



Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health

BEYOND  **2025**

ACTION TOOLKIT

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"I am only one,
But still I am one.
I cannot do everything,
But still I can do something;
And because I cannot do everything,
I will not refuse to do the something that I
can do."

— Edward Everett Hale

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CENTER FOR INNOVATION IN SOCIAL WORK & HEALTH

Our Mission

The Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health (CISWH) at Boston University School of Social Work (BUSSW) drives transformative solutions, amplifies the profound impact of social work, and boldly reimagines traditional approaches to advance equitable health, mental well-being, and quality of life worldwide.

Our Team

Our multidisciplinary team comprises experts in social work, public health, health policy, business, health economics, and communications, all working collaboratively to drive meaningful change. Through partnerships with BUSSW faculty and community leaders, CISWH ensures its initiatives are both deeply relevant and highly impactful, bridging the gap between research, practice, and policy to create a more just and equitable future.

WHAT WE DO

At the heart of CISWH's mission are four intersecting labs that promote innovation in social work research, training, and practice.



Powerbuilding & Leadership Lab

Elevates social work leadership that shapes policy, transforms practice, and implements innovative models for equitable health, well-being, and quality of life.



Health Equity Research Lab

Conducts data-driven research and policy analysis to advance health outcomes across all areas that impact health and well-being, centering the lives of historically marginalized people to generate evidence for impact.



Social Work Innovation Lab

Brings together social work experts, individuals with lived expertise, and leaders from public health, health economics, data science, and other fields to co-design and test creative, human-centered solutions to society's most pressing health and social issues.



Global Social Work & Public Health Lab

Explores emerging areas of inquiry, fostering co-learning, capacity building, and global partnerships to create effective healthcare and mental health care delivery systems.

About the Beyond 2025 Action Hub

Like many of you, we are concerned about the far-reaching changes in social service, healthcare, economic, and governance systems proposed in “Project 2025”, the “America First Agenda”, and other policy platforms. The 119th Congress and the current administration are already taking steps to enact these and other policy plans with severe consequences for human rights and social justice.

The team at CISWH has been developing strategies to address the profound impacts these policy changes are likely to have on human dignity, health, and mental well-being—especially for the most marginalized among us. Many of us are experiencing persistent disbelief, fear, anger, and anxiety in response to these changes. We’re feeling exhausted from the effects of moral injury in our day-to-day work and personal lives.

We anticipated feeling some of these impacts ourselves, and felt that others like us would likely feel similarly. As policy changes came fast and furious, it became increasingly clear that protecting ourselves and our communities must be a priority. Yet how to do so was a challenge. Beginning in December 2024, we delved into the content of “Project 2025” and the “America First Agenda” to better understand what lies ahead and to identify ways to help others prepare and take action.

The result of this work is the Beyond 2025 Action Hub, a bold initiative designed to provide information and tools to help you navigate proposed changes and connect with others to take meaningful action on the issues that matter most to you.

The Beyond 2025 Action Hub is made up of three components.

Our first is a user-friendly, searchable database containing over 1,300 proposed policies and plans. The database is now publicly available at www.beyond2025.com, allowing you to explore “Project 2025”, the “America First Agenda”, and other policy plans and actions without sifting through thousands of pages of polarized and dehumanizing text.

Critical Conversations, our second component, is a series of ongoing virtual convenings that equip social workers, residents, public health practitioners, and others with skills to navigate policy, funding, and practice changes. The series also fosters community-building and collective action to drive change. You can stay informed about future convenings via our [website](#).

And finally, the Beyond 2025 Action Toolkit is a practical companion to the database and virtual convenings, offering a curated collection of action planning resources, tools, and tutorials to help you learn more about key social change concepts and identify areas of interest for participating in collective action.

We hope the Beyond 2025 Action Hub will serve as a valuable resource to help you prepare, plan, and take action in addressing the significant disruptions facing our economic, political, health, and social service systems. Looking beyond 2025, we will work together to build the conditions that support equitable health, mental well-being, and quality of life for all.

Tami Gouveia and Meg Comeau

The Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health
Boston University School of Social Work



Inform.

INFORM

Introducing the Beyond 2025 Action Toolkit

Welcome to the Beyond 2025 Action Toolkit!

We have designed this suite of tools to provide social work leaders, public health and other practitioners, residents, faculty, students, and all those who value justice, equity, and human dignity with the foundational resources they will need to effectively respond to “Project 2025” and the “America First Agenda’s” stated policy objectives.

Many of these foundational resources were created by well-established and trusted organizations outside of CISWH. We have curated and assembled this initial selection of resources for your convenience, given the urgency of the moment. We continue to add other existing and original resource materials to the toolkit as the policy environment evolves.

Educate.

EDUCATE

Fundamental Social Change Concepts, Knowledge, and Tools

As a user of the Beyond 2025 Action Toolkit, you cannot do everything on your own. It is our hope that as you are called to respond to the moral imperative to do something based on your strengths, opportunities, and resources, others will also be called to work collectively to make an impact.



The following original and curated materials have been gathered to help you think through where and how to make your own unique and valuable contributions.

Social Change, Implementation, & Your Role
U.S. Civics 101
Staying Safe in Uncertain Times
Media Literacy 101

Social Change

- What is social change?
- How to implement social change?
- What is your role in social change?

What is Social Change and How to Implement It

Social change can happen on a number of different levels, in a number of different ways. While many people think of highly visible methods such as demonstrations or protests, there are many other effective social change actions and methods. There are the things that happen on the individual level, in the way we think or behave. There are those which happen in the context of relationship, whether personal or professional. One-on-one conversations, volunteering, fundraising, voting, community-building, and raising awareness through social media also have important roles to play in the array of activities and efforts that make up social change.

Just as there is no one perfect way of working towards social change, there is no one perfect type of person to engage in social change efforts. We each have unique skills, talents, and other assets that we can contribute. The impact of all of us working together is greater when we take the time to think about and then apply what we do best.

The following resources (pages 17 - 21) created by [Seed Coalition](#), an organization that supports civic and community engagement in higher education in the Midwest, can help you identify where and how you can make your most meaningful contributions.

Your Role in Social Change

Whether you are an experienced activist who has been involved in multiple social change and movement building efforts, or you are new to learning about how you can leverage your strengths, values, and resources for collective action, the tools included in this section offer an opportunity for reflection to make your efforts more effective and collaborative.

We begin with the Social Change Wheel developed by Deepa Iyer (next page).

You can read more about the Social Change Map in Deepa's interview with Erin Segal, a social worker and writer at Thick Press, [here](#).

To learn more about the framework, watch Deepa's interview with Student Affairs Now [here](#).



Social Change Wheel 2.0 Toolkit

Take it for a spin. What inspires you?

Imagine the wheel below rotating around the center of anti-racism, equity, and co-creation, offering a variety of alignments between its inner and outer rings. The outer ring offers a range of social change approaches happening in and outside of higher education. The inner ring offers a range of campus-based strategies used in the work of civic and community engagement. We hope the Social Change Wheel 2.0 toolkit inspires reflection, new ideas, and an affirmed commitment to a strong democracy.





Definitions, Examples, and Ideas: Ways to Work Toward Social Change

Below are definitions to use as a jumping off point as you work through the outer ring of the Social Change Wheel 2.0. Definitions are listed starting at the top of the wheel and moving clockwise. Examples are provided, as is space for you to write your own.



Socially Responsible Daily Behavior

Acting on one's values and civic commitments in one's personal and professional life.

- Noticing and naming problematic language
- Understanding the local and broader impacts of your daily routines, habits, and purchases
- Educating yourself about the people and history of your institution and community
- _____



Community Organizing

Bringing people together to act collectively in their shared interest or toward a common goal.

Mapping the skills, interests, relationships, and other assets of residents to inform work on particular issues

Using Gansz's public narrative model to surface stories and commitments to a common cause

- _____



Community Building

Strengthening the capacity of local residents and associations to work together by supporting opportunities for interpersonal connection.

- Creating local history projects profiling both long-time and new residents
- Organizing neighborhood clean-ups or National Night Out activities
- _____



Deliberative and Reflective Dialogue

Exchanging and evaluating different ideas and approaches around particular issues in a public setting. Learning about the experiences and stories of others by listening fully and actively.

- Organizing ongoing dialogues or story circles
- Creating space for all who wish to speak
- Facilitating with a National Issue Forums guide
- _____



Advocacy and Raising Awareness

Supporting an idea or cause through public and private communications, and collecting evidence to support one's position.

- Sharing research or a video that highlights inequities in your community on social media
- Calling and writing letters to elected officials
- Telling your peers why an issue matters to you
- _____



Social Innovation and Enterprise

Social innovation focuses on fairer and more sustainable solutions to social problems. Social enterprises are organizations using market-based solutions to address social problems.

- Creating a business with a "triple bottom line"
- Designing affordable products that purify water
- Developing an app with a clear social benefit
- _____



Fundraising, Giving, and Philanthropy

Donating money to increase the well-being of humankind, advance another social good, or support non-profit or community organizations.

- Holding a fundraiser for a local nonprofit
- Giving cash or in-kind donations yourself
- Boosting online days of giving on social media
- Participating in fundraising phone banking
- _____



Protests and Demonstrations

Expressing public, visible disagreement with a situation or policy, often in a large group setting.

- Participating in rallies or marches in support of a cause or to bring awareness to injustice
- Creating public visual or performance art intended to draw attention to an issue
- Taking a knee during a national anthem
- _____



Mutual Aid and Informal Association

Unpaid, collaborative work and/or sharing of resources by people seeking to improve their collective quality of life.

- Using digital platforms to connect people with a network of support to share resources such as money, clothing, food, or services
- Opening your home to a displaced person
- _____



Community and Economic Development

Acting to provide economic opportunities and improve social conditions in sustainable ways.

- Developing marketing plans, websites, or other supports to help small businesses grow
- Offering microloans to aspiring entrepreneurs
- Supporting community-owned businesses
- Partnering with community business leaders
- _____



Voting and Formal Political Activities

Mobilizing others to participate in and influence public policy through formal political channels – and participating yourself!

- Organizing a voter registration drive
- Running for public office or working or volunteering on a candidate's campaign
- Sharing resources about state voting laws
- _____



Volunteering and Direct Service

Addressing immediate needs by providing assistance, often through churches, schools, social service agencies, and nonprofits.

- Helping weekly as a tutor at a local library
- Distributing donated food at a food bank
- Cleaning up debris after a disaster or crisis
- Registering participants at a blood drive
- _____



Additional Notes

Reflection and Discussion Questions: Ways to Work Toward Social Change

- ❓ Which part(s) of the wheel are you drawn to the most? Why?
- ❓ What ways to work toward social change do you have experience with? What ways to work toward social change have you seen others use effectively? How?
- ❓ Which part of the wheel do you find most challenging or unappealing? Why?
- ❓ How could an "around the wheel" approach be activated to address enduring social problems and systemic inequities? Why might a multifaceted approach be valuable?



Reflecting on Campus-Based Strategies: In Your Work, On Your Campus, With Your Community



Starting at the Center

"The beauty of anti-racism is that you don't have to pretend to be free of racism to be anti-racist. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including in yourself. And it's the only way forward" – Ijeoma Oluo (@IjeomaOluo, July 14, 2019)

How do or can you practice anti-racism in your work? How is anti-racism practiced on your campus? With your community?

How is equity defined and practiced in your work, on campus, and with community?

How does co-creation align with the culture and values on your campus? Who regularly sits at your planning table? How can you check which voices have been excluded?



Mapping Current Practices, Imagining New Possibilities



Civic-Minded
Career Readiness



Voicing the Public Purpose
of Higher Education



Information, Digital,
and Media Literacies



Community-Engaged
Teaching and Learning



Community Building
and Partnership



Cultivating Lifelong Learning
and Global Citizenship



Engaged Scholarship and
Participatory Action Research



Student Involvement and
Leadership Development



Who makes the map and holds the compass for civic and community engagement on your campus?



Where are the strategies above located on your campus? What other strategies are on your map?



Which of these strategies are currently on the outskirts, or on a completely different map? Why?



With whom on and beyond your campus could you partner to reflect on the current terrain and embark on new pathways?

THE SOCIAL CHANGE ECOSYSTEM MAP (2020)

In our lives and as part of organizations, workplaces and movements, many of us play different roles in pursuit of equity, shared liberation, inclusion, and justice. And yet, we often get overwhelmed, lost, and burned out. Some of us are newcomers to ongoing social change efforts and don't know where to start. Still others are catalyzed into action in the midst of a crisis in our community.

The Social Change Ecosystem Map is a framework that can help individuals, networks, and organizations align with social change values, individual roles, and the broader ecosystem.

What you're reading now is the most recent version of the social change ecosystem framework created by Deepa Iyer (BMP's Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives). Deepa first developed the map in 2018, and this 2020 version incorporates her new and revised text. Below you'll find a *Frequently Asked Questions* section. Following that are the three components of the framework: the map, the description of roles, and a reflection guide.

The Social Change Ecosystem Map



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 @dviyer
 @BldingMovement

Frequently Asked Questions

Who developed the framework?

My name is Deepa Iyer, and I'm a writer, facilitator, and activist. Learn more about my original concept of the social change ecosystem map [here](#). As I utilized the framework with others, it began to evolve; see more about that [here](#). You're working with the most current version of the framework.

What are the components of the framework?

The map, the description of the roles, and the reflection guide can all be found in this document. If you'd like to access individual components, you can find them [here](#).

How do I use this framework?

It's a three-step process: (1) identify your values and cause in the middle circle; (2) map your roles and those played by your ecosystem; and (3) reflect, observe, and plan.

Who can use this framework?

Anyone. Individuals can use it to reflect, assess, and plan. Organizations can use it at staff and board retreats, team-building meetings, orientations, and strategy sessions. Workplaces can use it to assess their effectiveness. Coalitions and networks can use it to clarify different lanes. People new to equity and inclusion issues can use it to identify how to begin. Those of us who have been doing social change work for some time can use it when we feel fatigued or overwhelmed.

When should this framework be used?

As an individual, you can use it when you need a re-set, when you feel stuck, burned out or confused, or when you don't know how to begin. I use it often when there is a community crisis and don't know how to respond. For example, people have been using the framework to figure out their roles during COVID-19, in the struggle for Black liberation, and for post-election response.

What are the permissions and restrictions on using this framework?

This framework is for individual and public use - **with boundaries**. Due to creative and commercial infringements that occurred in 2020, I have placed new parameters on the use of the map. As of October 2020, all previous licenses are revoked. Please read the permissions and restrictions below and if you have any questions or doubts, please email me (diyer@buildingmovement.org). Please do not send direct messages on Twitter or Instagram; email is the most effective route.

