to have ties to the U.S. military. Unfortunately, lackluster federal efforts have failed to consistently reduce the number of allegations of extremism-related activity in the military. The Pentagon's 2023 annual report identified 183 unique allegations of extremism within the different branches of the military. Despite this, in December, Congress defunded the Defense Department's Countering Extremism Activity Working Group, which was established to offer recommendations to root out extremism within the ranks. The Pentagon's current attempts to address radicalization have faced scrutiny from watchdog organizations over what appears to be ineffective and largely symbolic trainings.

In January, the Department of Defense released its long-awaited report examining extremism internally. The report allegedly found "no evidence" that extremism was a disproportionate problem in the military compared to the civilian population. The report did note that without a clear DoD-wide definition of extremism, military personnel were still confused about internal policies and prohibited activity. The Institute for Defense Analyses, which carried out the study, also mentioned that although the number of violent extremists in the military was not disproportionate to the U.S. population, "there is some indication that the rate of participation by former service members is slightly higher and may be growing." This report is a troubling indication that extremism in the military is likely to continue to go unaddressed.

ADDRESSING WHITE NATIONALISM WITHIN THE MILITARY AND FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT



Recommendations:

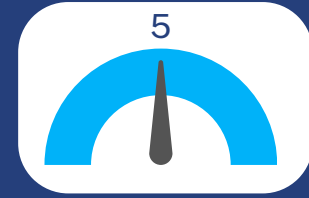
- States and municipalities should follow Chicago's lead and bar members of bigoted groups from serving as law enforcement officers.
- The Biden Administration must aggressively implement civil society recommendations to follow up on important policy changes that have already been made to address extremism in the military.
- In view of high levels of recruitment of veterans by white nationalist groups, the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs must implement programs that support their transition to civilian life and meaningful community engagement.
- Federal law enforcement agencies must guard against officer collusion with anti-democracy groups, including at the border.

PROTECTING ELECTIONS



The attempts to steal the 2020 election by the Trump Administration have had lasting effects on our democracy, bringing election deniers into the halls of power and shifting the way that Americans view the electoral process. Distrust in the electoral process is especially high among people who are influenced by anti-democracy groups and leaders, which have invested significant effort in peddling conspiracy theories to discredit the 2020 election results and justify the January 6 insurrection. In fact, polling in late 2023 showed that more of Trump's supporters now excuse or deny his responsibility for January 6 than in 2021. In response to the events of January 6, lawmakers passed the Electoral Count Act in order to close procedural loopholes and prevent future attempts to overturn elections. At the national level, the Justice Department also created the Election Threats Task Force in 2021 to address rising threats against election workers, but critics have pointed out the lack of engagement from the task force even as election workers continue reporting threats and harassment. As a result, some states, like California and Colorado, enacted legislation to protect election officials, staff and poll workers from threats. That said, election workers continue to face the brunt of targeting from anti-democracy groups and individuals, with many election workers leaving the field. According to one study, across 11 Western states, more than 160 top local election officials have left their positions since November 2020.

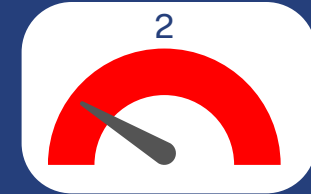
PROTECTING ELECTIONS



Recommendations:

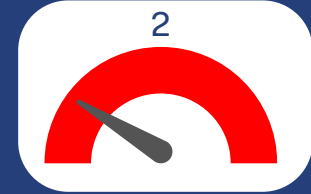
- Federal, state, and local agencies must prepare for potential voter suppression efforts and anti-democracy targeting by sending strong, multilingual, and accessible messages about the importance of voting and containing clear voter information.
- Federal, state, and local agencies can publicize their plans for holding accountable anyone who unlawfully targets election workers or voters, including through civil litigation and point to previous examples of holding individuals accountable.
- Counties and municipalities should conduct scenario planning and identify how they will respond to targeting, intimidation, or disruption of the voting process to protect the Constitutional right to vote.
- Especially where institutional leaders are the source of election distrust and misinformation, civil society leaders can join to make their own plans for encouraging voting, assisting community members with reporting voter intimidation, and holding leaders accountable for harmful messaging.
- Business leaders must condemn and withdraw financial support from candidates or elected officials who share election misinformation and disinformation or incite political violence related to the election.

