


BRENNAN
CENTER
FOR JUSTICE
 NYU | LAW

2024

**The Brennan Center
for Justice works to
build an America that
is democratic, just,
and free — for all.**

Contents

5

FRONT
MATTER

Letter from
the Board

5

Letter from
the President

6

Our Response
to the Crisis

7

11

OUR WORK
IN 2024

Free & Fair
Elections

14

Attacks on
Checks &
Balances

18

Criminal
Justice Reform

22

25

MAKING
THE CASE

Brennan
Center
Highlights

26

Kohlberg
Center on the
U.S. Supreme
Court

32

*Brennan
en español*

34

37

THANK YOU
SUPPORTERS

Legacy
Awards

38

Financials

40

Pro Bono
Partners

41

Supporters

42

Who We Are

50



Illustration: Dan Bejar

LETTER FROM THE BOARD

Dear Friends,

Thirty years ago the clerks and family of Justice William J. Brennan Jr. founded the Brennan Center as a living memorial. Since then, it has grown into the preeminent nonpartisan, national institution for supporting our systems of democracy and justice. We are proud to co-chair its Board.

The Center has grown to meet the mounting challenges to our democracy. Its team of 190 includes dozens of attorneys, thirteen social scientists, three former secretaries of state, election officials, and two Pulitzer Prize winners. Our website received 21 million visits in 2024, and 400,000 people have signed up to receive our newsletters. Our work is supported by 40,000 donors.

In 2024 the Brennan Center accomplished great things. We helped ensure that national and state elections were held safely and securely. We worked with election officials to combat misinformation and threats of violence. Our experts quantified the role that voter suppression plays in the growing racial turnout gap. Over two days, hundreds gathered to hear conservative and liberal state supreme court justices discuss the vital role of state constitutions. And we continued to lead on reducing the distorting effects of big money in our elections.

This Annual Report describes that work and outlines the task ahead. The Center receives no financial support from government or NYU. We are grateful to you for your partnership in strengthening the institutions of American democracy. Thank you for standing with us.

Kimberley D. Harris
Co-chair, Board of Directors

Christine A. Varney
Co-chair, Board of Directors



The Fight for the Constitution

In 2024 the Brennan Center worked hard to ensure elections that were safe, secure, free, and fair. Our work was nonpartisan and rigorous. We fought fear with facts.

In Arizona and Michigan, we helped secretaries of state prepare for the worst. In every state, on Election Day, police officers carried pocket guides we wrote outlining how they could help protect voters. We tested the best responses to egregious election rumors and worked with public officials and digital influencers to rebut conspiracy theories. We briefed hundreds of journalists on our research.

In the end, the election was safe and secure.

Voters chose a new president and Congress. The results were part of a worldwide anti-incumbent wave. But in the United States, they reflected deeper disquiet. For the first time since the 1800s, the incumbent party lost the White House three times in a row. Millions believe that the political system does not work for them. When a system fails to deliver a sense of prosperity and well-being, attachment to democracy can be tenuous.

In 2025, in Donald Trump's first weeks in office, we saw an unprecedented assault on the rule of law and the constitutional system of checks and balances.

How are we responding? We are fighting the abuse of power. We are defending voting rights. We are exposing the astounding new role of big money in government and politics at a scale dwarfing the Gilded Age.

But we must do more.

A crisis like this can bring innovation. We must think anew. We will not only respond to current threats, but craft and advance the next bold reform agenda. From today's clashes can come a time of democratic rebirth. What will matter most is not what we are against but what we are for.

So we will press forward with proposals to reform the Supreme Court, Congress, and the presidency. We will grapple with artificial intelligence and social media as they upend public life. We will advance creative criminal justice reforms — a continuing area of notable bipartisan accord.

As I told our staff the day after the 2024 election, the Brennan Center was built for this moment. Thank you for your support that makes this vital work possible.



Michael Waldman, President and CEO



Our Response to the Crisis

Our Plan

We are responding to the immediate challenges along several strategic avenues.



1.

WE WILL PRESERVE CHECKS & BALANCES

We fight the drive for unchecked presidential power — especially by enlisting scholars and litigators to educate courts and make the case.

As the White House invokes the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 to detain individuals, **we will participate in litigation and public education against this misuse of a wartime law.**

Our new Constitutional Crisis Litigation Project will reflect the Center’s longstanding appellate litigation leadership. **We will enlist legal experts to participate in drafting and signing “friend of the court” briefs.** A key target: cases where Trump claims the “unitary executive theory” gives total power over government without checks and balances.

We are working to rally lawyers, bar associations, former government officials, and others to ensure that the rulings of federal courts are respected.

2.

WE WILL FIGHT FOR FREE & FAIR ELECTIONS

Elections are the best way for citizens to hold government accountable. The 2026 midterm election will come under great pressure — now from a weaponized federal government.

This work starts in Congress, where we lead the fight against an egregious anti-voting bill. **The SAVE Act would essentially require Americans to produce a passport or birth certificate to register.** Our research shows 21 million voters lack ready access to those documents. The bill would bar registration online, by mail, or through drives in every state. If enacted, it would probably be the worst voting law ever passed by Congress. **We want to make sure that does not happen.**

We will fight misguided executive orders that purport to give DOGE authority to access voter rolls all across the country.

We will work with allies to support the cybersecurity experts purged by the new administration to ensure that state election officials get the help they need.

3.

WE WILL EXPOSE & EXPLAIN BIG MONEY IN GOVERNMENT

Since the *Citizens United* decision, American politics has been flooded by big money. Now the new role of tech moguls may transform politics and governance.

Documenting conflicts of interest and self-dealing in the federal government: We will connect the dots between the financial interests that shape the administration and the actions the administration is taking — particularly the Elon Musk–driven decimation of federal agencies on which millions of Americans depend.

Documenting the growing role of big money: Small donors increasingly play a positive role. But big donors and dark money dominate. Our researchers will document the true story of money in politics today.

Seeking reform: The most significant reform enacted is New York State’s new constituent-driven small donor public financing system, which boosts in-district giving. That can be a model for national legislation. New laws can restore checks on corruption and self-dealing at the highest levels of the federal government. And reform must address the role of big tech companies that dominate new means of political communication without democratic accountability.