This is Permitted:

- ✓ You can use the map, framework and the guide **individually and internally within your organization, workplace, faith group, board, or campus/school** for meetings, retreats, orientations, check-ins, evaluations, workshops, classes, self-discovery/group discovery sessions, leadership mapping and more, with the following attribution: *Deepa Iyer, Building Movement Project. SM, © 2020 Deepa Iyer. All rights reserved. All prior licenses revoked.*
- ✓ You can **share, post, and repost** the map online on your social media platforms and within emails, newsletters, internal communications and as part of a list of resources **as long as you include** the full and original image of the map, the [original link](#) and the following attribution: *Deepa Iyer, Building Movement Project. SM, © 2020 Deepa Iyer. All rights reserved. All prior licenses revoked.*

This is Not Permitted:

- × **No adaptations or remixes.** This includes but is not limited to changing the colors, the text or the roles, adding artwork or new elements, or visually reorganizing the roles.
NOTE: I'm open to the possibility of collaborating with all you visionaries and storytellers if we can come to an explicit agreement before you alter and create. Please contact me via email.
- × **No public-facing workshops.** Please contact me first to discuss/partner.
- × **No commercial use is permitted.** The map or any derivations of its content can never be used to accrue money for yourself or your organization, ie., charging people or asking for donations in a session that includes the map or framework; or making and selling products based on or including the map or framework.

The Social Change Ecosystem Map



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Characteristics of the Roles

Weavers: I see the through-lines of connectivity between people, places, organizations, ideas, and movements.

Experimenters: I innovate, pioneer, and invent. I take risks and course-correct as needed.

Frontline Responders: I address community crises by marshaling and organizing resources, networks, and messages.

Visionaries: I imagine and generate our boldest possibilities, hopes and dreams, and remind us of our direction.

Builders: I develop, organize, and implement ideas, practices, people, and resources in service of a collective vision.

Caregivers: I nurture and nourish the people around me by creating and sustaining a community of care, joy, and connection.

Disruptors: I take uncomfortable and risky actions to shake up the status quo, to raise awareness, and to build power.

Healers: I recognize and tend to the generational and current traumas caused by oppressive systems, institutions, policies, and practices.

Storytellers: I craft and share our community stories, cultures, experiences, histories, and possibilities through art, music, media, and movement.

Guides: I teach, counsel, and advise, using my gifts of well-earned discernment and wisdom.

REFLECTION GUIDE for SOCIAL CHANGE ECOSYSTEM MAP

The Roles

- What values call to you? Circle the ones in the middle of the map that connect with you or add more/others. When do you feel most aligned with these values?

- What are you seeking to change? Is it a system of power, a mindset or a policy? You can also choose to write in a particular issue, campaign, or crisis that calls to you to take action (i.e. COVID-19, solidarity with Black communities, campaign to center immigrants, post-election response).

- Locate yourself on the map and put your name inside the circles that you find yourself playing most frequently. Add other circles if needed and label them with roles (not job titles). Recognize that you can be playing multiple roles, and that these roles can even shift depending on the context. Write the roles below and identify their characteristics (check the definitions for ideas).

• What role(s) do you feel comfortable and natural playing, and why? What role(s) make you come alive, and why? Are there any differences between these two responses for you to explore? Reflect on how your roles embody the values you identified earlier.

• What is the impact of playing these roles on you - physically, energetically, emotionally, or spiritually? What/who sustains you?

• In your role(s), how often do you vision and dream? What is the effect of repetition and redundancy, or compromise and sacrifice in the roles you play?

• How does your role connect to your privilege and power? For example, are there roles where you might be taking too much space (or not enough)?

- What story emerges about you when you review the map and your reflections?

- How could you stretch yourself? Where can you take bolder risks?

• Social change can be fulfilling but it can also be draining at times. It's natural to feel burn out and fatigue. People who have been subjected to generations of oppression carry trauma that shows up in behaviors and responses. And, in times of crisis, we can cycle through fogginess, exhaustion, and numbness. All of these responses are natural. We can also learn more about their roots and triggers, and build sustainability plans to tend to ourselves – and each other. *Below*, reflect on a time when you felt fatigued from social change work. What led to that experience & how did you cope? Knowing what you know now about your roles and your ecosystem, reflect on activities that you can take to sustain yourself through challenging times (ex. setting boundaries, relying on a mentor, asking for help, switching roles, or taking breaks). Then, think about a person in your ecosystem that you can support and check in on regularly.

Ecosystems and Connections

Social change cannot happen at an individual level when we work in silos. It happens when we are connected to others. Our bodies, nature, and organizations all comprise of ecosystems. As [Grace Lee Boggs](#) reminds us: “We never know how our small activities will affect others through the invisible fabric of our connectedness. In this exquisitely connected world, it's never a question of 'critical mass.' It's always about critical connections.”

- Who are you connected to? What roles do they play? Start with your immediate ecosystem (usually your organization) and then zoom out to include mentors, supporters, co-conspirators, friends, and colleagues outside of your organization. If you are working with the map from an organizational lens, you can have staff/volunteers map themselves, or you can map partners/allies that are part of a coalition or network.

- The middle circle in the map identifies the values of the communities and the world we seek to create. Which resonate with your ecosystem and why? How does your ecosystem create the conditions for justice, liberation, solidarity and inclusion to be realized?

- What observations emerge about your team, organization, network, or movement when you review the complete ecosystem, and your role in it?

- An effective, healthy, and sustainable social change ecosystem requires people playing diverse roles. Is your map imbalanced in any way? If so, how could the ecosystem provide support, alter objectives, or course correct?

- Often, social change ecosystems are prone to maintaining cultures of overwork, productivity, and performance at the cost of individual well-being and long-term sustainability. Does the mapping process provide insights into the culture of your ecosystem? Are there roles that need to be strengthened in order to cultivate a more sustainable culture?

Alignment and Aspirations

- There are times when we all feel confused and lost about the roles that we should play, especially during community crises. When you don't feel in alignment with my roles, how can you re-set? Who can you turn to for guidance? When you are in right relationship between your roles and values, how do you feel?

- Based on the reflections above, set 2 goals for yourself to try out before your next check-in. Identify 1 SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely) goal and 1 [B-HAG](#) (Big, Hairy, Audacious, as defined by Jim Collins) goal. Check in every quarter to reflect on what's changed, and if possible, work with a partner, coach, or team-member for accountability and momentum.

U.S. Civics 101

- Charters of Freedom
- Federal Government Overview
- Structure of Federal Government
- Congressional Lawmaking
- Civic Engagement
- Elections/Voting
- Civil Rights

U.S. Civics 101

In this section, develop a thorough understanding of how policy proposals become laws in the U.S., as well as how the budget process works.

The following was developed so that you can be an informed changemaker in your community.

Charters of Freedom

The Charters of Freedom include three documents critical to United States history. They outline the philosophy, framework, laws, and ethics that provide a foundational structure for the U.S. government. Consequently, this shapes the daily lives and experiences of everyone living in the United States.



Declaration of Independence

- The Declaration of Independence was a powerful document written to inspire unity, revolution, and independence from Britain in 1776
- It encourages the principles of equality, freedom, solidarity, and the right to rebellion
- The right to rebel is supported through a list of 27 grievances against King George III
- It concludes with the declaration that the United Colonies are separate and independent from Britain and the King

The United States Constitution

The Constitution was written in the summer of 1787 and provides a framework for the structure and systems of the U.S. federal government. The Constitution is divided into a preamble and seven articles that articulate how different facets of the government operate.

Articles 1-3 outline the structure and responsibilities of the federal government and the system of checks and balances that provide oversight of each branch.

1. Legislative Branch
2. Executive Branch
3. Judicial Branch

Articles 4-6 outline the relationships between the state and federal governments. This includes processes to ratify and amend the Constitution as well as the Supremacy Clause.

Supremacy Clause

When legal conflict arises, the U.S. Constitution and federal laws take precedence over state laws

Article 7 outlines process for states to ratify the Constitution.

Bill of Rights

The Bill of Rights is the first ten amendments made to the Constitution.

Amendments 1-10

1. Freedom of religion, speech, press, and peaceful assembly
2. Right to bear arms
3. Troops cannot stay in homes during peacetime without consent
4. No unreasonable searches or seizures
5. Due process for criminal prosecutions; right to not testify
6. Right to speedy, public trial by jury
7. Right to civil jury trials in federal civil cases
8. No excessive bail or cruel and unusual punishment
9. Unlisted rights are not inherently denied
10. Powers not delegated to the U.S. by the Constitution are reserved to the states

Federal Government Overview

Articles 1 - 3 of the Constitution outline the division of the federal government into legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

Legislative Branch

This branch is responsible for drafting and passing proposed legislation, controlling federal spending and budgeting, confirming presidential nominations (Senate only), and has the authority to declare war. The legislative branch includes:

Congress

Composed of representatives from each state and structured into two chambers, as well as special supporting agencies and offices.

Senate

- 100 members
- Staggered six-year terms

House of Representatives

- 435 members
- Two-year terms



Executive Branch



This branch is responsible for executing the law and is composed of the following:

President

- Heads executive branch of government
- Has power to sign, veto, and execute laws as well as nominate federal judges, make treaties with two-thirds of the Senate, and issue executive orders
 - Executive Order: Presidential directive that can carry the force of law without Congressional approval when it is based on the president's constitutional or statutory authority. An executive order cannot override existing laws, can be struck down by the courts, and can be revoked by a future president.
- Other roles include head of state and commander in chief of U.S. Armed Forces

Vice President

Breaks ties in Senate votes and may periodically preside over the Senate

Cabinet

- Serves as advisors to the president
- President nominates cabinet members and Senate confirms them

Executive departments, independent agencies, and other boards, commissions and committees

Judicial Branch

This branch is responsible for interpreting, applying, and evaluating the law, and has the power to find laws unconstitutional or executive actions unauthorized. It includes federal courts and the Supreme Court.

Supreme Court

- Head of the judicial branch of government
- Nine justices of the Supreme Court are nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate
- They have the power to overturn unconstitutional laws, including executive orders



Structure of the Federal Government

Checks and Balances

Checks and balances between branches of the United States government separates power and prevents one branch from having too much power over others.

Legislative Branch

- Congress can override a veto
- The legislative branch has the power to control the budget, approve presidential nominations, and impeach the president
- The Senate confirms the president's nominations for judicial positions

Executive Branch

- The president can veto laws submitted through the legislative branch
- The president can sign executive orders
- The president nominates Supreme Court justices, court of appeals judges and district court judges who evaluate the law on the judicial branch

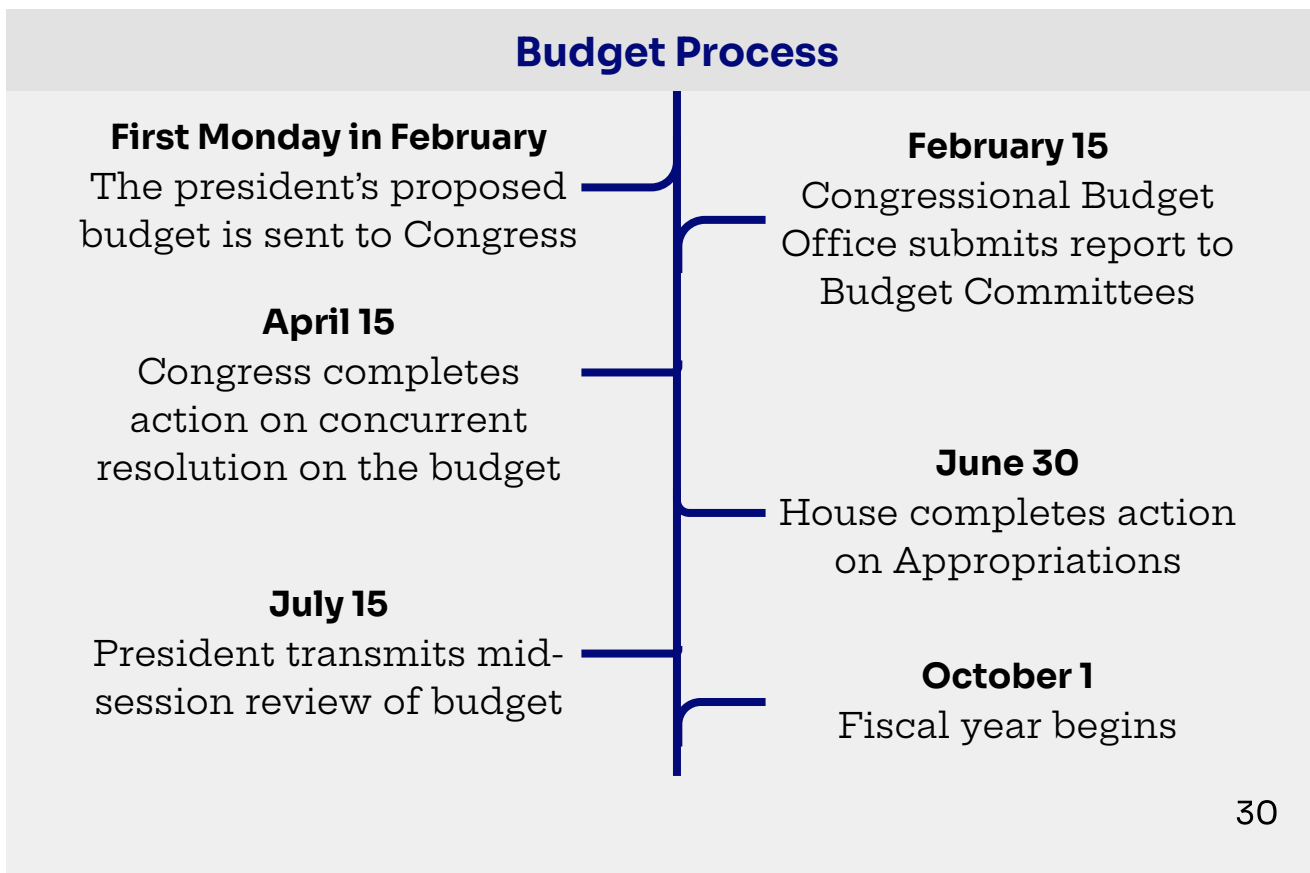
Judicial Branch

- The Supreme Court can declare laws passed by Congress as unconstitutional
- Interprets laws written and approved by the executive and legislative branches

The Federal Budget

The federal budget outlines federal government revenue, spending, borrowing, and debt.

