

APRIL 27, 2026

Brennan Legacy Awards 2026

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CENTER

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About the Brennan Center

The Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law is a nonpartisan law and policy institute that works to reform, revitalize, and defend our country's systems of democracy and justice so that they work for all.

Since our founding more than 30 years ago by the family and law clerks of U.S. Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan Jr., the Brennan Center has grown from a scrappy start-up to a major national institution with a staff of nearly 200 and an annual budget of \$67 million.

We have built a distinctive model for our work: part think tank, part advocacy group, part cutting-edge communications hub. We start with rigorous research. We craft innovative policies. And we fight for them — in Congress and the states, in the courts, and in the court of public opinion.

We are in a great fight for the future of American democracy. At this pivotal moment, the Brennan Center has stepped forward to play a singular role in the long-term drive for a more perfect union.

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Brennan Legacy Awards

Monday, April 27, 2026 | Cipriani Wall Street

PERFORMANCE

“Hush, Somebody’s Calling My Name” **Fisk Jubilee Singers®**

INTRODUCED BY

Ron Chernow, Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award-Winning Author

KEYNOTE

Michael Waldman, President and CEO, Brennan Center

AWARD PRESENTATION

Jamie Raskin, U.S. Representative, Maryland’s 8th Congressional District

PRESENTED BY

Chris Hayes, Host, MS NOW

WELCOME

Kimberley Harris, Co-Chair, Brennan Center Board of Directors

AWARD PRESENTATION

Peter Keisler, Acting U.S. Attorney General (2007)

PRESENTED BY

Donald B. Verrilli Jr., Solicitor General of the United States (2011–16)

AWARD PRESENTATION

Vanita Gupta, U.S. Associate Attorney General (2021–24)

PRESENTED BY

Preet Bharara, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York (2009–17)

PARTNERSHIP FOR SOUTHERN IMPACT

Dr. Agenia Walker Clark, President, Fisk University

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As of April 17, 2026

Rep. Jamie Raskin

Congressman Jamie Raskin proudly represents Maryland's 8th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. Rep. Raskin was chosen by the Democratic Caucus to be the Ranking Member of the Committee on the Judiciary in the 119th Congress. In the 118th Congress, he served as Ranking Member of the Committee on Oversight and Accountability.

Rep. Raskin was appointed as the lead impeachment manager in the second impeachment trial of President Donald Trump in 2021 and later served on the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol. Prior to his service in Congress, Rep. Raskin was a three-term State Senator in Maryland, where he served as the Senate Majority Whip. He was also a professor of constitutional law at American University's Washington College of Law for more than 25 years.

He has authored several books, including the *Washington Post* bestseller *Overruling Democracy: The Supreme Court versus the American People*, *We the Students: Supreme Court Cases for and About America's Students*, and the *New York Times* No. 1 bestseller *Unthinkable: Trauma, Truth, and the Trials of American Democracy*.

“The most important words of our Constitution are the three first words of the Constitution: We the People.”