MOVING FORWARD ON REFORM

There is an urgent need to craft an affirmative, appealing nonpartisan reform agenda around our issues of democracy and justice.

Supreme Court Reform

The Kohlberg Center on the U.S. Supreme Court is building a campaign to lay the groundwork for — and ultimately win — transformational Supreme Court reform including term limits and enforceable ethics standards. Strategies include scholarship, public education, and outreach to conservatives, bar leaders, and others.

Future of the Constitution Project

We have launched the Future of the Constitution Project to craft and advance a constitutional vision that can serve as a compelling alternative to originalism, rooted in our national charter’s democratic meaning and promise. We connect scholars with key environmental, women’s, and labor groups to test theories and language. We aim to put forward a new public articulation for future political and governmental leaders.

Grappling with AI

In February 2025, the Brennan Center published a comprehensive approach for regulators, *An Agenda to Strengthen U.S. Democracy in the Age of AI*. Its proposed reforms have been shared widely with legislators federally and in states, spurring action around the country.

We're not giving up on democracy — we're going to fight for it.

The U.S. Constitution and the rule of law face unnerving threats. The Brennan Center was built for this moment. We are committed to the core values of American democracy. And we stand with a powerful movement to defend the Constitution and the rule of law, prevent presidential overreach, challenge abuses of power, and advocate for equal voting rights for all citizens.

Free & Fair Elections



PROTECTING THE 2024 ELECTION

As the 2024 election approached, trouble loomed: A well-funded election denier movement peddled conspiracy theories. Election officials feared for their safety. Disinformation clogged social media.

Yet these threats met a fortified election system, strengthened over the last four years by election officials with a major assist from the Brennan Center. As a result, the 2024 election was smooth and accurate, largely free from violence. Voting was peaceful. Election workers did their jobs. Results were tabulated efficiently and without public panic. The election was safe and secure.

A key strategy: enlisting law enforcement to work with election officials to protect the vote. Together with conservative activists and others, we organized the Committee for Safe and Secure Elections in 2022. It enlisted a bipartisan network of local election officials and law enforcement to protect elections

Our experts include three former secretaries of state and a top election official in Virginia.

Illustration: BC/JASON REDMOND/spxChrome/Getty

from intimidation, physical and cyber threats, and political violence. The network has since become a crucial resource for the people who make our democracy work.

The Brennan Center's own team of experts includes three former secretaries of state and a top election official in Virginia. Our experts briefed more than 100 journalists in meetings with ABC News, CBS News, CNN, NBC News, and *The Washington Post*. They fanned out across the country to help election officials prepare, coordinating nearly 150 safety exercises and briefings across more than 35 states. Tabletop drills helped officials prepare for bomb threats and other challenges. >>>

The Brennan Center coordinated nearly 150 safety exercises and briefings across more than 35 states before the election.

On Election Day, police officers in every state carried pocket guides explaining how they could protect the vote (and what they could not do). All told, 100,000 guides were printed. At last year's National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers Conference, the Brennan Center distributed more than 1,650 of these pocket guides to 12 law enforcement offices. An example of progress: Georgia now requires police trainings to include a curriculum on state election law.

Rogue local officials threatened to refuse to certify results in a bid to sabotage an unfavorable outcome. The Brennan Center brought legal and scholarly heft to ensure that this could not happen. After all, we argued, certification of results was always a matter of routine, not a chance to second-guess the voters. ■

AI/MISINFORMATION

Increasingly sophisticated AI-generated misinformation designed to confuse voters presents an ongoing threat to U.S. elections. The Brennan Center is providing both thought leadership and practical solutions. We distributed a tool kit to aid election officials in addressing misinformation. We helped run election training exercises for officials in Arizona, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. We published a series of groundbreaking essays, in partnership with top data scientists, about the potential risks and benefits that AI presents to elections. Brennan Center experts also promoted best practices for identifying AI-generated content, explained new efforts to monitor it, and suggested necessary legislation as we continue to combat misinformation in American elections. ■



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In March 2024, Sen. Cory Booker cited Brennan Center research before the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary.

RACIAL TURNOUT GAP

For years, the gap in electoral participation rates between white and nonwhite voters kept shrinking. But then something changed. A major study by Brennan Center social scientists examined nearly one billion voter records, housed in a supercomputer at our New York office (the largest such database anywhere). Their findings were striking. The racial turnout gap actually grew across the country over the past decade. The trend had many causes. But the gap grew twice as fast in the states once covered by the Voting Rights Act, before it was gutted by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2013 in *Shelby County v. Holder*. >>>



“When you look at the growing racial disparities in voter turnout — the Brennan Center has a great point to this — these gaps are growing.”

Cory Booker
Senator from New Jersey

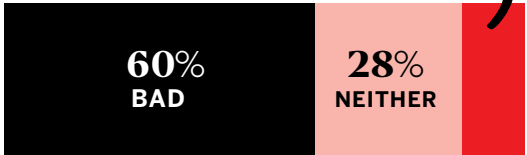
Political scientists Kevin Morris and Coryn Grange showed that hundreds of thousands of ballots went uncashed by voters of color in each recent election. *The New York Times* featured the study in a front-page exclusive, and outlets from Politico to NPR covered it. Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey brandished it at a hearing. The Brennan Center convened 125 political scientists and advocates to discuss related scholarship, hear dozens of presentations, and set the agenda for future research. The next phase will probe causes and suggest solutions. Some pundits and scholars have cynically claimed that new voter suppression laws did not matter. This definitive study proved, not surprisingly, that voter suppression laws suppress the vote. This is vital ammunition for future fights. ■

Illustration: Doug Chayka

MONEY IN POLITICS

Money always matters in politics. Indeed, campaign finance reform was one of the founding issues for the Brennan Center. But ever since the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2010 *Citizens United* ruling, political contributions and spending have effectively been deregulated. More small donors have participated in election giving, an encouraging trend boosted by digital fundraising. But megadonors have dominated, contributing an ever-larger share of the funds that fuel campaigns and tilt policy. Last year was an alarming pivot point for the role of big money in American politics. Donald Trump’s winning presidential campaign relied to an extraordinary degree on super PACs funded by a handful of the very wealthiest donors, with almost half the money backing the president’s reelection coming from just 10 people. Elon Musk, the world’s richest man, spent nearly \$300 million on Trump’s campaign and ran his field operation. We saw the results in the new administration: The three wealthiest men in the country, Musk, Jeff Bezos, and Mark Zuckerberg, sat in the first row behind the lectern at the presidential inaugural — in front of the Cabinet. Musk and other tech executives then were given control of much of the machinery of government. >>>

12%
Thought it a good idea for the president to rely on billionaires for advice about government policy.