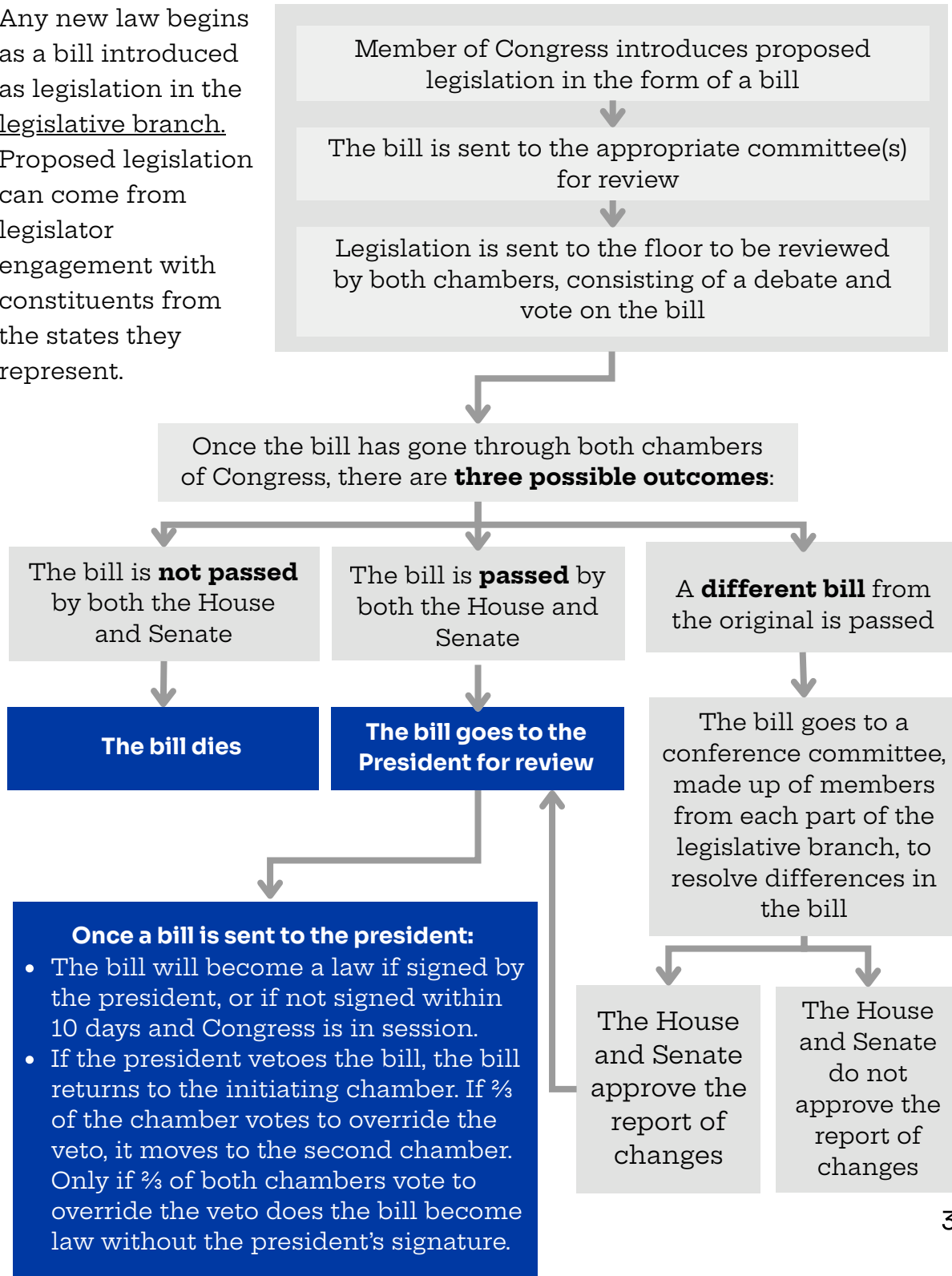
- The fiscal year runs from the beginning of October until the end of September the following year
- The federal government uses revenue to cover spending costs, and borrows money to finance deficits that revenue will not cover
- The national debt is the amount of money the federal government has borrowed over time but not yet paid back
- There are three types of spending:
 - **Mandatory:** About 59% of all federal spending (\$4.2 trillion) and is automatically applied. This spending is set by existing law and includes Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and SNAP.
 - **Discretionary:** About 27% (\$1.9 trillion) set by Congress each year through appropriations.
 - **Net interest on the debt:** About 14% (\$970 billion).



Congressional Lawmaking

How a Bill Becomes a Law

Any new law begins as a bill introduced as legislation in the legislative branch. Proposed legislation can come from legislator engagement with constituents from the states they represent.

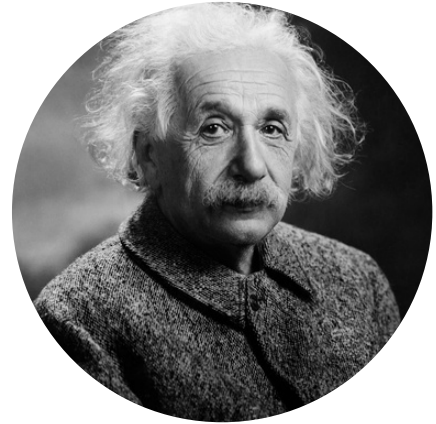


Civic Engagement

“The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything.”

— Albert Einstein

Civic engagement is an action that is designed to address issues of public concern.



How to Become Civically Engaged:

- **Get involved in your community**
 - Volunteer for an organization whose values mirror your own.
 - Join a social justice club.
 - Get involved in a protest or rally.
- **Get involved in government**
 - Familiarize yourself with how the United States government works.
 - Call, write, or email your congressperson and senator to demand change: find who your Congress person and senator is along with their contact information here.
 - Attend city council or town meetings, community forums, and town halls to express your concerns and stay up to date on what is happening in your community.
- **Get informed**
 - Learn about the pressing issues that affect your community.
 - Stay up to date with the evolution of the policy proposals that impact the issues you care about in the [Beyond 2025 Action Hub Database](#).
 - Be intentional about where you purchase your goods. Buy from small businesses and businesses whose values align with yours.
- **Not sure where to start?**
 - Try some of these ideas from [dosomething.org](#).

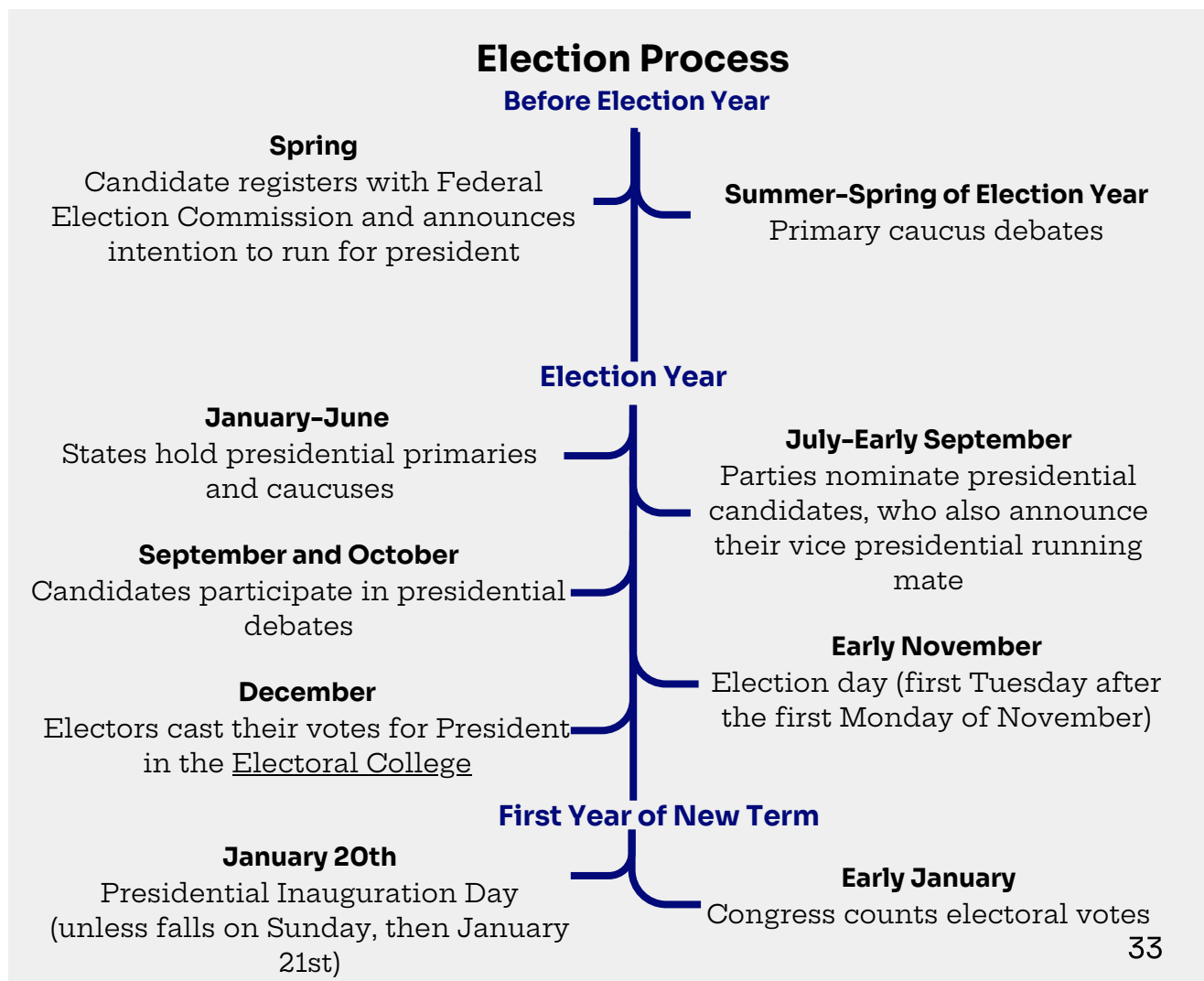
How Presidential Elections Work

Presidential Election Process

Becoming the President of the United States involves meeting certain eligibility requirements and engaging in election activities beginning a year prior to the election year. The president serves four-year terms.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Must be a natural-born citizen of the United States
- Must be at least 35 years of age
- Must be a resident of the United States for at least 14 years



Electoral College

The Electoral College is a body of citizens selected by the people who are responsible for casting the final votes in the presidential election. To win the presidential election, a candidate needs to receive a majority of 538 votes (270 or more) from the Electoral College.

Facts about the Electoral College

- Each state is allotted electoral votes equivalent to that state's Congressional delegation (two Senators + the number of representatives).
- If a presidential candidate wins the state's popular vote, they receive all the state's Electoral College votes. However, Maine and Nebraska use a different process: one electoral vote is awarded to the popular vote winner in each Congressional district and the remaining two (representing the Senate seats) go to the statewide popular vote winner.*
- The winner of the presidential election is officially declared on January 6th in a joint session of Congress.

* Popular vote: the votes cast by individual voters. In every state except Maine and Nebraska, the candidate who wins the most votes statewide receives all of that state's electoral votes, even without a majority.

How Elections Work:

Congress, State & Local Elections

Congressional Elections and Midterm Elections

- Every two years, 1/3 of the Senate seats and all of the seats in the House of Representatives are up for election.
- Members of the House of Representatives serve two-year terms.
- Senators serve six-year terms.
- The president of the United States serves up to two four-year terms.

State and Local Elections

- Similar to the federal government, state and local governments often include legislative, executive, and judicial offices.
- Local government often also has a city or town council where members are elected. To learn more about what these offices can entail, [click here](#).
- These elections can also include ballot initiatives about proposed changes to state or local laws.
- These elections take place any year at various times throughout the year. [Click here](#) to find out when the next election is in your state.

How to Vote:

Casting Your Ballot

Early Voting

1. **In-person:** Check if your state allows early in-person voting.
2. **Mail and absentee voting** have been shown to make it easier for people to vote, which increases voter participation. Check to see if you're eligible to vote by mail in your state.
 - a. Return a mail-in ballot through the mail: completely fill out the return envelope and check to see if a postage stamp is needed to send or if postage is included.
 - b. Return a mail-in ballot to a ballot box: drop your ballot, which does not need to be stamped, at your nearest ballot box which can be found here.

Voting In-Person

- Know your polling location as well as the opening and closing times for voting here.
- Ensure you have the proper identification to vote here.
- Ensure you have any notes or documentation that will help you to make your decision. You can bring your notes, voter guide, or a sample ballot to the voting booth so you do not have to memorize your choices. Some polling places restrict cell phone use, so bring paper copies. Also, check the rules with your local election office before you go.

- Know your voting rights:
 - No one can threaten or intimidate you during the voting process.
 - You cannot be denied the opportunity to vote if you are in line prior to the polls closing.
 - No one can deny or restrict voting rights because of a citizen's race, color, or membership in a language minority group.
 - For voters with disabilities, states must ensure that they have a full and equal opportunity to vote.
 - If any of these rights are denied, you can report a complaint to the [Department of Justice](#).

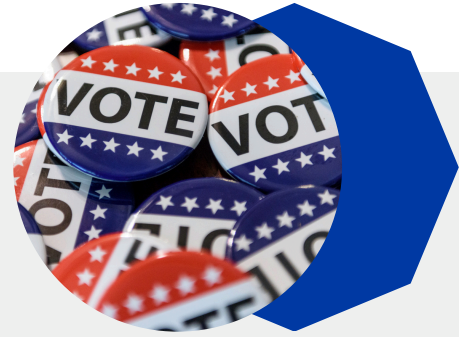


How to Vote:

Before Casting your Ballot

Register to Vote

Each state and territory sets its own rules for voter registration.



You may be able to:

- **Register online:** Most states offer online registration. Select your state or territory to find out if you can register online.
- **Register by mail:** You can download and print the National Mail Voter Registration Form for use in every state except New Hampshire, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The form is available in many languages.
- **Register in person:** You can register in person at your state or local election office or your state motor vehicles office.

In some states, you must register to vote 30 days prior to election day, while in others you can register on election day.

You can find voter registration deadlines in your state.

Aligning Your Vote With Your Values

- Decide which issues you care about and the qualities that you want in an elected official. This can include things such as the positions they take on the issues you care about as well as the experiences and qualities they bring to office (LWV).
- See where candidates and their parties stand on these issues and how they align with these characteristics by:
 - Using VOTE411.org to see races and candidates on your ballot, as well as detailed information on candidates and ballot initiatives.
 - Examining campaign websites, social media content, and materials including endorsements and campaign contributions.
- Learn where the candidates' parties stand:
 - Democratic Party
 - Green Party
 - Libertarian Party
 - The Republican Party
- Voter guides provide background information on candidates and ballot measures. Find online voter guides by home address nationwide.
- Sample Ballots show you the elections, candidates, and ballot measures that would be printed on your actual ballot

Civil Rights

Civil rights are personal rights guaranteed and protected by the Constitution and federal laws passed by Congress.

They protect people from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, disability, age, religion, and sex in settings like housing, the workplace, school, voting, business, healthcare, and public spaces.

14th Amendment

Section 1: Anyone born or naturalized in the United States is a citizen of the United States. No state may deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, or deny any person equal protection of the laws.



Section 3: No one can run for office that has engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the country or has aided enemies of the country. Congress can lift the ban only by a two-thirds vote of each chamber.

The Civil Rights Act (1964)

- Prohibits discrimination in public spaces.
- Required schools and other public facilities to integrate, threatening to withhold federal funding if states did not comply.
- Made employment discrimination illegal on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin.



The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)

- Prohibits discrimination against people with a wide variety of disabilities.
- Guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities in everyday activities such as employment, purchasing goods and services, and participating in government programs by requiring locations open to the public to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.



“If one really wishes to know how justice is administered in a country, one does not question the policemen, the lawyers, the judges, or the protected members of the middle class. One goes to the unprotected — those, precisely, who need the law’s protection most! — and listens to their testimony.”

—James Baldwin

Staying Safe in Uncertain Times

- Strategies to Promote Safety
- Personal Protections
- Resources

Staying Safe in Uncertain Times

Ensuring and cultivating safety can be complex and varies depending on your social position in relation to your social context. Accessing resources and safe spaces can present barriers to safety for some, and safety for a community will look different than taking steps to ensure the safety of an organization or an individual.