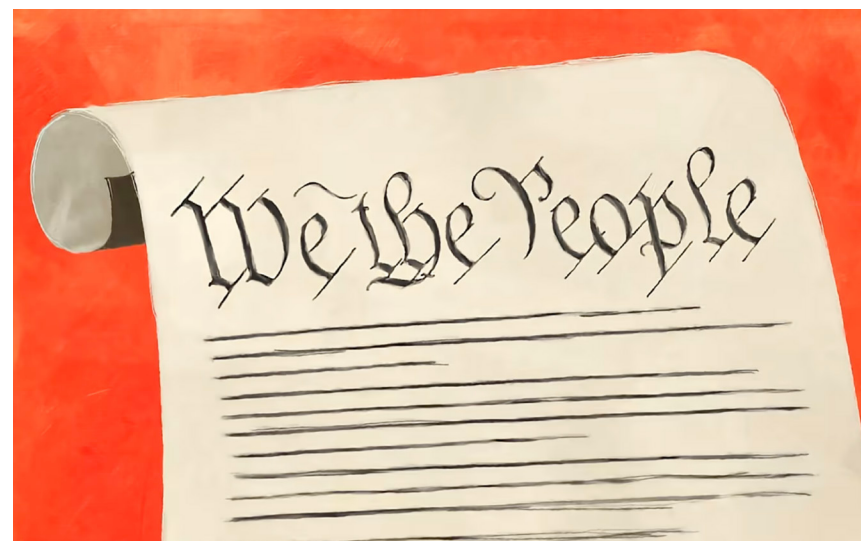
Rep. Jamie Raskin



AWARD PRESENTER

Chris Hayes

Chris Hayes is the Emmy Award–Winning host of *All In with Chris Hayes* on MS NOW. He also hosts the MS NOW original podcast *Why Is This Happening? The Chris Hayes Podcast*. Hayes became an MS NOW contributor in 2010 and has been with *The Nation* since 2007. His essays, articles, and reviews have appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Time*, *The Nation*, *The American Prospect*, *The New Republic*, *The Washington Monthly*, *The Guardian*, and *The Chicago Reader*. His most recent book, *The Sirens' Call: How Attention Became the World's Most Endangered Resource*, debuted at No. 1 on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Hayes's first book, *Twilight of the Elites: America After Meritocracy*, was also a *New York Times* bestseller. Hayes was a fellow at Harvard's Edmond & Lily Safra Center for Ethics and a Bernard Schwartz Fellow at New America.



Peter Keisler

Peter Keisler served as acting U.S. attorney general during the George W. Bush administration. He also served for five years as the assistant attorney general for the Civil Division, leading the Justice Department's largest litigating division and overseeing the department's work representing the U.S. government in civil cases in federal and state courts across the country and abroad. Previously he served in the White House as associate counsel to the president during the Reagan administration.

Before and after his government service, Keisler was a partner in the Washington, DC, office of Sidley Austin, where he maintained an active practice before the Supreme Court and other federal courts, co-chaired the firm's Supreme Court and appellate practice, and served on the firm's executive committee.

After retiring from Sidley, he helped found in August 2025 the Washington Litigation Group, a public interest, pro bono law firm that represents individuals and institutions that have been unlawfully targeted by the government for exercising their rights and that initiates litigation aimed at curbing governmental overreach. He currently serves on the Washington Litigation Group's steering committee.



“We have a saying in this country. It’s deeply embedded in who we are. ‘Everybody deserves their day in court.’ And all of us want to know that if the government acts against us, we will at least have the opportunity to go to a neutral decision-maker, present evidence and legal argument, and make sure that the government stays within its legal bounds.”

Peter Keisler, CBS News, Oct. 19, 2025

Keisler is also a member of the boards of directors of the Brennan Center for Justice and the Society for the Rule of Law, and he serves on the council and the executive committee of the American Law Institute. He was previously appointed by the chief justice of the United States to serve on the Judiciary's Standing Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure and its Advisory Committee on Civil Rules.

He is a recipient of the Edmund J. Randolph Award from the Department of Justice, the Rex E. Lee Advocacy Award from the J. Reuben Clark Law Society, and the Visionary Award from the *National Law Journal*. A graduate of Yale College and Yale Law School, he clerked for Justice Anthony Kennedy of the U.S. Supreme Court and Judge Robert Bork of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

AWARD PRESENTER

Donald B. Verrilli Jr.

Don Verrilli, a partner at Munger, Tolles & Olson and founder of its Washington, DC, office, is one of the nation's premier Supreme Court and appellate advocates. He served as U.S. solicitor general from 2011 to 2016. At Munger, he has handled numerous significant cases in the U.S. Supreme Court, where he successfully argued the case against the independent state legislature theory. He has also won high-stakes class action, antitrust, constitutional, government contracts, and copyright appeals. As solicitor general, he argued dozens of cases before the Supreme Court, securing landmark decisions upholding the Affordable Care Act and recognizing marriage equality. He was named a star individual by Chambers USA and lawyer of the year in *The Best Lawyers in America* (2026). Verrilli previously served as deputy White House counsel and as a senior Justice Department official.