DONATIONS TO PRESIDENTIAL SUPER PACS



“It’s tempting to liken this to the Gilded Age,” the Brennan Center’s Michael Waldman told *The New York Times*, “but John D. Rockefeller didn’t actually run McKinley’s campaign or move into the White House.” In last year’s election, we found that super PAC donors giving at least \$5 million spent more than twice as much as they had in 2020. The top 10 donors supporting Kamala Harris accounted for nearly 8 percent of her campaign, while Donald Trump’s top 10 accounted for 44 percent of his. Citizens have begun to seethe about the new role of private money. In an Associated Press survey, only 12 percent thought it a good idea for the president to rely on billionaires for advice about government policy. Nearly two-thirds said Congress should do more to limit money in campaigns. New models for reform have started to take hold. The Brennan Center helped lead the drive to enact small-donor public financing in New York State, the most significant legislative response to *Citizens United*. Under this system, which went into effect last year, small contributions are matched at an 8:1 ratio. Encouragingly, in 2024, in-district contributions of \$250 or less jumped from under 5 percent of overall funding for state legislative candidates to 45 percent. This will better connect politicians in Albany to their constituents. ■

Attacks on Checks & Balances



RESTRAINING PRESIDENTIAL POWER

Presidents wield enormous power, constrained by checks and balances exercised by Congress and the courts. But a collection of laws, some of them centuries old, grant presidents even broader power than usual in an emergency. These laws leave the chief executive subject to few constraints.

In a landmark 2019 report, the Brennan Center's Elizabeth Goitein identified 150 powers that a president can unlock in a national emergency. Many are measured and sensible, but others seem like the stuff of authoritarian regimes, giving the president the power to take over U.S. communications

facilities, seize Americans' bank accounts, control domestic transportation, and more. Other laws give the president broad powers to use the military as a domestic police force.

Over the course of a decade, Brennan Center attorneys developed some of the country's deepest expertise in these laws. Today, that matters more than ever. Donald Trump has laid out specific plans to use emergency powers as part of the push for the mass deportation of immigrants. But the power grab will not be limited to that — as evidenced by the record number of emergency declarations (seven) issued in his first month in office. >>>

Illustration: Dan Bejar

DOMESTIC MILITARY DEPLOYMENT

Americans have always opposed the idea of soldiers on our streets, going all the way back to the Boston Massacre. Indeed, this has been a part of Anglo-American legal tradition for centuries.

The Insurrection Act represents a problematic and overbroad exception to that principle. On its face, it empowers the president to deploy the military, at the request of a state government, to suppress an insurrection. In addition, the Insurrection Act lets presidents use the military to enforce federal law or quash a rebellion against federal authority, even if the state government objects. (It also can be used to protect civil rights when a state government won't do so.) At times,

“Soldiers are trained to fight an armed enemy, not to do the work of immigration agents.”

Joseph Nunn

Counsel, Liberty and National Security

the Insurrection Act has been used for noble ends, including to crush the Ku Klux Klan and to desegregate schools. But it grants the president substantial discretion to unilaterally deploy federal troops in cases of civil unrest or alleged obstruction of the law. That's too much power for one person to have, with too few meaningful checks on its exercise.

For several years, the Brennan Center has pushed for legislative reform, working with conservative, libertarian, and liberal lawmakers. Our work has had a wide impact. Two former high-ranking government officials, Jack Goldsmith of Harvard Law School and Bob Bauer of NYU School of Law, co-chaired a bipartisan American Law Institute group that published guidelines to update the Insurrection Act in ways very similar to the Brennan Center's proposal. Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut introduced a bill in Congress to reform the law along the same lines.

During his first term, President Trump reportedly told military officials that he wanted to invoke the Insurrection Act against Black Lives Matter protests in the wake of George Floyd's murder in 2020. They eventually dissuaded him, but the Insurrection Act resurfaced after his election defeat. Stewart Rhodes, the founder of the far-right militant group the Oath Keepers, urged Trump to use the law to keep himself in office. And in one of the first orders of his second term, Trump gave the secretaries of defense and homeland security 90 days to submit a report on whether to invoke the Insurrection Act at the southern border.

“No president has ever used the Insurrection Act for immigration enforcement — and for good reason,” says the Brennan Center's Joseph Nunn. “Soldiers are trained to fight an armed enemy, not to do the work of immigration agents. Using them for that purpose diverts personnel, resources, and attention away from the military's core responsibilities and will hurt, not strengthen, national security.” >>>

THE ALIEN ENEMIES ACT

The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 are among the most notorious laws in American history. Thomas Jefferson decried them as coming from a “reign of witches.” One of these laws remains on the books today. The Alien Enemies Act allows the president during wartime to detain or deport foreign nationals who are natives and citizens of an enemy nation without a hearing, based only on their country of birth or citizenship. Before 2025, the law had been activated three times: during the War of 1812, during World War I, and during World War II when it was used to detain Japanese nationals as well as German and Italian immigrants. The government eventually apologized, but it did not repeal the law. In her definitive 2024 report on the Alien Enemies Act, the Brennan Center’s Katherine Yon Ebricht notes that the law conflicts with core constitutional principles of due process and equal protection articulated in the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments. “The Alien Enemies Act is an outdated and dangerous law that violates rights in wartime and could be weaponized against immigrants in peacetime,” Ebricht explains. “The law’s role

“The Alien Enemies Act is a dangerous wartime law that could be weaponized against immigrants in peacetime.”