CREATING POLITICAL PRESSURE TO REJECT BIGOTRY AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE



It makes a difference when elected officials and community leaders speak out across the political spectrum to create strong boundaries against bigotry and political violence. This is especially important in the face of the rapid mainstreaming of bigoted conspiracy theories such as the so-called Great Replacement Theory, which has motivated several instances of mass violence over the past six years. Some elected officials have made supporting inclusive democracy and speaking out against bigotry a cornerstone of their work, and the increasing level of fluency in these subjects is undoubtedly helpful in setting standards. Unfortunately, we've also seen many examples of elected officials and influential leaders in business, culture and politics continuing to perpetuate rhetoric that could just as easily be found in a white nationalist manifesto. Many more have been silent. Even mass shootings motivated by white nationalist beliefs, like the targeting of a Black neighborhood in Jacksonville, Florida, last year, have been increasingly normalized. Advocates noted that the three victims' stories fell out of the headlines with disturbing speed. Social media companies have also loosened their moderation guidelines, leading to a flood of harassment against marginalized people and a platform for many forms of bigoted rhetoric. With few controls on election-related misinformation and bigotry online, we may be entering 2024 in a worse place than we were at on January 6, 2021.

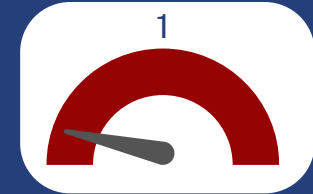
CREATING POLITICAL PRESSURE TO REJECT BIGOTRY AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE



Recommendations:

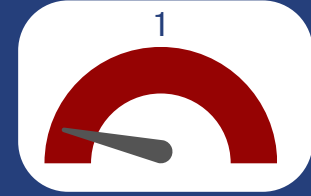
- Elected officials and community leaders at the local, state and national level should consider in advance how they want to collectively respond to incidents of bigotry and political violence. By making agreements ahead of time, they can organize the broadest and most powerful coalitions
- When a horrific incident happens, everyone has a role to play in speaking out. Broad condemnation as well as centering the voices of communities impacted by political violence and bigotry is incredibly important
- New standards must be set among elected officials, business leaders, and cultural influencers to hold their peers accountable for bigoted speech and speak out in favor of inclusive democracy.
- Ahead of the 2024 election, it's imperative for civil society to have a conversation on the prevalence of bigoted conspiracy theories online and decide how we will respond to educate our communities where government cannot step in.

**PROTECTING INDIVIDUALS AND
COMMUNITIES FROM BIGOTED AND ANTI-
DEMOCRACY THREATS AND HARASSMENT**



Many communities face threats, harassment and violence from anti-democracy groups and actors. As difficult as it is when elected officials or democratic institutions are targeted, they may still have some resources to bring to bear; but when average Americans like an activist, a small business owner, or a community-based organization become targets, they often do not know where to turn for institutional backup. In 2021, the Pew Research Institute found that 41% of Americans reported experiencing online harassment. When incidents of harassment and threats rise to the level of a potential hate crime, there are many barriers to reporting these incidents and to seeing perpetrators held accountable. This leads to extensive chilling effects on civic participation, freedom of speech and freedom of expression, especially for people of color, women, LGBTQ+ people, and anyone who lives at the intersections of these identities. When community involvement becomes fraught with harassment and threats for people who are underrepresented in the halls of power, they lose opportunities for advancement, and our institutions fail to reflect the diversity of our communities.

PROTECTING INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES FROM BIGOTED AND ANTI- DEMOCRACY THREATS AND HARASSMENT



Recommendations:

- State and federal government agencies must create better mechanisms for reporting and documenting threats and intimidation, including improved training for first responders to learn how to recognize threats and provide useful assistance to the people being targeted.
- Local government agencies should establish anti-swatting registries, like the registry [created in Seattle](#) in 2018.
- Local elected officials and community leaders should provide stronger leadership to help shift norms toward rejecting the use of violence and targeted harassment in politics.
- States and municipalities should proactively expand systems for reporting hate incidents and potential hate crimes, including establishing dedicated hotlines and non-police reporting and support options.
- Government and civil society can ensure that existing reporting systems for hate incidents and bigoted harassment are widely publicized and as accessible as possible, including multilingual and [easy-read](#) resources.
- Law enforcement must take bigoted threats and harassment more seriously, including investigating and charging crimes when they have occurred and providing public leadership rejecting bigoted violence and illegal harassment.