Vanita Gupta

Vanita Gupta is a distinguished scholar in residence at NYU School of Law, where she teaches courses on the Justice Department, executive branch lawyering, civil rights, and public safety. In October 2025, she launched the Center for Law and Public Trust at NYU School of Law, which houses projects aimed at making U.S. institutions more effective, responsive, accountable, and resilient.



Gupta is also the founder and director of Nonprofits Together, a unique cross-sector network of civil society leaders, which was launched in April 2025. The network facilitates trusted information sharing; access to legal and other resources; and coordination of crisis response and solidarity actions to protect the First Amendment rights of organizations so they can remain mission-focused in defense of the rule of law and vulnerable communities.

She served as the 19th associate attorney general of the United States from 2021 to 2024, overseeing 13 Justice Department components, including its civil litigation and grant-making divisions, and leading initiatives on police-community trust, reproductive rights, environmental justice, mental health, and gun violence prevention. She led the department's Civil Rights Division during the Obama administration, investigating police misconduct and litigating landmark LGBTQ and voting rights cases.

“With civil society under attack, the very foundations of our country — our ability to hold the government accountable, to be free to dissent and debate, to support vulnerable communities — are also threatened. This matters because, as with all moves out of the authoritarian playbook, even if you’re not the target this time, you could be next.”

Vanita Gupta, *The New York Times*, July 27, 2025

Gupta served as president and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, the nation's oldest and largest coalition of national, nonpartisan civil rights organizations. There she led national campaigns on voting rights, justice reform, and the 2020 census. She also served as deputy legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union and as an assistant counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, where she secured historic mass exonerations in Tulia, Texas, after challenging dozens of wrongful convictions.

She has appeared extensively in the media, including as author of op-eds published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. She is a magna cum laude graduate of Yale College and NYU School of Law.

AWARD PRESENTER

Preet Bharara

Preet Bharara, former U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, is a renowned and highly regarded lawyer who is a partner at the law firm WilmerHale, focusing on strategic counseling, crisis management, and investigations. Dubbed “one of the most consequential prosecutors in



American history” by *The New Yorker*, Bharara led some of the most significant litigation brought in the Southern District, leaving an indelible impact on the office. Before serving as U.S. attorney, Bharara was chief counsel to Sen. Charles Schumer. Bharara wrote a *New York Times* bestseller, *Doing Justice: A Prosecutor's Thoughts on Crime, Punishment and the Rule of Law*. He is also host of the *Stay Tuned with Preet* and *CAFE Insider* podcasts. In 2012, Bharara was featured on the cover of *Time* and listed as one of the “100 Most Influential People in the World.”

The Partnership for Southern Impact

Fisk University's John Lewis Center for Social Justice and the Brennan Center launched the Partnership for Southern Impact in 2026. With Fisk's Nashville campus as its base, the two institutions will establish a hub for communities and civic groups across the South to build more representative and responsive state and local governments. It will foster nonpartisan solutions to problems including voter suppression, partisan redistricting, and excessive punishment in the criminal justice system. It will draw on Fisk's and the Brennan Center's expertise in research, advocacy, and communications and Fisk's longstanding relationships with elected officials, community leaders, policy advocates, and other stakeholders in the region.

Fisk Jubilee Singers®

The Grammy Award-winning Fisk Jubilee Singers are vocal artists and students at Fisk University who perform worldwide. The original singers introduced spirituals to the world in 1871 and were instrumental in preserving this unique American musical tradition. They broke racial barriers in the United States and abroad with their international tours after the Civil War period, which raised funds that ensured Fisk's survival.



Agenia W. Clark

Dr. Agenia W. Clark serves as the 18th president of Fisk University, Nashville's oldest institution of higher learning, where she is leading a transformative vision for the university's next 150 years. With a focus on sustained growth, she is committed to strengthening a campus culture of inclusion, intellectual exploration, and social responsibility. Throughout her career, Dr. Clark has been a powerful advocate for unity and community impact, including as CEO of the Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee. She serves on the board of directors of FirstBank and was named Nashvillian of the Year in 2021 by the *Nashville Business Journal*, which also regularly names her one of "Nashville's 100 Most Powerful People."