Katherine Yon Ebricht
Counsel, Liberty & National Security

in World War II-era internments underscores its incompatibility with some of our most cherished values — the rights to a fair hearing and to be judged by conduct and character, not race or place of birth.” The law can be used only when the nation is in a declared war or has been attacked by a foreign government (as in 1812 and the two world wars). That alone should bar its use today. But Trump during his 2024 campaign pledged to activate it. Two months into his second term, Trump made good on his promise. He invoked the Alien Enemies Act and ordered the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security to detain and remove every Venezuelan aged

14 or older deemed by the administration to be part of the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua, excluding U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents. Trump falsely proclaimed that the gang was “perpetrating, attempting, and threatening an invasion or predatory incursion” of the United States, telling reporters, “This is a time of war.” His administration promptly deported 137 immigrants to El Salvador under the proclamation without providing evidence of their supposed gang ties — disregarding a court order temporarily blocking the removals. Trump’s historic abuse of this outdated and dangerous law faced immediate court challenges on several grounds. Most obviously, the Alien Enemies Act can only be activated during declared wars or armed attacks by foreign governments. Gangs are not governments, and the suggestion that the United States has been invaded is beyond disingenuous. The bid to misuse this wartime authority for peacetime immigration enforcement is among the administration’s array of illegal power grabs that courts must unequivocally reject. And dispensing with hearings and other due process protections all but guarantees that innocent people — potentially even U.S. citizens — will be caught up in Alien Enemies Act deportations.

NATIONAL EMERGENCIES ACT

The 1976 National Emergencies Act contains very few guardrails. Congress didn’t define “national emergency,” nor did it create any requirements that had to be met to declare one. As enacted, the law allowed Congress to terminate national emergency declarations through a legislative veto — a law that takes effect without the president’s signature. But a few years later, the Supreme Court held that legislative vetoes are unconstitutional, and that key safeguard was stripped from the law. Presidents have declared national emergencies 87 times since the National Emergencies Act took effect, an average of 1.9 times per year. The vast majority of the declarations have been for the purpose of imposing economic sanctions on hostile foreign actors, often in situations that fall far short of true “emergencies” but almost always with Congress’s acquiescence and without much controversy. Outside the foreign sanctions context, most emergency declarations have been defensible, even important. The Covid-19 pandemic, for



example, was declared a national emergency in March 2020. In recent years, though, we’ve seen a disturbing new trend: phony emergencies concocted to allow the president to overcome congressional opposition or inaction. In February 2019, for example, President Trump declared an emergency at the southern border to enable him to divert funds toward the construction of a border wall. During the Biden era, the White House wrongly sought to use emergency powers to forgive student debt. And some emergency declarations, even if justified when first issued, extend seemingly forever; several have remained in place for decades.

Under Elizabeth Goitein’s leadership, the Brennan Center’s Liberty and National Security Program has been advocating for reform and in 2024 saw substantial progress in that effort. In May, Goitein testified before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. She told senators that presidents of both parties are guilty of abusing the law. She urged Congress to amend the National Emergencies Act to provide that presidential emergency declarations will terminate after 30 days unless Congress approves a renewal and to require congressional approval for any subsequent renewals of the declaration. Later in 2024, that legislation came achingly close to passage. A bill moved through a House committee unanimously, and the same language was approved by a 13–1 vote in a Senate committee. The bipartisan support for reform is overwhelming, a testament to the Brennan Center’s leadership on fixing this broken law. We anticipate getting that work done in the coming years. ■

^ Elizabeth Goitein testified in May 2024 on the importance of reforming the 1976 National Emergencies Act before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. Her testimony went viral with more than 19K views on TikTok.



Illustration: Mel Haasch

Criminal Justice Reform



LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERS

A decade ago the Brennan Center formed Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime and Incarceration (LEL). Its 200 current and former police chiefs, prosecutors, corrections officials, and others from across the country offer a powerful law enforcement voice for wiser policies.

In public webinars and a bipartisan congressional briefing, LEL members joined Brennan Center experts to discuss data showing that violent crime has declined in recent years. Members attested firsthand to the benefits of policies that provide alternatives to incarceration, make the justice system fairer, and increase safety for all.

“People do not fear change; they fear loss,” said Shon F. Barnes, police chief in Madison, Wisconsin, and LEL member at an October event. “And so in order to implement change you first have to build or create a receptive capacity for change.”

Meanwhile, LEL members advocated for evidence-based measures that advance rehabilitation and second chances, laying the groundwork for bipartisan reforms in coming years. ■

“People do not fear change; they fear loss. And so in order to implement change you first have to build or create a receptive capacity for change.”

Shon F. Barnes

Police chief in Madison, Wisconsin, and LEL member at the Brennan Center event Promoting Justice and Public Safety Since the Pandemic



Illustration: Nick Ogonsky

BAIL REFORM

In the past decade, many cities and states reformed, reduced, or eliminated bail. Wealth shouldn't determine whether someone can work and be with their family while awaiting a criminal trial, reformers argued. But the changes remain controversial. When crime rose during the pandemic, some politicians called for a revival of the unjust cash bail policies of the past.

What was the real story? Did bail reform cause crime to rise? In a first-of-its-kind analysis, Brennan Center researchers studied crime rates from dozens of jurisdictions across the country. They isolated bail reform as a factor to see whether that single policy change — rather than economic disruption, social isolation, the breakdown of the social safety net, and ever-increasing access to weapons — sent crime rates upward.

The answer: There is no statistically significant connection between bail reform and recent trends in crime. This is true regardless of the type of crime or the scale of the reforms. Cities with bail reform saw crime rise and then fall, and those without bail reform saw crime rise and fall at similar rates. Blame Covid and other factors, not reform. >>>

In other words, there is no reason to believe that eliminating bail leads to increased crime. Nor is there any reason to believe that rolling back these reforms will reduce crime. It will only distract from more proven ways to do so. Policymakers can and should continue to make the criminal justice system more humane and enhance public safety at the same time. ■

BUSTING CRIME MYTHS

Violent crime has been falling since 2022, although one might not know it from cable news or political speeches. To fight fear with facts, the Brennan Center produced nearly a dozen analyses in the months before the 2024 election. Our painstaking research debunked the myth of a migrant crime wave, documented a sharp drop in murder, and showed that progressive prosecutors were not responsible for pandemic-era crime increases. The series received widespread media attention, and hundreds of thousands of people read individual posts based on this research on the Brennan Center's website. ■



Illustration: Max-o-matic

**Making
the Case**



Elizabeth Howard, director of strategic outreach, Elections and Government, testified before California lawmakers.