Political tension can impede our daily experiences by perpetuating feelings of frustration, fear, uncertainty, and desperation. If not managed effectively, exposure to this type of prolonged stress can have a significant impact on your mind and body. These impacts can extend beyond ourselves, and, over time, may begin to influence our relationships, work, and other domains of life. During times of political uncertainty, it can feel as though our individual and collective futures are out of our control. It can be helpful to remember that we still hold the power to support ourselves, our community, and those we care about.

This section provides strategies for promoting safety in different areas of life so that together we can navigate this difficult time while also engaging in social change.

Many of the foundational political, social, and cultural contexts we have come to rely on in the history of the United States are currently being transformed or attacked. It is normal to feel concerned for the safety of yourself, your loved ones, and your community.

Safety

noun /'seɪf.ti/

We define safety as the condition of being protected from harm. Harm can take many forms and can be explicit or implicit. When people in power or elected office aim to normalize oppression and the dehumanization of large groups of people, this harm can present physical, psychological, and relationship challenges.

Staying Safe in Uncertain Times: Strategies to Promote Safety

Psychological Well-being

- Place boundaries on how much time you spend focusing on the news and social media.
- Actively find ways to feel hope and joy.
- Actively make time for in-person activities or time outdoors away from the news and social media.
- Focus on what you can control and/or influence.
- Find time to identify sources of hope or inspiration that you connect to.
- Put your feelings into action through advocacy.
- Use coping skills when needed to manage overwhelming emotions.
- If your emotions are impacting how you function in your daily life, reach out for help whether it be to a friend, a relative, religious leader, and/or mental health professional. If none of these options are available to you at the moment, call, text, or chat online with the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, which can be reached 24/7. There are options for Veterans, Spanish language speakers and the deaf or hard of hearing as well.
- If you feel you could benefit from talk therapy, you can find a therapist here.



Physical Well-being

- Get a good night's rest.
- Eat nutritious food and drink plenty of water to fuel your body and brain.
- Move your body every day.
- Be aware that stress can take a toll on your physical health and take precautions to limit this stress.



Social Well-being

- Set boundaries about having conversations about current events.
- Although conversations about current events are important, an abundance of arguments and distressing topics are not helpful for relationships; limit them when necessary.
- Connect with other people who are experiencing similar issues/worries.
- Connect with people in your community through social activities, classes, groups.



Staying Safe in Uncertain Times: Personal Protections

There are many practices that can be used to enhance safety through personal protection.

Technology and Personal Information

- Set passwords and limit biometric logins. Turn off location sharing for sensitive apps, especially period trackers, immigration help apps, or organizing platforms.
- Minimize your digital footprint by removing personal identifying information, such as address and birth date, from social media accounts.
- Take steps to protect your privacy by learning how to mitigate the possibility of becoming a victim of [doxxing](#). Learn more [here](#).
- Use messaging and other applications that use end-to-end encryption, such as [Signal](#).

Safeguard Critical Documents

- Obtain an official paper copy of your birth certificate and other documents, such as marriage and death certificates, from your state's registry of vital records or health department.
- Have important identification documents such as your birth certificate, passport, and Social Security card on hand and stored somewhere safe but easily accessible.
- Download and file personal online information such as student loan records, Social Security earnings, and income tax returns.

Birthright Citizenship

- Obtain U.S. birth certificates or passports.
 - If your child was born in the U.S., apply for their passport immediately to document status.
 - If there is a delay in getting a birth certificate, follow up with the Department of Health or local vital records office.
- Consult an immigration attorney if you are in a mixed-status family.

Immigration

- Secure or renew legal status.
 - If you are eligible, apply or renew DACA, TPS, asylum, or your green card.
 - Identify a local immigrant rights organization and save their contact information in case of emergency.
 - Gather and securely store documents such as your passport, ID, employment history, and school records.
 - Submit applications before any executive order rolls back protections.
- Create an emergency family plan. [Here](#) is an example.
 - Include: power of attorney, school pick up plan, and custody arrangements for children in case something happens to the parents.
- Know your rights.
 - Learn and teach “Know Your Rights” material, such as not opening the door if ICE agents arrive, asking for a warrant signed by a judge, and understanding your right to remain silent
 - Carry a “[Know Your Rights](#)” red card with your rights in multiple languages

Student Loans

- Track and save documentation.
 - Keep copies of payment history, income-driven repayment confirmations, and Public Service Loan Forgiveness records.

Social Security and Retirement

- Create a my Social Security account.
 - Check your earnings and ensure accurate records.
 - Download and/or print a copy.

Health Insurance and Healthcare

- Document medical needs.
 - Keep records of diagnoses, prescriptions, and doctors in case you need to appeal lost coverage

LGBTQIA+ Rights

- Update legal documents.
 - The State Department now issues passports only with an M or F marker matching sex at birth and no longer issues X markers. Existing passports remain valid until they expire. Name changes are still processed.
 - Driver's licenses and state IDs are set by each state; many still allow gender marker changes.
 - Social Security: Check current SSA policy before applying.
- Connect to LGBTQIA+ Legal Networks.
 - Lambda Legal and Transgender Law Center offer toolkits and representation.
- Support and know local networks.
 - Abortion funds and legal defense organizations can help if laws change quickly.

Housing & Unhoused Rights

- Know your local tenant rights.
 - Research eviction laws, rent control rules, and legal aid hotlines in your area.
- Apply for affordable housing.
 - Sign up for alerts from housing authorities and nonprofit developers.
- Create a documentation folder.
 - Include ID, lease, utilities, and rental payment history—this is helpful for future housing applications.

Civil Rights and Policing

- Record interactions with law enforcement.
 - Use apps such as “Mobile Justice” or keep your camera ready.
- Know local legal aid resources.
 - Memorize or write down contact information for public defenders or legal clinics - don’t rely on your phone contacts list.

Mental Health Services

- Get evaluations and diagnoses documented now.
 - This helps in qualifying for support services later.
- Find sliding scale or peer-led support networks.
 - Build relationships with local clinics, therapists, and mutual aid mental health collectives.
- Understand emergency rights.
 - Know your rights under the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) and how to advocate during a crisis.

Child Welfare and Education

- Request your child's IEP and 504 plan.
 - Keep hard copies and digital scans in a secure file.
 - Learn how to advocate for your child's rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- For mixed-status families.
 - Create an emergency family plan for ICE intervention or appearance at school.
 - Refer back to the Immigration safety section above for specifics on what you may want to include in the family plan.
- Track school changes and speak at board meetings.
 - Organize with parent groups or join local education coalitions.
 - Ensure teachers and support staff know about policy changes that impact students' support services received.
- Know alternative education options.
 - Identify inclusive charter schools, homeschooling pods, or co-ops that align with your values if local policies become harmful.

Climate and Environmental Justice

- Join or support local environmental justice groups.
 - Especially in frontline communities (Black, Indigenous, low-income, immigrant).
- Install air and water quality monitors if possible.
 - Track data to document environmental harm (especially near polluting industries or fracking).
- Stay informed on local hazards.
 - Subscribe to alerts for wildfires, air quality, and water safety.
- Create a household emergency plan.
 - Include evacuation routes, supply kits, and communication trees
 - Write down contact information of family members, attorneys, and other key numbers you will need if you don't have access to your phone
- Stock up on food, medication, water purification straws, solar chargers, and other supplies you may need if supply chains are disrupted
- Register for local emergency alerts.
 - Go to your state, city or county's emergency management website for more information
- Make copies of legal IDs and insurance information.
 - Keep them waterproof and ready to go in case of an emergency
- Pack a Go-Bag with medication, copies of important documents, toiletries, and extra clothing, cash, and credit cards, extra battery and cell chargers, etc.

More on Digital Safety

- Create strong passwords and store them safely.
- Choose a password manager to manage multiple complex passwords.
- Utilize two-factor authentication when possible.
- Choose fictional answers for security questions.
- Make a habit of using encryption methods to protect your device and data. End-to-end encryption can defend you against surveillance by bad actors.
- Create a secure device to store your most sensitive data.
- Use a secure browser such as Firefox or Brave.
- Use end-to-end encryption platforms like Signal to communicate with others.
- Share digital safety tips with others.

Developing a Data Security Plan

- Identify and make a list of information you want to protect.
 - Examples include emails, photos, text messages, etc.
- Identify who you want to protect this information from.
 - Examples include individuals, government actors, corporations, etc.
- Understand the risk of threat against your identified assets.
- Identify your resources such as encryption methods, for mitigating threats to assets and reducing risk.

Social Media Safety

- Do not use your legal name if you do not want to.
- Do not provide more information than necessary when registering for social media accounts.
- Anything you post on social media is data that can be tracked.
 - Information like your location, contacts, or political beliefs can be quietly collected and misused by others acting in bad faith.
- Be aware of metadata your posts may contain as this provides additional information about you.
 - Metadata is data that describes a piece of information, apart from the information itself. An example of this would be the time and place a photo was taken, which is separate from the photo itself.
- Be careful about what you post on social media and your profile picture.
- Choose a strong password.
- Enable two-factor authentication.
- Choose false password recovery answers. Honest answers might be identified through gathering information from social media.
- Be aware of your social media's privacy policy.
- Change your privacy settings to match the level of security you need.
- Keep different account identities separate, by using photos you have not used anywhere else.

Resources

Civic Engagement

- [The Importance of Civic Engagement](#)
- [Get Out the Vote: Cultivating Civic Engagement in Youth and Adults](#)
- [5 Ways to Be an Engaged Citizen \(Besides Voting\)](#)
- [Citizen University](#)
- [The All-America Conversations Toolkit](#)
- [Positive Health Effects of Being Civically Engaged](#)
- [Activism 101 from Simmons University](#)
- [Attending a Protest](#)
- [Know Your Rights under the Bill of Rights](#)
- [U.S. is Added to Human Rights Watchlist Article](#)
- [Know Your Rights Red Card](#)
- [Civil Unrest Resources](#)

Personal Protections

- [Can Border Agents Search Your Electronics?](#)
- [Privacy for Students](#)
- [Digital Security Checklists for Activists](#)
- [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#)
- [Stress Effects on the Body](#)
- [The Cost of Daily Politics](#)
- [The Impact of Election Stress: Is Political Anxiety Harming Your Health?](#)
- [Practicing Self-Care During Uncertain Times](#)
- [Tips for Preparedness, Peaceful Protesting, and Safety](#)
- [Politics Stressing You Out? Five Steps to Feel Better](#)
- [Trevor Project - LGBTQ+ Support and Community Building](#)
- [Politics Seep into Daily Life, Negatively Affecting Mental Health](#)
- [Not Fake News: Toxic Consequences of the Trump Stress Effect](#)
- [USCRI Know Your Rights and Safety Planning](#)
- [Election Self-Care Kit](#)
- [Community Care Post Election Toolkit - Wake Forest University](#)
- [Resource Hub for Higher Education](#)
- [Mass Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition](#)

Media Literacy 101

- Making Sense of Media
- Questions to Ask Yourself
- Questions to Frequently Ask
- Resources

Media Literacy 101

For social change makers, media literacy is a critical skill, both in holding well-informed opinions about policy proposals and in influencing others' opinions. The following section discusses media literacy and online critical thinking, with the goal of developing skills to become an effective media consumer.



Making Sense of Media

After reading this section, we hope you will feel equipped to evaluate the quality of information sources, analyze their content, and inform others about how to do the same. Only by collectively sharing information and building our critical thinking skills can we protect each other from misleading and harmful information.

What is Media Literacy?

Media literacy is the ability to decode, analyze, evaluate, and critically examine messages and information presented in various forms.

Media forms can include print sources such as books or newspapers, as well as digital sources such as online articles, television news broadcasting, or social media (National Association for Media Literacy Education, 2024).

“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.”

— Aristotle

Why is Media Literacy Important?

Digital media has great power to impact and inform how we think, feel, and behave, especially considering how much time we spend consuming it. Now, more than ever, it is important to develop critical thinking skills to evaluate how and why messages are presented, so we can make rational, informed decisions.

Remember, not all media sources are trying to mislead you, but all are trying to convince you of something. Building media literacy skills allows us to be more effective communicators, mindful media creators, judicious consumers, and informed community members, which are crucial prerequisites for successful civic engagement.

Media literacy helps protect against believing:

- **Misinformation:** false or inaccurate information that is spread, regardless of whether there was an intent to mislead.
- **Malinformation:** Also known as “cherry picking”; information based on facts but used out of context to manipulate, harm, or mislead.
- **Disinformation:** Information purposefully created to mislead, harm, or manipulate.

Questions to Ask Yourself

About the Media Source

- Is there an identifiable bias from the author of this source?
- What is the creator's background and expertise?
- Who is the funding source of the creator, if applicable?
- Whose story is being told? Whose story is not being told?
- Why is the creator publicizing this story? Do they have an agenda? Do they want to truthfully inform?
- Is the source reinforcing common stereotypes and narratives?
- When was this media created? What has changed regarding the topic since then?
- Is this source stirring up strong negative feelings?
 - Remember, bad news sells. Media outlets capitalize on fear and anger to circulate their stories.
- Are there spelling or grammatical errors that might indicate the author is not who they say they are?
- Is this information confirmable across multiple reliable sources?
- Is the information source pretending to be more reputable than it is?
- Does my social media feed only include one perspective?
 - Algorithms are trained to feed us similar views and perspectives with what we have interacted with, not balanced views.

- What is the purpose of this piece?
 - Op-ed and review = opinion piece
 - Analyses = context and background for a topic
 - Original research study = empirical research findings
 - Literary criticisms = interpretations and contexts for original works
 - Biography = an account of someone's life written by someone else
 - Government documents = reports, data, and other materials created by government agencies

About Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- Check the source information.
 - AI-generated content may have missing details about where the content came from.
- Look for unusual or unnatural elements.
 - Check for unusual object positioning, unrealistic lighting, or warped frames.
- Notice perfection in both the subject and background images.
- Examine vivid or saturated colors.
 - AI-generated content might enhance colors, making them overly bright.
- Check across websites to see if the image or video appears without a consistent source.
- Examine the audio and the people or objects in the video.
 - If they look disproportionate, lines between objects are blurred, or if the intonation of voices sounds artificial, it was most likely created by AI.

About the Content

- Is there any potential for data manipulation?
- Can you see uncertainty in the data or statistic?
 - Visual representations found in charts and graphics can make people less likely to question or criticize the data.
- Can you see yourself in the data?
 - Averages do not match up with people's individual experiences. What happens when you separate data by group or experiences (e.g. education level, gender, geographical region, etc)?
- How was the data collected?
 - How did they get the numbers? Who did they ask? How many people were asked?

Resources

- **Fact-Checking Sites**

- [FactCheck.org](#)
- [Snopes](#)
- [Washington Post Fact Checker](#)
- [PolitiFact](#)
- [CSI Library](#)
- [Open Secrets](#)
- [Duke Reporters' Lab](#)

- **Media Literacy Resource Sites**

- [National Association for Media Literacy Education](#)
- [Media Literacy Now](#)
- [Ad Fontes Media Bias Chart](#)

- **Media Literacy for Educators**

- [PBS Learning Media](#)
- [Toolkit](#)

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Engage.