Kareem Crayton

Kareem Crayton is vice president of the Brennan Center's Washington, DC, office, where he manages the center's work in the capital and leads programs including the Partnership for Southern Impact with Fisk University. An established scholar on the intersection of law, politics, and race, he has served on law and political science faculties across the country and authored more than two dozen publications that explore the connections between race and politics in representative institutions. As counsel and adviser, he has represented advocacy groups and public officials. He holds a law degree and a doctorate in political science from Stanford University.



FEATURED SPEAKERS

Ron Chernow

Ron Chernow is the prize-winning author of eight books and the recipient of the 2015 National Humanities Medal. His first book, *The House of Morgan*, won the National Book Award. *Washington: A Life* won the Pulitzer Prize for Biography, and *Alexander Hamilton* — the inspiration for the Broadway musical — won the George Washington Book Prize. He has twice been a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and is one of only three living biographers to have won the gold medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters for biography. His most recent book, *Mark Twain*, was a No. 1 *New York Times* bestseller and named one of Barack Obama's favorite books of 2025 as well as a *New York Times* Notable Book.



Michael Waldman

Michael Waldman is president and CEO of the Brennan Center, which he has led since 2005. He is a constitutional lawyer and expert on the presidency and American democracy. Waldman was assistant to the president and director of speechwriting for President Bill Clinton and was responsible for writing or editing nearly 2,000 speeches, including four State of the Union and two inaugural addresses. Waldman is the author of seven books, including *The Supermajority: How the Supreme Court Divided America*, *The Fight to Vote* (a *Washington Post* notable nonfiction book), and *The Second Amendment: A Biography*. Waldman was a member of the Presidential Commission on the Supreme Court of the United States.



Kimberley Harris

Kimberley Harris is executive vice president of Comcast Corporation and general counsel of NBCUniversal. She serves as co-chair of the Brennan Center's Board of Directors. Harris joined NBCUniversal from Davis Polk & Wardwell, where she was a litigation partner. She previously served as senior counsel in the U.S. Department of Justice and principal deputy counsel to President Barack Obama. Harris serves on the board of directors for Goldman Sachs and Advocates for Children of New York. She is a member of the advisory boards for the Center for the Study of Corporate Law and the Tsai Leadership Program at Yale Law School and the board of trustees of the Mount Sinai Health System.



BRENNAN LEGACY AWARD PAST HONOREES

Since 2001, the Brennan Center
has presented the Legacy Award to
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the values of democracy and justice.

2025

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2024

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2021

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2019

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Desmond Meade
Levi Strauss & Co.
Patagonia

2018

Preet Bharara
Christine Todd Whitman
Salesforce

2017

Dan Schulman
William Joseph Barber II

2016

Sandra Phillips
Christopher Jackson

2015

Kimberley Harris

2014

Brad Smith
Zachary W. Carter

2013

Bryan Stevenson
Bill Moyers
Sheri McCoy

2012

Michael S. Solender
Judith S. Kaye

2011

Robert M. Morgenthau
Jane C. Sherburne

2010

Cory A. Booker
Indra C. Nooyi

2009

Eric H. Holder Jr.
Nicole Seligman

2008

Donna F. Edwards
Lewis B. Cullman
Jay S. Fishman

2007

John Conyers Jr.
Frederick A.O. Schwarz Jr.
Neal S. Wolin

2006

John Lewis
Richard Cotton

2005

Bertha Lewis
Anna Deavere Smith
Daniel Vasella

2004

Michael S. Helfer
Antonia Hernández
José E. Serrano

2003

Elaine R. Jones
Martin Lipton

2002

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We also want to thank the following firms for providing legal advice and guidance to the Brennan Center this year: Davis Wright Tremaine LLP; Harmon, Curran, Spielberg & Eisenberg; Kauff McGuire & Margolis; Kostelanetz; and Zuckerman Spaeder LLP

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