“AI HAS ADDED A NEW AND COMPLEX DIMENSION TO THE EXISTING THREATS TO ELECTION OFFICES.”

“The freedom to vote in America is under escalating attack, a national issue that requires a national response.”

Brennan Center adviser **Lisa J. Danetz** testified before the House Committee on Small Business.



Misdemeanors Presentation

Josephine Hahn (right) presented her research findings “Misdemeanor Enforcement: Diminished Caseloads and Persistent Racial Disparities” at the Goldstock-Jacobs Faculty Seminar at NYU Law, an invitation-only forum for criminal justice leaders, alongside **Tiffany Sanabia**, **Jinmook Kang**, and **Hernandez Stroud**.



SEN. JEFF MERKLEY ON THE FILIBUSTER

In a virtual event, **Sen. Jeff Merkley** of Oregon and **Mike Zamore** of the ACLU discussed their book, *Filibustered! How to Fix the Broken Senate and Save America*. The book makes the case that Congress’s decline began 50 years ago with the introduction of the “no-talk” filibuster and that returning the tool to its original form will do much to restore order to the legislature. **Kimberly Atkins Stohr** of *The Boston Globe* moderated.

“All of us, whatever our views, should care and fight for elections that are free and fair and secure.”

Brennan Center President **Michael Waldman** testified on threats posed by election denial and false claims of noncitizen voting before the Committee on House Administration.



“That’s what was put at risk on Jan. 6. The idea that we would actually be a functioning democracy where power would be passed peacefully from one administration to the next.”

Melissa Murray, Brennan Center Board member and professor at NYU Law, spoke at our event Decoding the Trump Indictments.



“State constitutions, too, are a font of individual liberties, their protections often extending beyond those required by the Supreme Court’s interpretation of federal law.”

Justice William J. Brennan Jr. was quoted by Eyal Press in *The New Yorker*.



The Promise and Limits of State Constitutions

As the Supreme Court steps back from protecting individual rights, state constitutions are filling the void. Do we fully understand their role and importance? The Brennan Center’s *State Court Report* and *NYU Law Review* hosted a two-day event in February 2024. Panel discussions with judges, academics, and lawyers covered the nuances and importance of state constitutional law. As Justice William J. Brennan Jr. once wrote, state courts “ought to be the guardians of our liberties.” Panelists included **Justice Clint Bolick** of the Arizona Supreme Court, **Justice Anita Earls** of the North Carolina Supreme Court, and **Chief Justice Loretta Rush** of the Indiana Supreme Court.

FREE. FAIR. SECURE.

In a *Time* cover story, the Brennan Center’s **Barton Gellman** wrote about the strength of our election system and why Trump would fail if he tried to overturn the results. He wrote that the 2024 election would be free, fair, and secure, despite “the assault on truth” that will “continue unabated in the ceaseless effort [to] undermine faith in the results.”



OUR REACH
IN 2024

6.4M

website visitors

1350+

media hits

396K

social followers

40K

donors

378K

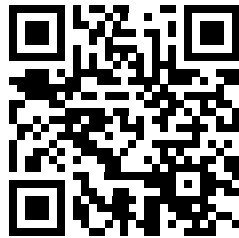
newsletter
subscribers

40M

impressions across
social platforms

“Congress must act to ensure that the use of new technologies in consequential and secret national security applications does not sweep away our constitutional values.”

Brennan Center Senior Director **Faiza Patel** in a statement at the Senate AI Insight Forum on National Security.



BRENNAN CENTER PODCAST

In April 2024 we launched a podcast created from Brennan Center events. We have published 25 episodes and earned 12K downloads.



National Voter Registration Day

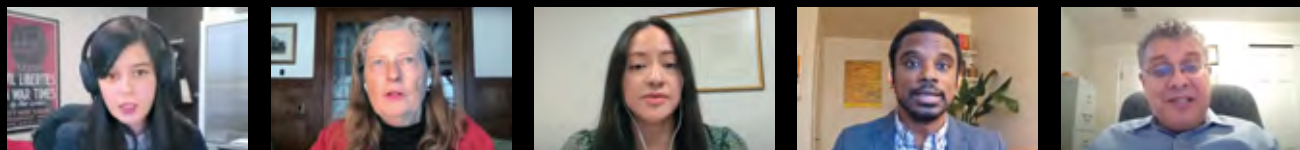
The Brennan Center’s **Sean Morales-Doyle** met with then–Vice President Kamala Harris’s office to discuss efforts to get people registered to vote on National Voter Registration Day.

STATE COURT REPORT X SLATE

Last fall, *State Court Report* announced an exciting new partnership: The online magazine *Slate* will publish select *State Court Report* content, significantly increasing the reach and visibility of the new Brennan Center publication. “*Slate* is a go-to source for top-notch legal reporting and analysis,” said **Alicia Bannon**, editor in chief of *State Court Report*. “More and more Americans are turning to their state constitutions to protect their rights, and this partnership will help deepen the public’s understanding of state constitutions and their potential.”

Analyzing Trump’s Plan to Invoke the Alien Enemies Act

In December 2024, the Brennan Center hosted an urgent conversation with legal scholars and other experts on the Alien Enemies Act. The Brennan Center’s **Katherine Yon Ebright**, law professor **Ilya Somin**, German American Internee Coalition President **Karen Ebel**, UnidosUS’s **Rita Fernandez**, and Brennan Center Fellow and moderator **Wilfred U. Codrington III** spoke about the shameful history of the law, the Trump administration’s plans to misuse it, and the legal obstacles standing in the way. The widely viewed event featured remarks from **Sen. Mazie Hirono** of Hawaii. Below, from left, Yon Ebright, Ebel, Fernandez, Codrington, and Somin.



THE RACIAL TURNOUT GAP

The Brennan Center hosted a two-day conference at NYU School of Law exploring the latest research on racial disparities in voter turnout and solutions to expand access to the ballot. Panels included discussions about the effects of statewide voting policies, the barriers different minority groups face to voting, and issues surrounding redistricting and representation. Shown, from left, the Brennan Center’s **Kevin Morris** and **Wendy Weiser** with Emory University professor **Bernard Fraga**.