ENGAGE

Advocacy Strategies and Tools for Social Change

“We are the ones we have been waiting for.”

-June Jordan

Advocacy 101

LGBTQ+ Safety

Reproductive Justice

Immigrant Safety

Disability Justice

Threats to Social Safety Net Programs

Advocacy 101

- What is the Point of Advocacy?
- Preparing for Advocacy

Advocacy 101:

What is the Point of Advocacy?

“When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have to speak up. You have to say something; you have to do something.”

— John Lewis

Often when talking about advocacy people wonder “what can my one action do to make real change in the world?”

Let's answer this question with an example of boycotting a large online retailer. By no longer using this company and instead buying from stores that better align with your values, such as small businesses, you are helping to financially support like-minded stores and thus help their bottom line, even if just ever so slightly. Even if you do not fully boycott a company but instead limit or divert your spending to like-minded businesses, you are reducing the power of harmful companies.

Will the large online retailer notice if one person stops buying from them and cancels their account? Probably not, but if even just a small percentage of people stop shopping on the site, they will start to notice. Further, the businesses that work to make our communities better, especially small businesses, will notice and benefit from an increase in revenue.

Another example: imagine once a week you cook a meal for yourself and simply make one extra portion to donate to a community fridge. Over the course of a year, that small habit would provide 52 meals for people in need. One of those meals may not be the earth-shattering change you want to make, but with your action someone no longer has to worry about going without a meal.



Change can start with the action of one person or a small group of people, such as Malala Yousafzai or the student leaders of March for Our Lives: people with few initial resources, other than passion, who were able to create real change with their efforts. Your individual actions do not have to be as strong or groundbreaking as these change makers; doing something small can make change.

Remember the action of one can start and add to the actions of many.

Preparing for Advocacy

Everyone can participate in some form of activism and advocacy. Remember, big movements are made up of many small, meaningful acts.

Ways to Prepare to Participate in Advocacy

As a first step, it's important to understand both those who support your issue and those who oppose it. By understanding the reasons, needs, and goals of others, you'll be better able to defend your own position as well as influence other people's opinions and positions.

Ask the following questions to educate yourself about issues that you are passionate about:

- How do people feel about the issue?
- Who and what influences those who hold different opinions than yours?
- What political forces are influencing decision-makers on the issue?
- Who are the individuals or groups most likely to have the power to make changes in your issue area?
 - What will it take to gain their support for your issue?
- Who is affected by the issue?
- What factors contribute to the problem or goal?
- What are the consequences of not remedying the issue?
- What are the barriers (political, cultural, etc.) to addressing the issue?
- What are the resources available for addressing the issue?

- What is the history of the issue in the communities it impacts?
- What is currently being done to address the issue?
- What do experts believe is needed to improve the situation?
- Do some self-reflection on your beliefs:
 - Why do I believe what I believe about this issue?
 - How does my background, place of origin, identities, and contexts impact my beliefs?
 - Are my beliefs based on evidence, factual information, or what I have been told throughout my life?
 - Can my beliefs be changed with credible information?

"I'm convinced of this: Good done anywhere is good done everywhere. For a change, start by speaking to people rather than walking by them like they're stones that don't matter. As long as you're breathing, it's never too late to do some good."

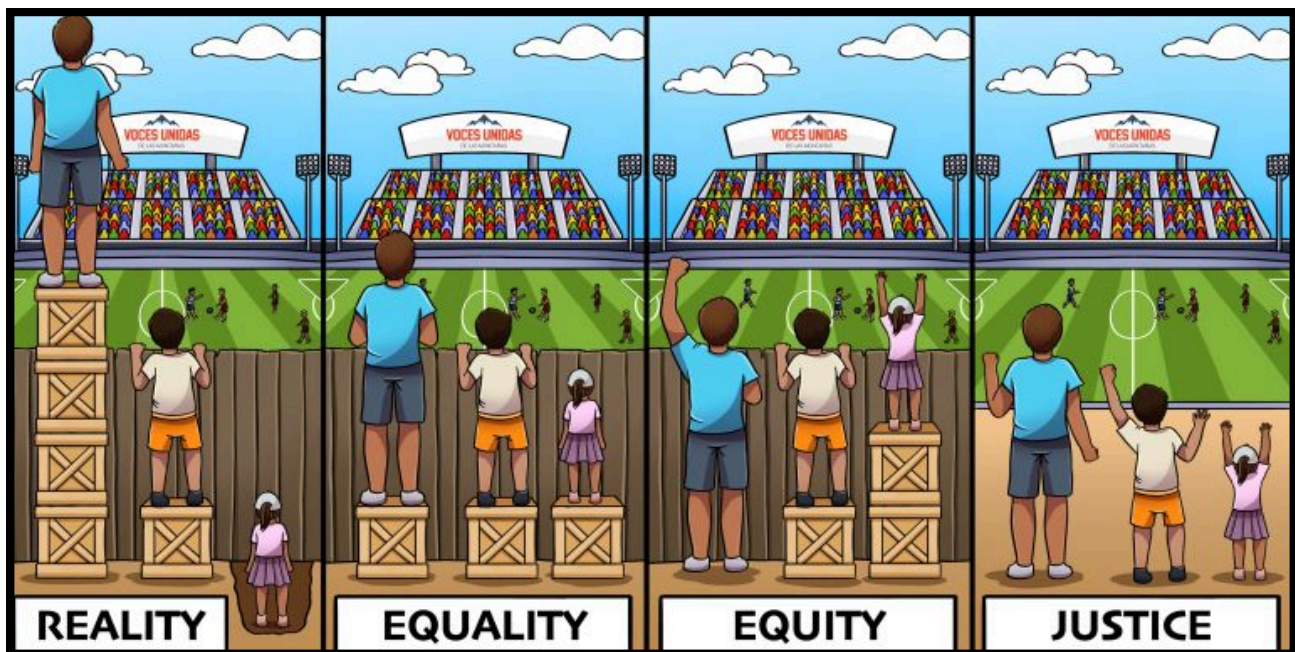
— **Maya Angelou**

Acknowledge Your Privilege

In addition to the questions above, it can be helpful to explore any privilege and advantages you may enjoy and how it affects how you view the world.

If you are or think you may be coming from a position of privilege, it's important to become aware of how both the systems you are a part of and even your own actions can help continue to marginalize people, often in subtle or indirect ways. The first step toward change is learning to notice those patterns and acknowledging one's privilege.

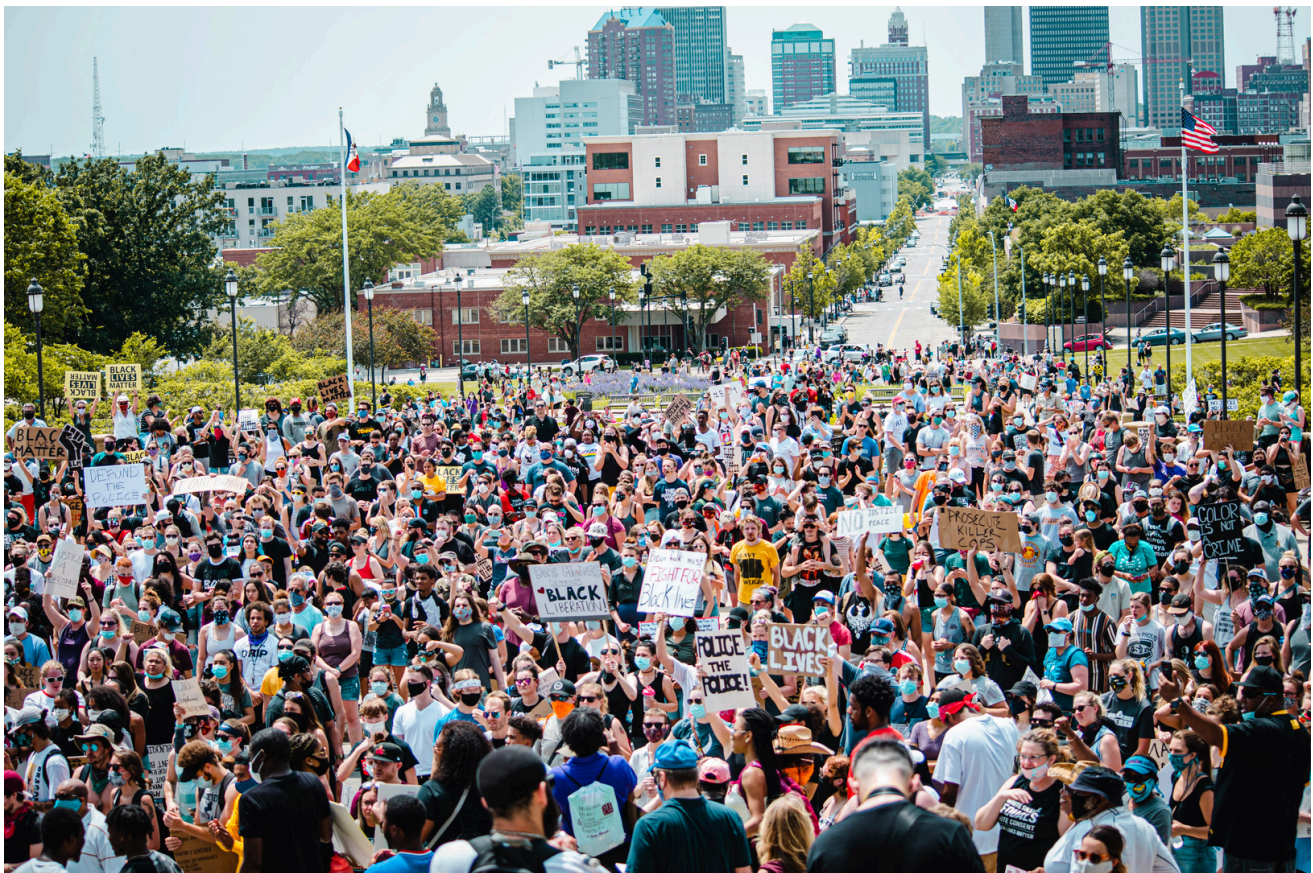
If you want to learn more about power and privilege and your potential place in it, see this resource: [Understanding Power, Privilege, and Intersectionality - GCPE Social Justice Resource Guide - LibGuides at Pratt Institute.](#)



Identify Your Advocacy Resources

Compile a list of your resources:

- Funds and expenses
- People you know who possess skills that can help your cause
- Joining or creating groups who want to fight for similar issues
- Facilities (e.g., access to transportation, computers, space)
- Access to information archives or libraries



Take Action

- Protest – see [here](#) for protest safety tips
- Write letters and call political leaders
- Boycott companies and products that do not align with your values. **Remember, these organization are only able to make money when we give them our money.**
- Learn about the ways you can safely use social media to express your views as well as to find like-minded individuals to help build community and awareness to the issue.
- Volunteer with groups, organizations, and institutions that support social change efforts.
- Donate to causes you care about.
- Help candidates that you support in their election.
- Make your voice heard through local radio or other media outlets.
- Support minority-owned and small businesses.
- Call out when things are wrong and unfair, especially when you are coming from a place of power.

- Educate and encourage others to be involved in advocacy.
- Write an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor of local, regional, and national news outlets about your issue.
- Have your voice heard by lawmakers: in-person visits from constituents, individualized emails, letters, and phone calls as well as speaking up in town halls have the most positive influence on politicians.
- Spread stories of how inaction on the issue has harmed people, preferably in partnership with them.
- Be kind, understanding, and compassionate to yourself, your colleagues, students, loved ones and community members (KU, n.d; Jason et al., 2015).



Staying Safe and Healthy

Advocacy is an uphill battle that will most often not show results immediately. Pushing through and staying the course will be more likely to show results than inaction, but pressing on is not always easy. Make sure to celebrate the small wins in your advocacy work and find comfort in those fighting with you when the work becomes overwhelming. With advocacy, it is especially important to take care of your own physical and mental health in this process. For some tips on doing so, see the Safety section of the Toolkit.

Things That Get in the Way of Advocating

There are many roadblocks that may come up when one wants to get involved in advocacy work. Here are some common roadblocks and how to overcome them:

- Feeling like you lack knowledge or expertise.
 - Figure out where you have expertise and influence and how these attributes can add to the movement.
- Not wanting to appear political or divisive.
 - Understand that silence and neutrality protect the status quo and uphold inequalities.
- Feeling like you will not make a difference.
 - Start with small but impactful actions and join with others to leverage power in numbers (KU, n.d.; YWBBoston, 2020).

Safety In Protesting and Demonstrating

Protesting can be a powerful tool to achieve social change. Evidence has shown that when just 3.5% of the population engages in peaceful protest, meaningful change often follows (Sozan, 2025). Even so, the 3.5% rule is not hard-and-fast; smaller protests and local actions can also build momentum that leads to lasting change. Your presence matters. If you decide to participate in a protest, make sure to plan ahead and take some safety precautions:

Prior to the Protest

- Ensure the protest you are attending aligns with your values.
- Try to go to protests with friends for safety.
- Think carefully about bringing children or pets who might distract you from being aware of your environment or be at particular risk of harm if danger arises.
- Know your rights and carry the Know Your Rights Red Card, which can be downloaded [here](#).
 - For rights specifically regarding protesting, click [here](#).
- Ensure you are physically prepared for the protest. Stay hydrated, dress appropriately for the weather, keep needed medications on-hand for the estimated time period as well as a little beyond, and bring along supplies to remove chemical irritants such as a face covering, Milk of Magnesia, towelettes, and a small first aid kit. Bring water, food, and cash.
- Be prepared for encounters with law enforcement. Learn how to protect yourself from non-lethal weapons [here](#).

- Fully charge your cell phone and bring a charger and external battery in case your phone dies.
- Encrypt your phone, put it on airplane mode, and take off any biometric passwords (such as Face ID and fingerprint ID).
- Tell at least one of your emergency contacts about your participation in the protest including where the protest is, how you will get there, what you will do in an emergency, and when you plan to leave the protest.
 - Also keep this contact informed as to how the protest is going and tell them what time you plan to contact them to state you have finished protesting so they know when to be concerned if they do not hear from you.
- Have an offline map of the protest area and plan multiple routes in and out of the area in case of an emergency.
- Identify the location of any resources protest organizers are offering.
 - This includes first aid tents, security, portable restrooms, food vendors, etc.
- Choose a landmark to serve as a meeting point with those you attend the protest with, in the event of an emergency (Human Rights Campaign, 2020).