BRENNAN CENTER RESEARCH BY THE NUMBERS



Brooke Slezak, courtesy NYU Photo Bureau



Last Week Tonight covered Brennan Center research on the **Alien Enemies Act of 1798**, telling viewers about the dangers of this outdated, overbroad wartime authority.



Gowri Ramachandran, director of elections and security, was interviewed on MSNBC’s *Chris Jansing Reports* about abuse of local election officials.



Senior Adviser **Barton Gellman** spoke about the future of democracy and the 2024 election on MSNBC’s *Katy Tur Reports*.

Election Watch

Brennan Center executives, voting rights and elections experts, and communications staff monitored election developments on November 5. They worked with advocates throughout the organization to quickly deliver reliable information to election officials, journalists, and voters.



“Democracy affects all other issues. If you care about gun control or clean air or a woman’s right to choose, if our democracy is compromised, that makes all the other issues harder to solve.”

Ari Berman, author of *Minority Rule*, at our live event Resisting Minority Rule

EXPLAINING THE ALIEN ENEMIES ACT

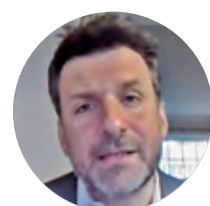
Building on **Katherine Yon Ebricht**’s seminal report, counsel **Ivey Dyson** partnered with the Communications Department to produce an explainer video about the Alien Enemies Act and the Trump administration’s threats to invoke it. The video featured powerful footage of internment camps used to detain noncitizens of Japanese, Italian, and German ancestry during World War II to emphasize that this shameful law should remain a dark chapter in American history and not be revived.

16.3M
impressions

47%
watched the
entire video



Joanna Zdanys, deputy director in the Elections and Government Program, testified at a joint New York state legislative budget hearing on February 6, 2024. Zdanys urged the legislature to fully fund New York’s new public campaign finance program by matching the governor’s proposed \$114.5 million for the upcoming fiscal year and ensure adequate funding for improvements to elections and voting infrastructure.



“The federal government is the guarantor for many very basic protections, including civil rights protections and other sorts of things that people take for granted.” Dan Weiner, interviewed on Spectrum News in July 2025



“Widespread and often racist allegations of unproven fraud are driving violence and threats directed at election officials, poll workers, and voters.”

Brennan Center counsel **Lauren Miller Karalunas** testified before the California Senate Committee on Elections in support of the California Peace Act.

Excessive Punishment

In her new book, *Excessive Punishment: How the Justice System Creates Mass Incarceration*, Brennan Center Justice Program Senior Director **Lauren-Brooke Eisen** (below) unpacks why our criminal justice system is so punitive. The book contains 38 essays by 45 contributors — practitioners, activists, academics, and thought leaders — who highlight the harms of the status quo and provide valuable insight into how we can move toward a criminal justice system that is smaller, more effective, and more humane. The book prompted a panel discussion with Eisen at the Commonwealth Club of California in April 2024.



Eisen photo: Kelly Donohue

AWARD-WINNING WORK FOR SUPREME COURT TERM LIMITS CAMPAIGN

1 ANTHEM AWARD

Gold
Human & Civil Rights, Campaign — Nonprofit

2 WEBBY AWARDS

People’s Voice
Video, Public Service & Activism
Winner
Video, Public Service & Activism

2 SHORTY AWARDS

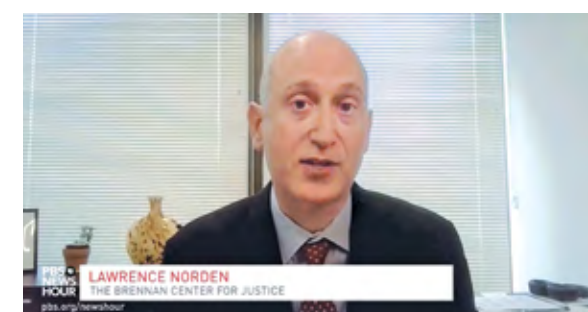
Winner Animation
Silver Honor
Medium-Length Video



Wendy Weiser, vice president for Democracy, talked about election security on the PBS documentary *Counting the Vote: A Firing Line Special with Margaret Hoover*.



Kareem Crayton, vice president for Washington, DC, was interviewed on MSNBC’s *Weekends with Alex Witt* in March 2024 about the growing racial turnout gap.



Larry Norden, vice president of the Elections and Government Program, on how AI-generated misinformation threatens election integrity on *PBS Newshour*.

The Supreme Court has grown too powerful and out of step with public values. Reforming and modernizing the Court is a key objective of the Brennan Center, and a visionary \$30 million commitment from businessman and philanthropist Jim Kohlberg allowed us to make notable strides in this long-term effort.



“Seventy percent of Americans think the court now puts ideology over impartiality and I am part of that overwhelming majority.”

Jim Kohlberg in a piece he wrote for *Fortune*

“They have enormous power over all of our lives, and it’s entirely appropriate for us to push back, to question that power, to demand that they not overstep their bounds, and to insist on reforms like term limits and an ethics code.”

Brennan Center President **Michael Waldman** at our June 2024 event A Politicized Supreme Court Is Remaking America. Waldman, who served on the 2021 Presidential Commission on the Supreme Court, was joined by **Kareem Crayton**, the Brennan Center’s vice president for Washington, DC. Together they explored the threat the current Court poses.

BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR REFORM

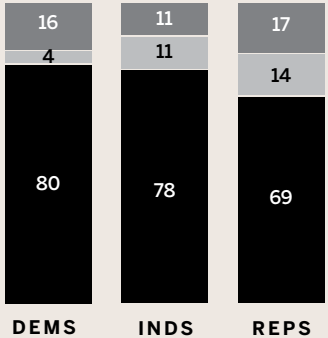
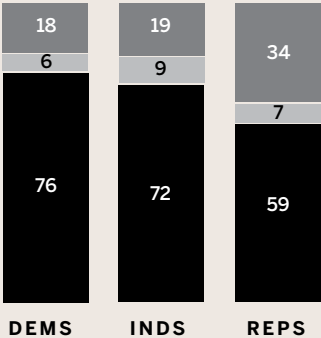
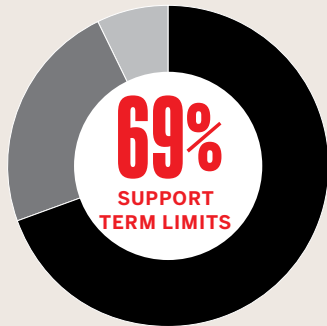


Photo courtesy of Kohlberg & Co.