During the Protest

- Be aware of what is going on around you at all times.
- Follow the lead of the organizer(s).
- Look out for other protesters, especially those who may not have the same privileges as you.
- Do not engage with counter-protesters.
- Do not engage police in conversation.
- Do not take pictures of people at the protest without their permission.
- Be alert to anything that seems off or suspicious.
 - If you see something, say something to someone in authority.
- If there is a potential to be arrested, have bystanders video record the interaction.
- If there is a situation that needs to be de-escalated:
 - Stay calm and keep your voice as calm as possible.
 - Avoid any negative behavior and body language.
 - Walk away when necessary while never turning your back on the source of danger.
- If there is an emergency, use the OODA Loop to make decisions.
 - **Observe:** Figure out where the source of danger is and its proximity to you.
 - **Orient:** Identify where you are and where you need to get next.
 - **Decide:** Choose an action that has the least risk involved.
 - **Act:** Follow through with your action and continue to be aware of any changes in the situation (HRC, 2020).

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LGBTQ+ Safety

- Importance of LGBTQ+ Safety
- LGBTQ+ Key Terms
- History of LGBTQ+ Advocacy
- Current Legislation
- How to Take Action to Help
- Resources

LGBTQ Safety

"I believe that telling our stories, first to ourselves and then to one another and the world, is a revolutionary act."

-Janet Mock



The Importance of LGBTQ Safety

LGBTQ+ individuals face significantly higher risks to their safety and well-being compared to the general population, which can lead to mental health challenges, physical assaults, and systemic discrimination, especially in the context of the recent political climate which specifically targets LGBTQ+ rights (Human Rights Campaign, 2023).

LGBTQ+ youth are at greater risk for homelessness, substance use, bullying, sexual abuse, PTSD, depression, anxiety, and suicide (The Trevor Project, 2023). LGBTQ+ people are 4 times as likely to attempt suicide compared to their peers (Johns et al., 2020). Further, LGBTQ+ people are nearly 4 times more likely to be victims of violent crime and 9 times more likely to be victims of violent hate crimes compared to non-LGBTQ+ people (Flores et al., 2022; Williams Institute, 2025).

Due to the many forms of harm faced by LGBTQ+ individuals simply for being who they are, it is essential to equip both members of the community and allies with the tools and knowledge needed to help keep themselves, their friends, and their families safe.

LGBTQ Key Terms

What exactly does LGBTQ+ stand for and what are some key terms to know?

LGBTQ+ is an acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer with the plus standing for any other sexual orientation or gender identity that is not heterosexual (intimate relationship with a different sexed partner) or cisgender (one's sex at birth and gender identity are the same).

The LGBTQ+ community centers around supporting those with marginalized sexual orientations and gender identities.

Sexual orientation is “an inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people” that is separate from one's gender identity.

Gender identity is how one identifies themselves that does not have to align with one's sex. Sex is the label corresponding to one's biological anatomy, hormones, and chromosomes (The National Safe Place, n.d.).

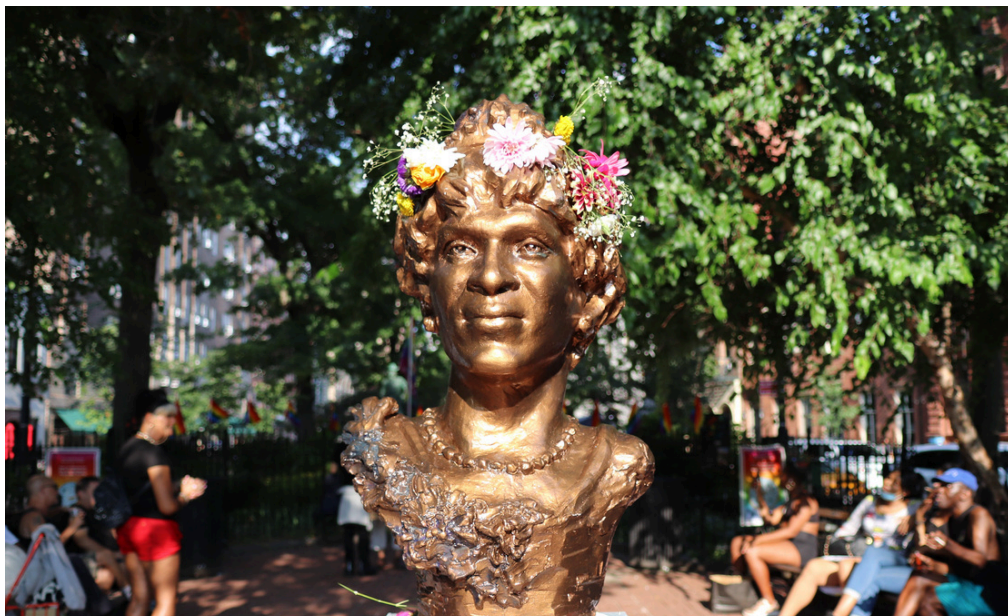


History of LGBTQ+ Advocacy

The modern LGBTQ+ rights movement in the U.S. took shape in the 1950s with groups like the Mattachine Society, which challenged anti-gay laws and promoted visibility, and the Daughters of Bilitis, which created safe spaces and support networks for lesbian women (National Park Service, 2016; Library of Congress, n.d.).

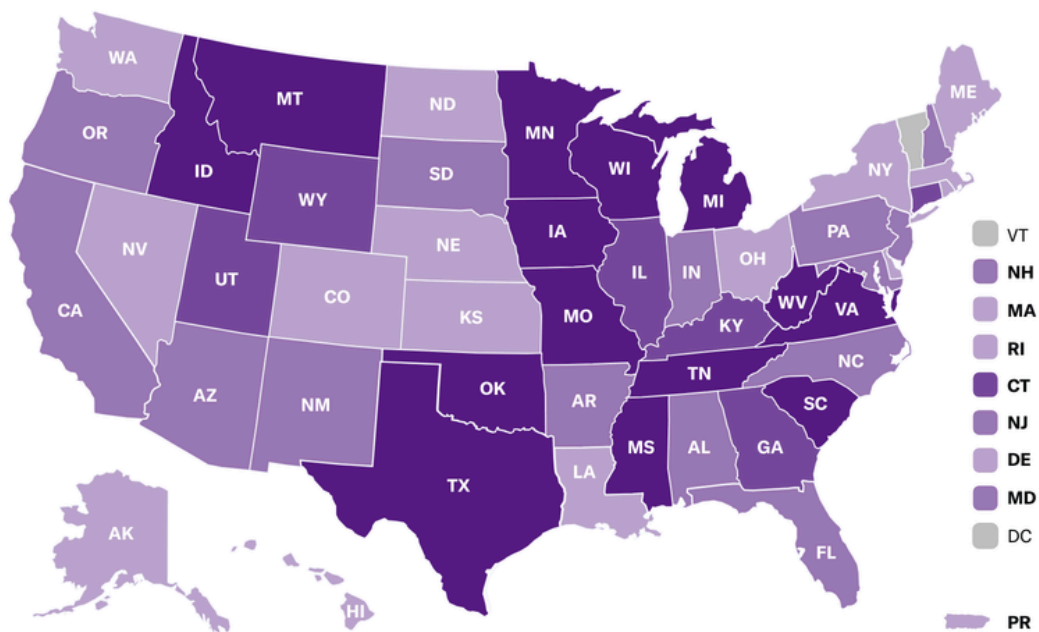
A major turning point for the LGBTQ+ movement came in 1969 with the Stonewall Uprising in New York City where LGBTQ+ patrons of the Stonewall Inn in New York City fought back against a police raid, sparking several days of protest and launching the modern LGBTQ+ rights movement (National Park Service, 2016). The movement gained more momentum in the following decades, helping to confront the AIDS crisis, push for anti-discrimination laws, and secure marriage equality through the 2015 Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges* (Sanders, 2016).

While some legal rights have expanded, LGBTQ+ individuals, especially transgender people, still face social and political challenges, particularly in the current political climate.

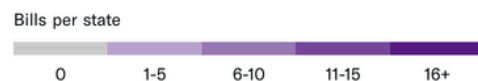


Current Anti-LGBTQ+ Legislation

In 2023, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) declared a National State of Emergency for LGBTQ+ people in the United States, following the introduction of over 525 anti-LGBTQ+ bills across the country. These laws targeted the community in alarming ways: banning educators from teaching LGBTQ+ history, restricting gender-affirming care, enforcing bathroom bans, and not allowing people to even say LGBTQ+. The emergency declaration came before the current administration, which has pursued an even more openly anti-LGBTQ+ agenda. Just in this year alone, 598 new anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been introduced, surpassing the number that triggered the original emergency. Even though the political climate is growing increasingly hostile, advocacy groups such as the [ACLU](#), [HRC](#), [The Trevor Project](#), and [GLAD Law](#) continue to stand on the front lines to defend LGBTQ+ rights. As the HRC reminds us: “For every villain, there are countless heroes fighting back” (HRC, 2023).



The Trevor Project, 2023.



How to Take Action to Help the LGBTQ+ Community

- Know those who oppose LGBTQ+ rights (HRC, 2023).
 - Three large anti-LGBTQ+ organizations have recently come together into a coalition to create a "Promise to America's Children" which helps lawmakers introduce anti-LGBTQ+ bills in their states and pay for anti-LGBTQ+ lawsuits.
 - Moms for Liberty is another anti-LGBTQ+ group that tries to restrict discussion of LGBTQ+ people in schools, including in curriculum and books. One of their main tactics is to take over school board meetings, so make sure if they are in your community that you participate in school board meetings, to counter their views with your own.
- Know not only the current laws affecting LGBTQ+ people, but also proposed laws in your community utilizing the ACLU LGBTQ+ Bill Tracker.
- Social justice and change work is hard. Find and build a community of people who love and support you no matter what. Some groups and places where this can be accomplished include:
 - LGBT Centers
 - GSA Network
 - It Gets Better Project
 - The Trevor Project
 - National Youth Forum on Homelessness
 - CenterLink
 - PFLAG
 - Local community pages, especially those about LGBTQ+ people

- Support government candidates that are pro-LGBTQ+ through voting and volunteering or donating to the campaign. For more general advocacy tips see the Advocacy 101 section.
- Have hard conversations to address myths about LGBTQ+ people. When you feel more comfortable, try engaging with strangers. The HRC gives some tips on how to get the conversation started:
 - Start with building a relationship and finding common ground, such as shared values, with the person.
 - Create space for the person to openly discuss their concerns.
 - Ask them to put themselves in your or your family's shoes.
 - How would they feel if the situation were reversed and they were so misunderstood, judged, or targeted by lawmakers?
 - Understand that a lot of this is new information and it can feel confusing and disorienting, or even make them feel uncomfortable.
 - Invalidate the invalid — research shows that gender-affirming care and gender-neutral restrooms are safe. Being uncomfortable is not a reason to discriminate against someone else.
 - Your goal is to provide resources and answers. Be someone they can ask for advice and want to call in the future
- Reach out to elected officials through calling, emailing, or meeting in person to discuss the negative effects of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation



- File complaints of discrimination with the appropriate federal civil rights office within 180 days from when an incident occurred – remember most employers with at least 15 employees, along with schools that receive federal funding, cannot legally discriminate against you.
 - For Employer related discrimination – contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.
 - For Health Care Related Discrimination – contact the Office for Civil Rights.
 - For School Related Discrimination – contact the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.
 - For more advocacy resources, look at the advocacy section of the Toolkit [here](#).
-

“You never completely have your rights, one person, until you all have your rights.”

— **Marsha P. Johnson**

Being an Effective Ally for the LGBTQ+ Community

- Be aware of personal values and biases you have related to gender and sexual orientation (National Safe Place Network, n.d.).
- Do not impose personal values on others (NSP, n.d.).
- Be open to using the pronouns/labels/language that a young person prefers. If a youth identifies as one gender or another, please use the appropriate language for their identification. If you make a mistake, quickly correct yourself (NSP, n.d.).
- Publicly show your support and advocate for LGBTQ+ communities, even and especially when they are not present (988 Lifeline, n.d.).
- Check in with your loved ones who are a part of the LGBTQ+ community and directly tell them to reach out if they need someone to listen without judgment. Remember, having one person that is accepting of one's pronouns and/or sexual orientation can make all of the difference. LGBTQ+ young people with at least one accepting adult in their life or have high social support from their family have significantly lower rates of suicide attempts (988, n.d.).

Further LGBTQ+ Resources

Library of Congress – LGBTQ+ Pride Month Resources:

<https://www.loc.gov/lgbt-pride-month/>

American Psychological Association (APA) – History of LGBTQ Rights:

<https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/history>

GLAAD – LGBTQ Movement Overview: <https://www.glaad.org/about/history>

LGBTQ+ People Overall Safety by State: <https://outleadership.com/driving-equality/climateindex25/>

Advocacy as an LGBTQ+ Person: <https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/LGBTQ-Guidebook-for-Action.pdf>

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/navigating-personal-safety-while-taking-action-as-an-lgbtq-young-person/>

National Safe Place LGBTQ+ Resources on Connection:

https://www.nationalsafeplace.org/lgbtq_

LGBTQ+ Digital Safety: <https://glaad.org/smsi/lgbtq-digital-safety-guide/>

If you are fearful that a loved one is contemplating taking their own life:

- Follow #BeThe1To's "[How and Why the 5 Steps Can Help](#)".

For resources for LGBTQ+ people who are contemplating taking their own lives, reach out to:

- **Trevor Hotline:** "If you're thinking about suicide, you deserve immediate help."
 - Call 1-866-488-7386 or text "START" to 678-678.
- **Trans Lifeline:** "A peer support service run by trans people, for trans and questioning callers."
 - Call 877-565-8860 (United States) or 877-330-6366 (Canada)

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Reproductive Justice

- What is Reproductive Justice?
- Key Themes of the Movement
- Why Does Reproductive Justice Matter to All?
- Landmark Laws and Court Decisions
- Where is Reproductive Justice Now?
- Advocacy
- Resources

Reproductive Justice

“The emphasis must not be on the right to abortion, but on the right to privacy and reproductive control.”

— **Ruth Bader Ginsburg**



What is Reproductive Justice?

Reproductive Justice is the movement to cement the human right to make informed decisions about one’s own body and its physical well-being, as well as the right to have or not have children as decided by the individual.

This movement originated out of the desire to improve the reproductive health of Black women and expose the limitations of the “pro-choice” movement for those with limited access to reproductive health care and autonomy. The movement was eventually expanded to adopting a human rights framework focusing on the reproductive choices of women as a basic right (Reproductive Justice – In Our Own Voice, 2025).

Key Themes of the Movement

The Right to Have a Child

- Eliminating forced and coerced sterilization.
- Providing access to:
 - Prenatal and obstetric medical care
 - Assisted reproductive services, including fertility treatments, sperm and egg donation, and in-vitro fertilization
 - Family planning services
 - Midwives and doulas
- Eliminating barriers for same-sex couples to raise children (Reproductive Rights Full Section - Women in the States, 2015).

The Right to Not Have a Child

- Having unrestricted access to:
 - Contraceptives
 - Medical care when having a miscarriage
 - Medical care to have an abortion or terminate a pregnancy by choice
 - Sexual education and sexual health resources

The Right to Parent Children in Safe and Healthy Environments

- Providing access to:
 - Affordable housing
 - Accessible and affordable healthcare, including maternal healthcare
 - Legal protection against interpersonal violence, human trafficking, and forced marriage
 - Living in an environment free from toxins or other safety risks, such as gun violence
 - Proper nutrition through accessible and affordable food
 - Affordable, high-quality education and career options (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2025).