THE SUPREME COURT AND
THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY

We hosted a panel on Supreme Court reform with (from left) NYU Law’s **Melissa Murray**, Rep. **Jamie Raskin**, Sen. **Sheldon Whitehouse**, *The Nation*’s **Elie Mystal**, and BlackPAC’s **Adrianne Shropshire**.



“We believe that Supreme Court term limits are urgently needed at a time of plummeting confidence in the Supreme Court.”

From an October 2024 letter to congressional leadership, signed by **57 prominent constitutional scholars and retired judges**, endorsing term limits for Supreme Court justices

A HISTORIC MOMENT FOR SUPREME COURT REFORM

We hosted a discussion with Supreme Court experts on term limits and an enforceable ethics code featuring (clockwise from top left) Brennan Center Judiciary Program Director **Alicia Bannon**, Yale Law professor and Presidential Commission on the Supreme Court Co-chair **Cristina Rodríguez**, and former federal appeals court judge **Diane Wood**. Brennan Center President **Michael Waldman** moderated.



The Kohlberg Center has published essays by prominent former judges and academics:

“The term limits proposal offers a better balance between stability and growth than the status quo, and its benefits will only increase over time.”

Diane Wood, a former federal appeals court judge, emphasized that the average time served by Supreme Court justices has grown by almost a decade since 1990.

“A fixed term for the justices would indeed better serve the founding generation’s ideas and ideals of judicial independence.”

Jack Rakove, a member of the Brennan Center’s Historians Council on the Constitution, wrote that lifetime tenure for Supreme Court justices has outlived its usefulness.

BRENNAN CENTER

en español

The Brennan Center is fighting critical battles that directly affect Latinos in the United States. *Brennan en español* provides timely research and analysis in Spanish, ensuring that Spanish-speaking and bilingual communities, media outlets, and organizations have access to the resources needed to dispel misinformation about voting, elections, and other issues related to our democracy and justice systems.

Univision Collaboration

Brennan en español continued its successful partnership with **Univision**, the nation's largest Spanish-language broadcaster. The media giant copublished Brennan Center articles debunking disinformation about key election topics, including voter roll accuracy, mail ballot security, and election certification. Three joint live events featuring *Brennan en español* Fellow **Kira Romero-Craft** and Univision Noticias's **Carlos Chirinos** (right) covered early voting and strategies for avoiding election-related disinformation. These events attracted tens of thousands of views on both Facebook and YouTube.



El Glosario

Brennan en español launched El Glosario, a resource that provides Spanish translations and context for terms that frequently appear in the research and writings of the Brennan Center. We made it publicly available to help ally organizations, colleagues, and others working to strengthen our systems of democracy and justice communicate more effectively with Spanish-speaking and bilingual audiences.



NEW FELLOW

Brennan en español recruited **Kira Romero-Craft** as a fellow to serve as a spokesperson and write about issues particularly relevant to Latino audiences. She is a lawyer with experience in voting rights litigation who joined the Center from LatinoJustice PRLDEF.

CELEBRITY INFLUENCE

Adamari López (below), a television personality with millions of social media followers, helped *Brennan en español* reach Latino voters before the 2024 election. She addressed the importance of registering to vote, how to identify disinformation and find trustworthy sources, and other concerns. A Facebook Live hosted by López with BEE Fellow **Kira Romero-Craft** attracted **228K** views on Instagram and **193K** views on Facebook.



Illustration: Nick Ogonosky

Collage: //kneen/Elena Chudoba



LATINOS AND THE FAR RIGHT

Our event with (clockwise from top left) journalist **Paola Ramos**, political scientist **Eduardo Gamarra**, and Brennan Center Fellow **Mike German**, moderated by BEE Editor in Chief **Mireya Navarro**, was one of the most viewed events on our YouTube page, with 11K views.

GROWING OUR REACH

124K
website visitors

8K
social followers

421K
Facebook Live views of one event



Anthem Awards

Brennan en español received two Anthem Awards for a Spanish-language video that raised awareness about the racial turnout gap. Brennan Center research revealed that millions of voices are being silenced in our democracy. Attacks on the Voting Rights Act cleared the way for states to impose restrictive voting laws targeting Americans of color. We called on Congress to pass the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to revitalize protections for voters.

National Association of Hispanic Journalists

In the summer, *Brennan en español* cosponsored a two-hour workshop on disinformation at the National Association of Hispanic Journalists convention in Los Angeles. Disinformation and Democracy: Reporting on the 2024 Election and Countering Disinformation drew a standing room-only crowd as the Brennan Center's **Larry Norden** (left) and panelists from NPR and the fact-checking service Factchequeado spoke on how to cover an election season marred by the misuse of artificial intelligence to spread disinformation. Next to Norden, Mireya Navarro, Kira Romero-Craft, and BEE adviser Ricardo Ramírez.



LA OPINIÓN COLLABORATION

La Opinión, the country's largest Spanish-language daily, continued to publish a Brennan Center monthly column and coproduce monthly Facebook Live events that also streamed across other social platforms. The columns, by *Brennan en español* Editor in Chief **Mireya Navarro**, and the Live events featuring BEE Fellow **Kira Romero-Craft** and *La Opinión*'s political editor **Jesús García**, delved into noncitizen voting, Project 2025, and the Alien Enemies Act, the law being used to deport immigrants without due process.



**Thank
You to Our
Supporters**



U.S. Commerce Secretary
Gina Raimondo



Brennan Center Board members, supporters, and staff



Brennan Center President
and CEO **Michael Waldman** with fellow
movement leaders **Alexis McGill Johnson**
of Planned Parenthood and **Maya Wiley**
of the Leadership Conference



Retired Ohio Supreme
Court Chief Justice
Maureen O'Connor

Brennan Legacy Awards

The Brennan Center's annual gala gathers 500+ supporters and partners for an inspiring evening that celebrates leaders in the fight for democracy and justice. In 2024, we honored U.S. Commerce Secretary **Gina Raimondo** for her visionary civic leadership. We also paid tribute to the **Ohio Organizing Collaborative** and retired Ohio Chief Justice **Maureen O'Connor** for their heroic attempts to bring fair redistricting to that state.