Why Does Reproductive Justice Matter to All?

Reproductive justice emphasizes the importance of the freedom to make decisions about one's own body and the ability to reproduce. It provides individuals with the power and resources to make informed decisions about their reproductive health while also addressing systemic inequalities that disproportionately affect marginalized communities.



Landmark Legislation

- 1973: In *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decided that based on one's right to privacy, women have a constitutional right to an abortion, which legalized abortions in the United States (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2024).
- 1992: In *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the “undue burden” standard was introduced to add onto the previous *Roe v. Wade* decision. This standard allowed states to regulate abortion if it does not place a substantial obstacle in the path of a woman seeking an abortion before the fetus is viable (Capatosto, 2023).
- 2010: The Affordable Care Act of 2010 included a provision for health insurance to cover contraceptives, without copayments or deductibles.
- 2022: In *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, eliminating the constitutional right to an abortion and leaving abortion regulation up to individual states (Reproductive Rights, 2023).

Where is Reproductive Justice Now?

- The overturning of Roe v. Wade significantly impacted access to abortion, leading to abortion bans or restrictions in many states. This has led to instability for women seeking abortion or medical care, an increase in births, and negative health outcomes for both women and their infants (Springer & Slusky, 2025).
- Some hospitals in states with abortion bans are denying emergency, lifesaving care involving an abortion, which has led to an increase in maternal and infant deaths (Population Reference Bureau, n.d.).
- With the cuts to Medicaid in the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act”, not only will millions of women lose their health insurance, but also Planned Parenthood will lose federal funding. If this happens, there will be an increase in negative maternal and reproductive health outcomes for women and their children such as an increase in maternal and infant mortality.
- The elimination of funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has led to the reduction of employees in the Division of Reproductive Health, which is dedicated to women’s health and fertility. This means there are fewer researchers and providers advocating for and delivering women’s health services. Less research means less data available for providers, communities and policy makers to make informed decisions.

Advocacy

Access to reproductive care and services is a human rights issue. To participate in the fight for reproductive justice:

- Reach out to your local and state leaders about reproductive justice issues that are important to you. Learn more about connecting with elected officials in the [Advocacy 101 Section](#).
- Donate to clinics and organizations providing reproductive and women's health services such as Planned Parenthood or the National Network of Abortion Funds.
- Learn about reproductive justice and share your findings with your community.
- Combat misinformation about women's health and reproductive rights. Learn more about how to effectively engage with the news and information sources [here](#).
- Get involved with organizations such as Planned Parenthood and the Center for Reproductive Rights, which specifically fight for reproductive issues.

Additional Resources

- Research your State's Department of Health website for any free or reduced-price contraceptive access programs that are available to you
- [Queer Reproductive Justice](#)
- [Reproductive Rights are LGBTQ Rights](#)
- [Find an abortion clinic near you](#)
- [Reproductive Health Access Project](#)
- [Center for Reproductive Rights](#)
- [Planned Parenthood](#)

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Immigrant Safety

- What Can Risk Your Status?
- Traveling Abroad
- Resources

Immigrant Safety

Jimmy Carter (D)

"We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams."



Ronald Reagan (R)

"Anyone, from any corner of the Earth, can come to live in America and become an American. ... This, I believe, is one of the most important sources of America's greatness."

What Can Risk Your Status

- The Trump administration plans to review all social media use before renewing visas. Ensure your social media does not include information or commentary that the administration may not find appealing.
- There has been more scrutiny for visa holders and lawful permanent residents who are crossing borders or traveling in airports. People who hold temporary visas or tourist visas can be turned away at the border and airports for smaller offenses (see here for travel safety info).
- Recently, there has been use of an old Cold War era law that allows the Secretary of State to have a non-citizen deported if they believe a person's presence or activities threaten U.S. foreign policy interests, even though the government is required to have proof for these activities to deport a person (Hughes, H, 2025). This particular law was invoked to detain Mahmoud Khalil who helped lead campus protests, and Rümeysa Öztürk who co-wrote a student op-ed, over their advocacy about the suffering of civilians in Gaza.
- Due to these detainments, immigrants of any status need to weigh the pros and cons of protesting prior to participating. For more protest safety see here.
- Any sort of conviction, arrest, or overstaying a visa
- Immigration fraud – not declaring working for other organizations

For green card holders – only an immigration judge can revoke green card status. If status is revoked, you have the right to have your case heard in court (Hughes, 2025).

Traveling Abroad

Before Traveling:

- Check immigration documents before traveling (Kim, 2025):
 - Ensure your visa has not expired.
 - Ensure that you do not have a renewal application pending.
 - Ensure that you maintain “status” and do not have status violations before leaving.
 - Verify the terms of your visa before traveling to reduce the likelihood of being denied entry to the country.
- Assess your risk of being questioned or detained (Kim, 2025).
 - Long trips abroad make it more likely suspicions will be raised.
 - If you are from a country with a travel ban in effect, particularly a country under full restrictions, you have the greatest risk of being denied entry.
 - See restricted entry Proclamation [here](#).
- Avoid leaving the country if you have ANY kind of criminal record, no matter how minor, including only arrests and no conviction.
- Have an immigration attorney’s contact information on hand (Kim, 2025).
 - Find one near you [here](#).
- Have a friend’s contact information handy who can contact an immigration lawyer on your behalf (Kim, 2025).

Traveling Abroad

Preparing Your Devices for the Border or Airport:

Be careful of what is on your devices: the government can check devices at the border, no matter your immigration status (ACLU, 2025):

- The ACLU recommends that you travel with as little data and as few devices as possible. Find out how to do so [here](#).
- Prepare your phone as if it is going to be searched prior to traveling. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) can download the full contents of your device and save a copy of your data. (ACLU, 2025):
 - Delete anything you don't want people to see or read on your device.
 - Encrypt devices with strong and unique passwords and shut down your devices when crossing the border.
 - If you turn on your device, ensure it is on airplane mode, the Wi-Fi is turned off, and the Bluetooth is disabled. This will hinder CBP officers from searching cloud stored data.
 - Disable Face ID or Touch ID to limit access to your device.



Traveling Abroad

While at the Border/Airport:

- Your rights at the border or airport are not the same as when you are fully in the United States. There are instances where rights in the United States are not recognized at the border. CBP may not need a warrant to search your devices or read correspondence between you and your attorney (ACLU, 2025).
- People with a temporary visa have the fewest rights. CBP officers have the final say on whether these travelers can enter the country and they can deny entry if a visa holder refuses to answer the officers' questions (Kim, 2025).
- Travelers who are asked to complete further inspection at the airport are not entitled to an attorney (Kim, 2025).
 - You may ask for an interpreter. If one is not provided, it is still good to have the request written down for the record (Kim, 2025).
- Consult an immigration attorney to get specific advice about your particular situation:
 - Find one near you [here](#).



Traveling Abroad

When Stopped at the Border or Airport

If you refuse to unlock your phone, CBP can still seize it and try to search it, including with forensic tools, without a warrant. If you are a U.S. citizen refusing to unlock your device, you cannot be denied entry, but your device can be held for weeks or months. Visa holders and visitors can be denied entry.

- If you are asked for a password for your device, weigh the pros and cons of not providing your password.
 - **IF YOU DO NOT:** You run the risk of not being allowed entry to the country if a non-citizen visa holder; citizens can have devices seized for weeks or months.
 - **IF YOU DECIDE TO:** It is recommended that you enter the password yourself instead of giving it to the CBP agent.
 - If you give your password to CBP, it can end up in a government database, so change your password and any other accounts that use that password when you get the chance.
 - If you have any privileged material on your devices, tell the CBP officers so they can follow proper procedures for looking at this information (Kim, 2025).
 - CBP is not required to return your device before you leave the airport and can send it off for further investigation for five days, but this often goes on for longer (ACLU, 2025).
 - If your electronic device is confiscated, the ACLU suggests asking for the officers' names, badge numbers, and agency they work for (ACLU, 2025). Additionally, you could request a receipt documenting that your item was taken (Kim, 2025).

- While searching electronic devices, CBP officers are looking for information regarding criminal convictions, domestic violence, antisemitism, and support of terrorism to turn travelers away (Kim, 2025).
- Recently deleted social media and email accounts may be able to be reactivated during a more in-depth forensic search (ACLU, 2025).

Resources

Know Your Rights

[Know Your Rights Cards \(available in 56 languages\)](#)

[Immigrants Rights from the ACLU](#)

Immigrant Resources

[At United We Dream](#)

[At the National Immigration Law Center](#)

[At USAHello](#)

Immigration Attorneys

[Immigration Law Help](#)

[American Immigration Lawyers Association: here](#)

[Advocate for Immigrants with the Immigration Advocates Network](#)

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Hughes, H. (2025, April 3). What is the legal process for deporting U.S. green-card and visa holders? PBS NewsHour. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/what-is-the-legal-process-for-deporting-u-s-green-card-and-visa-holders>

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Disability Justice

- Why Disability Rights Matter to Everyone
- Definition of Disability Justice
- Disability Rights
- Legal Rights
- Where Disability Rights Are Now
- Advocacy
- Resources

Disability Rights

“I wanna see a feisty group of disabled people around the world... if you don’t respect yourself and if you don’t demand what you believe in for yourself, you’re not gonna get it.”

— **Judy Heumann**



Why Disability Rights Matters to Everyone

Everyone either has lived experience themselves with a disability, or had a loved one, friend, colleague, or neighbor who has a disability. The World Health Organization estimates that 1.3 billion people in the world, or 1 in 6 people, experience a “significant” disability (World Health Organization, 2022). In the U.S., more than 1 in 4 people (29%) have a disability (CDC, 2026). The actual number may be even higher depending on how disability is defined or included. The disability community is the only marginalized community that any person can join at any time in their life, due to medical changes, accidents, aging, or other reasons.

The world is not set up to be readily accessible to people who fall outside the established “norm” for physical, behavioral and cognitive functionality and access to accommodations are typically the result of robust and sustained advocacy.

Society routinely underestimates and discriminates against disabled people on the basis of their physicality, perceived intelligence, accessibility needs, or abilities. This is especially noticeable in fields like healthcare, where physicians report that their perceptions of people with disabilities impact their approach to providing care so strongly that only some feel they welcome patients with disabilities into their practices and even fewer acknowledge or agree that disabled patients are generally treated unfairly by the healthcare system at large (Iezzoni et al., 2021).

These challenges have increasingly catalyzed disability justice and advocacy efforts. Laws may be passed, and physical, social, and digital spaces may enact guidelines to encourage increased accessibility, but social change by legislation is not a long-term solution. There needs to be swifter change in attitudes about working with and for people with disabilities. Until we acknowledge the disproportionate stress, discrimination, and ableism the disability community encounters, there will be no disability justice.

Framing Disability

A note regarding person-first vs. identity-first language

This section will use both person-first and identity-first language out of respect for the varying preferences of the disability community. Person-first language refers to someone by their personhood first and identity marker second, to try and demonstrate that disability-related identity is only one part of the individual. A friend with autism, a woman with cerebral palsy, or a child with Down syndrome are some examples of person-first language.

Identity-first language means referring to someone with their identity marker first as an attribute or part of the individual for example, a disabled coworker or dyslexic person. Some people in the disability community prefer this language and see their disability as an integral component of and a point of pride in their identity.

While research papers and academics may largely use person-first language, there is currently a mix of both (with a possible preference for identity-first) in the disability community to reframe how disability is considered- not as a negative, or something to be cured, but as a positive experience grounded in lived experience and personal choice (Taboas, Doepke, & Zimmerman, 2023).



The Definition of Disability Justice

Disability justice is a framework that is built on understanding the disability rights movement. The term was created by a group of disabled queer women of color who wanted to utilize a more comprehensive approach to securing rights for people with disabilities by “recognizing the intersectionality of disabled people who belong to additional marginalized communities” (Hudson, 2023).

Disability justice values accessibility, self-determination, and an expectation and acceptance of naturally occurring differences among people. There is an emphasis on community and relationship building in pursuit of mutual aid and creating a network of people who work with each other where they can. Disability justice is also connected to other justice movements as well, which work to end multiple types of oppression that typically include white supremacy and ableism.

How Do We Define Disability?

Disability is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or multiple life activities (ADA National Network, 2026).

Conversely, **ableism** is a set of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a “standard” of self and body that is considered “perfect” or “typical” and sometimes “fully human” (Smith, n.d.). This way of thinking, as expressed by Nosyreva in the International Journal of Law in Changing World (2024), pushes aside and undervalues people who don’t fit the conceptualization of what is considered “normal,” treating disability not as a natural part of the human experience, but as something wrong or lacking. These harmful beliefs are built into our systems and policies, often as barriers that make it harder for people with disabilities to access opportunities, be included, and be treated fairly (Nosyreva, 2024).

Who are we talking about when we refer to “people with disabilities”?

Some disabilities may fall into more than one category, as there can be overlap between different types. In this section, when we refer to people with disabilities, we hold a broad definition, which includes:

- **Physical Disabilities:** any physiological condition or disorder, or anatomical loss that affects one or more body systems.
 - Examples: Cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, limb differences, spina bifida, etc.
- **Mental/Developmental Disabilities:** any psychological or mental disorder, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disability.
 - Examples: autism, behavior disorder, Down syndrome, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, anxiety disorders, depression, etc.
- **Sensory Disabilities:** any neurological complication that affects the brain's ability to process sensory information (sight, hearing, smell, and touch).
 - Examples: autism spectrum disorder, loss of hearing or deafness, low vision or blindness, sensory processing disorder, etc.
- **Invisible Disabilities:** are mental, physical or neurological conditions that are not often externally visible; however, they may limit, reduce or challenge a person's movements, activities, or senses (Invisible Disability Project, n.d.). Further, these disabilities may result in misunderstandings and false judgments due to their invisibility.
 - Examples: Long COVID, brain injuries, Lyme disease, autoimmune disorders, lupus, sickle cell disease, eating disorders, mental illnesses, etc.

Legal Rights

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (1990): This law prohibits discrimination against people with a wide variety of disabilities. The ADA also aims to ensure that people with disabilities have equal opportunities for employment and to participate in state, local, community, and government programs (ADA, 2025).
- Olmstead v. L.C. Supreme Court decision (1999): This decision asserted that people with any type of disability have the right to live in community settings instead of institutions when their treatment professionals agree that community placement is appropriate, the individual agrees, and placement can be reasonably accommodated by the state (Olmstead Rights, n.d.).
- The ADA Amendments Act of 2008 significantly broadened the legal definition of disability, shifting the focus away from severity and towards reasonable accommodation and equal access (ADA Amendments Act, 2008).
- Affordable Care Act (ACA) Section 1557 (2010): This section of the ACA prohibits discrimination based on color, race, national origin, age, sex, or disability in health programs or activities (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016).