Kimberley Harris,
Brennan Center Board co-chair,
executive vice president of Comcast,
and general counsel of NBCUniversal



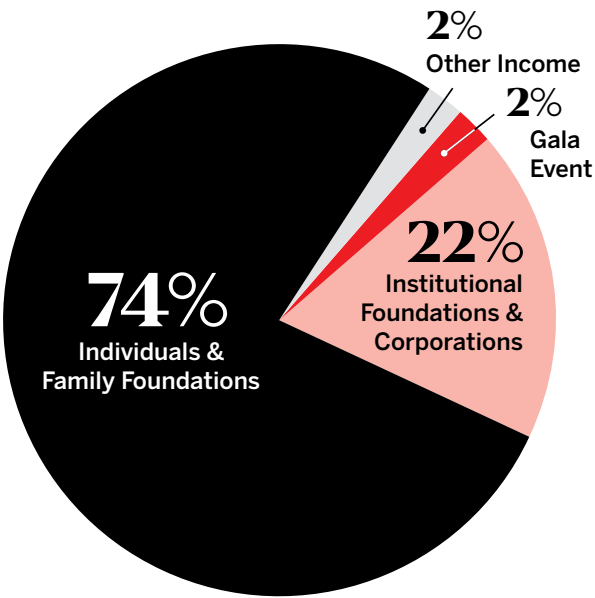
Leaders from the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, including Board member
Samuel Gresham Jr. (left), Executive Director **Molly Shack** (center right),
and former Policy and Advocacy Director **Jeniece Brock** (right), with
Brennan Center Board member and NYU Law professor **Melissa Murray**

Our Financials

Since our founding in 1995, the Brennan Center has grown into the country’s leading, largest, and longest-standing hub for democracy and justice. We are deeply grateful to the tens of thousands of financial supporters from across the country whose backing has made this possible.

The Center’s work is fully powered by our dedicated community; we receive no funding from New York University or government sources. Our commitment to fiscal transparency and stewardship has earned the highest marks from Charity Navigator and Candid — meaning donors can give with confidence.

FISCAL YEAR 2024 - ENDED JUNE 30, 2024

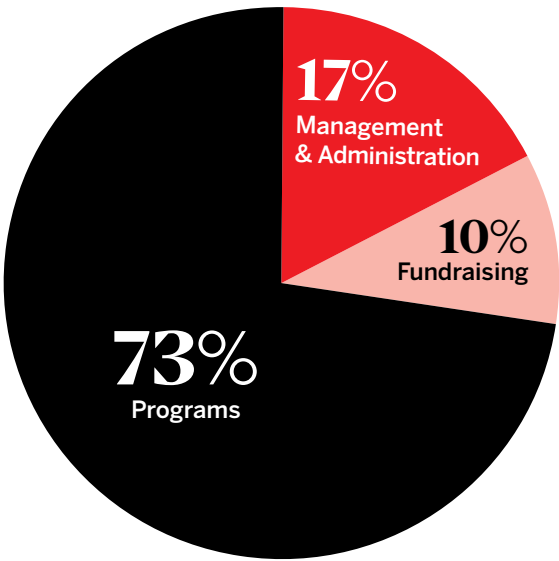


OPERATING SUPPORT

Individuals & Family Foundations	\$38,610,145
Institutional Foundations & Corporations	\$11,674,148
Gala Event	\$1,021,738
Other Income	\$ 983,093
Total	\$52,289,124*

*This total comprises all funds awarded during Fiscal Year 2024, including multiyear grants intended for use in future periods. It does not reflect the estimated monetary value of donated legal services provided by our law firm partners (list on p. 41).

As of June 30, 2024, the Brennan Center’s net assets totaled \$266,840,614. Approximately two-thirds of those funds (\$175,000,000) are designated for operating reserves or special long-term initiatives.



EXPENSES

Programs	\$36,672,381
Management & Administration	\$8,545,604
Fundraising	\$4,897,746
Total	\$ 50,115,731

PLANNED GIVING: ENSURING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

A growing list of supporters dedicated to protecting democracy over the long haul have included the Brennan Center in their estate planning as members of the Brennan Legacy Circle. These commitments are now a vital source of financial sustainability — we received significant bequests in fiscal year 2024 to help ensure our future strength.

Legacy Circle members are a valued pillar of our donor community and receive special updates and invitations to briefings and events, among other benefits. Learn how to pledge your intent and join the Circle at brennancenter.org/plannedgiving.

“I am proud to support the Brennan Center as a Brennan Legacy Circle member. With my estate plans, I am committed to seeing that our democracy works better for everyone — today and for future generations.”

Leslie Bhutani
Brennan Center
Board member



PRO BONO PARTNERS

Our work in 2024 depended on the support of legal leaders who fought alongside us for democracy, justice, and the rule of law. We are tremendously grateful for their commitment.

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Our Supporters

The Brennan Center’s work is made possible through the generous support of our community of donors and their commitment to an America that is democratic, just, and free. We are deeply grateful to all those who supported our work in 2024 and are pleased to recognize some of our most dedicated contributors.*

We sincerely regret any omissions or incorrect listings.
Please contact us at donations@brennan.law.nyu.edu with updates.

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SPECIAL THANKS

The work of the Brennan Center for Justice also happens thanks to the dedication of many supporters whose names are not listed here, including those who contribute through collaborative funding networks, pro bono legal assistance, and employee giving programs, as well as donors who prefer to remain anonymous. We greatly appreciate their generosity.

* Funding levels represent annualized giving.

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“Like so many others, I am concerned about what lies ahead. Supporting the Brennan Center came immediately to mind as I wondered what I could do. I am boosted by the staff’s commitment and their depth of information.”

Dotty Burstein
Supporter since 2020
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“The trust I have in the Brennan Center to be fighting the good fight to protect our democracy on all fronts offers me great comfort in these very troubling times.”

Pamela Jones
Supporter since 2022
New York, NY

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