Where Disability Rights are Now

The current administration has had several impacts on disability justice:

- There have been significant cuts to Medicaid as a result of the OBBBA, anticipated to be about \$911 billion over a 10-year period (Euhus et al., 2025). Previously, the ACA provided a lot of support for adults with disabilities through Medicaid expansion and increased home and community-based service options.
- The OBBBA would also increase the number of uninsured people by over 10 million people by 2034, and include increased barriers to enrolling in or renewing Medicaid coverage (Euhus et al., 2025).
- Additionally, new Medicaid work requirements pose significant threats to public coverage for people living with disabilities. Although there are provisions in the OBBBA for States to provide exemptions based on disability, they can be difficult for enrollees to understand, apply for and remain current on.
- Research suggests that Medicaid work requirements increase the number of those who are uninsured due to loss of Medicaid coverage, yet does not increase employment (Hinton & Rudowitz, 2025).
- There is also an erosion of legal rights and protections for people with disabilities. This includes a reduction of ADA enforcement, which is being done to reduce cost, not help people (Morcelle, 2025).
- In *Texas v. Kennedy*, a group of states challenged the 2024 regulations for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which bars disability discrimination by programs receiving federal funds. The states dropped their claim that Section 504 itself is unconstitutional in April 2025 (Sims, 2025). The case now targets the requirement that services be provided in the most integrated setting appropriate. In 2026, the Department of Justice took the position that Section 504 does not require this, putting the right to live in the community under *Olmstead* at risk (Grossi, 2026).

How can those with disabilities advocate for themselves?

- Learn about your rights regarding access to health care, education, and employment.
- Be ready to describe your individual strengths and needs, both in the context of disability and human rights.
- Practice expressing your needs clearly in settings such as school, work, and healthcare.
- Connect with disability-focused organizations, such as Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, to learn to use your power and increase civic engagement, such as voting.
- Build support networks by connecting with advocacy groups, mentors, and peers who can offer guidance and encouragement.
- Leverage social media and digital tools to help raise real-time advocacy and visibility.
- Refer to the advocacy section of the toolkit for additional ways to advocate.
- Refer to the media literacy section of the toolkit for additional ways to verify online resources.



How can others support and advocate for people with disabilities?

- Educate yourself about different types of disabilities and barriers that people with disabilities face, ideally from people with lived experience of disability.
- Learn about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other key laws and how they affect those in the disability community.
- Use person-centered “person with a disability” or identity-first language “disabled person” as preferred. Explicitly ask about individuals’ preferences.
- Advocate for accommodations in schools, workplaces, and healthcare organizations for accessibility for people with disabilities.
- Uplift, document, and share local successes in disability rights.
- Support, volunteer, and share the work of organizations that support disability rights and services.
- Refer to the advocacy section of the toolkit for additional ways to advocate.



Additional Resources

- American Association of People with Disabilities: <https://www.aapd.com/about-rev-up/>
- National Alliance on Mental Illness: <https://www.nami.org/advocacy/advocate-for-change/protect-medicaid-protect-mental-health/>
- Frameworks Institute: https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/issues/disability-justice/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=21471089253&gbraid=0AAAAA9b3_yBBx5Fh2pGqLzC_XJzYo_Tf&gclid=CjwKCAjwr5_CBhBlEiwAzfwYuLUeWFj2bXa7YXZEI37ANwxVmzvlOsmCxKTds78BrTvN5YpXoP4y0RoCvVEQAvD_BwE
- The Arc: <https://thearc.org/get-involved/self-advocacy/>
- The Americans with Disabilities Act: <https://www.ada.gov/>
- Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered: <https://selfadvocacyinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Self-Advocacy-Start-up-Toolkit-more-power-more-control-over-our-lives-2018.pdf>
- The Arc Plain Language Explainer of Texas v. Kennedy: https://thearc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Plain-Language-Explainer_Texas-v-Becerra.pdf

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Threats to Social Safety Net Programs

- Effects on SNAP
- Effects of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act on SNAP, Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security
- What to Do

Threats to Social Safety Net Programs

Effects on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Overview of SNAP currently

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) assists 42 million low-income Americans with obtaining the food they need to survive. The program is the nation's most effective defense against hunger, by reducing food insecurity and improving health outcomes (Gupta & Waxman, 2025). To give a sense of the scale of SNAP's impact, Feeding America is the largest U.S. charity which funds services combating food insecurity. For every one meal it provides, SNAP is able to provide nine (Feeding America, n.d.).

Further, research shows that each dollar spent on SNAP during economic downturns generates \$1.50 in economic activity, underscoring its benefit not only to those receiving the service, but to the greater economy as well. Despite its critical role, SNAP benefits are often inadequate in fully meeting the food-related needs of recipients. Even when receiving the maximum benefit allowed (which only 40% of participants receive), SNAP falls short of monthly meal costs by \$53 per person and cannot cover the whole cost of a modestly priced meal in 99% of U.S. counties (Gupta & Waxman, 2025).

Note: Although the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program is not directly affected by the OBBBA, many of those supported by WIC will be impacted by the cuts to SNAP and Medicaid due to the common crossover in enrollees between these safety net programs (National WIC Association, 2026).

Effects of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) on SNAP

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) is projected to cut 20% of SNAP's budget, reducing the program's funding by about \$186 billion between 2025 and 2034 (Gupta & Waxman, 2025). These cuts are expected to increase food insecurity and attendant poverty nationwide, with an average monthly loss of \$146 in benefits per family and an estimated 22 million people losing some or all of their benefits. With food insecurity previously on the rise in all 50 states prior to the passing of OBBBA, food insecurity is expected to rise even more, furthering the negative effects of hunger on people's mental and physical health.

Further, researchers estimate that the loss of SNAP support could lead to 93,000 premature deaths by 2039 (Khatana, 2025). Overall, decreased access to food assistance will push many low-income families deeper into poverty as they struggle to meet basic nutritional needs.

NOTE: SNAP has never been available to undocumented immigrants. The people affected by these cuts, including children, are U.S. citizens and lawfully present immigrants. Many refugees, asylees, and other humanitarian immigrants will lose eligibility entirely.



The OBBBA will:

- Force states to foot some of the bill for SNAP benefits, which states are unprepared for (Gupta & Waxman, 2025).
- Impose new work requirements on older adults and families with older children, requiring these individuals to complete 80 hours of work, training, education or volunteering a month and remove those not reporting this work time properly (USDA, n.d.).
- Make documented humanitarian immigrants ineligible for SNAP including asylees, victims of trafficking, people granted a withholding of removal and many others (Global Refuge, 2025).
- Require the determination of SNAP benefit amounts to be cost neutral. The benefits families receive cannot be adjusted other than for inflation (Gupta & Waxman, 2025).
- Defund SNAP-Ed, a program that helps families make the most of their benefits by teaching the importance of healthy eating and active lifestyles. SNAP-Ed has proven to be effective at increasing fruit and vegetable consumption, boosting physical activity, and reducing intake of sugary drinks (McNaught, 2025).
- Eliminate thousands of jobs due to reducing the money brought in by SNAP to state economies (Konish, 2026).
- Cut school meals, summer electronic benefits transfer (EBT), and food benefits to children (McNaught, 2025).
- Strain food banks, which are already at capacity. Prior to this Act, food banks recently had 1 billion dollars in funding cuts (Haigh & Lovan, 2025).¹²¹

What to Do: SNAP recipients

- Stay informed about your state's changes to SNAP. Every state may apply these new federal rules differently. Visit your State's SNAP website or call or visit your local SNAP office to find out how and when changes will apply.
- Ensure you are correctly tracking your work or volunteer hours. If you're considered an "able-bodied adult without dependents" (ABAWD), you may need to prove that you're working, volunteering, or training at least 80 hours per month. Start logging those hours and obtaining work documentation from organizations you are working with now to avoid later problems with SNAP eligibility.
- Ensure that you have all the proper documentation for your SNAP recertification - Recertification is when you must re-prove you are eligible for SNAP benefits. It is important to:
 - Respond to letters requesting recertification ASAP because late or missing documents can lead to benefits being denied or delayed.
 - Gather required documentation which often includes proof of income and other expenses.
 - If it is required, prepare for the recertification interview, see some tips for the interview [here](#).
 - Correctly log your work/volunteer hours.
 - Keep copies of any letters or other correspondence to and from your SNAP office.
 - The recertification process is different in all states, contact your State's SNAP program administrator for specific guidelines. Find their contact information [here](#).

What to Do: SNAP recipients

- Reach out for support. If you're struggling to meet new requirements and need help meeting your needs, reach out to:
 - Legal aid organizations and community action agencies
 - They may be able to help you with SNAP paperwork or appealing benefit cuts.
 - Find affordable legal help [here](#).
 - Food pantries
 - Find your local food bank [here](#).
 - Friends and family
- Speak out and get involved. Join local advocacy groups, attend community meetings, and contact your state legislators to make your voice heard.

What to Do If You Are Not on SNAP But Want to Help

- Donate food or money to food pantries.
- Volunteer at food banks.
- Call, write or meet with your representative to tell them about your feelings about the negative effects of the bill.
- For more general advocacy tools, check out the [Advocacy 101](#) section of the Toolkit.

Effects on Medicaid

The Medicaid program in your state may be called by a number of different names, depending on the state you live in. For example, in Massachusetts, the program is called MassHealth, while in New Mexico it is called Turquoise Care (Medicaid Planning Assistance, 2025). No matter the name, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that the OBBBA will cut federal Medicaid spending by \$911 billion over 10 years, and that the law's health provisions will leave about 10 million more people uninsured (Euhus et al., 2025). To see what the Medicaid program is called in your state, click [here](#).

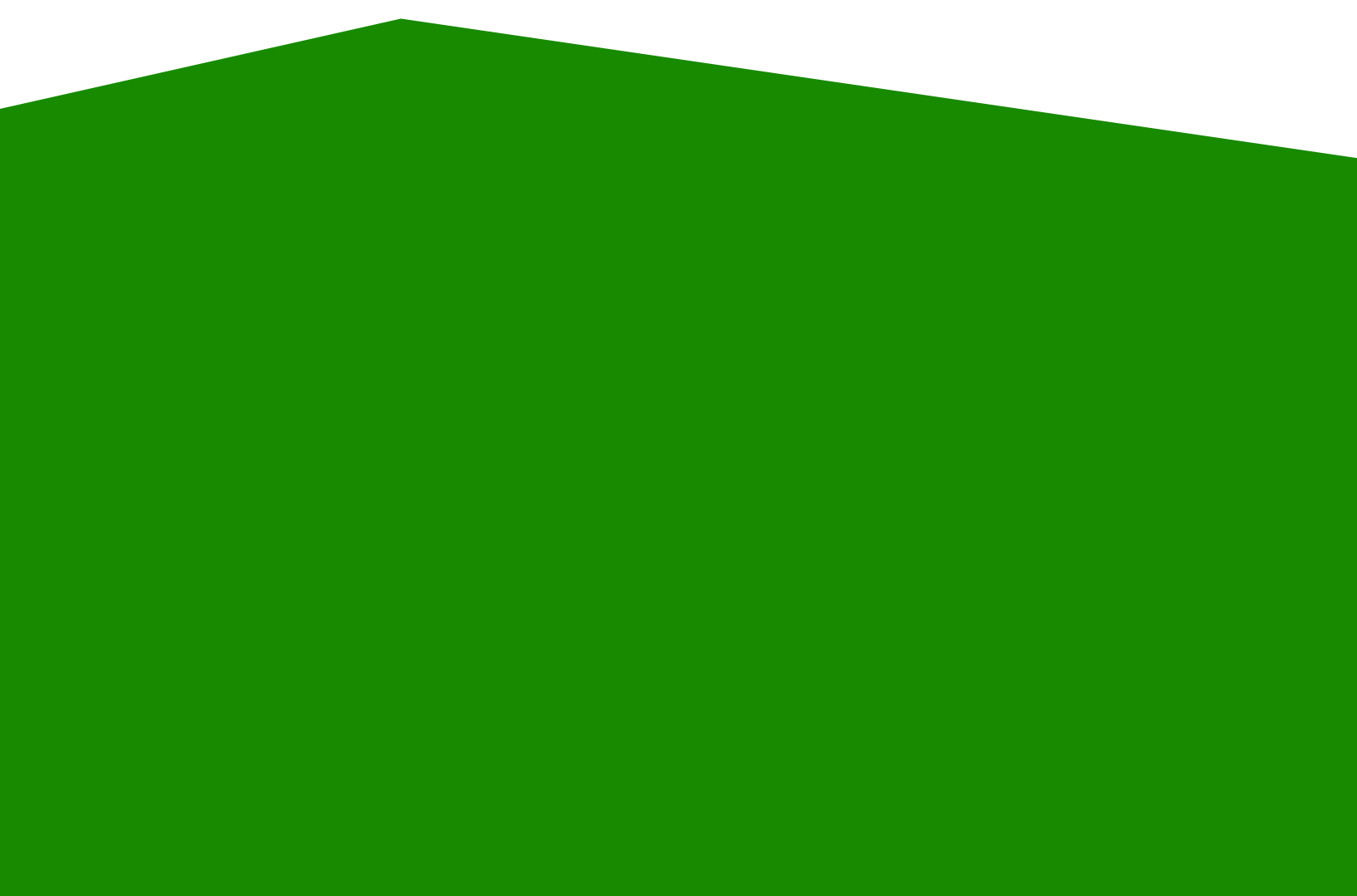
The OBBBA is predicted to:

- Require more out-of-pocket spending for recipients by increasing cost sharing for many types of health care services for enrollees who are between 100% - 138% of the federal poverty level, with each service having a cost share amount of up to \$35 per service (Alker & Schneider, 2025). Many of these medical services currently have no costs associated with them.
- A family of four on Medicaid making \$33,000 per year could face up to \$1,650 in new annual out-of-pocket spending (Alker & Schneider, 2025).
- Even though 92% of adult Medicaid enrollees are working or are not working because of caregiving, illness or disability, or school (Tolbert et al., 2026), burdensome work reporting requirements are estimated to increase the number of uninsured people by 5.3 million in 2034 due to barriers created by red tape (KFF, 2025).

- Allow providers to turn away Medicaid-enrolled patients who cannot pay the new cost share (Alker & Schneider, 2025).
- Cause people to skip doctors' visits, delay treatments, and stop taking medications due to increase in out-of-pocket spending. (Dow, 2025).
- Require Medicaid enrollees in states that have passed the Medicaid expansion option to prove that they are working, volunteering or attending school at least 80 hours a month or that they qualify for an exemption by 2027 even though there is evidence that implementing work requirements actually costs States more than three times the value of the benefits provided (Hinton, Diana, & Rudowitz, 2025).
- Cut provider taxes – prior to the passage of the OBBBA, states have been allowed to finance a portion of the non-federal share of Medicaid spending through provider taxes. Revenue from these taxes has been used to increase Medicaid payments to providers. The OBBBA limits any new provider taxes and increases in existing ones, putting rural hospitals and nursing homes at risk of closure (Alker & Schneider, 2025).
- Reduce home- and community-based services for Medicaid enrollees with disabilities by cutting payment rates leading to serving fewer people and increasing already long waiting lists for these services (Alker & Schneider, 2025).

What to do: Medicaid Recipients

- Prepare for Medicaid eligibility checks & renewals. Some things that you may be asked for include:
 - Your name and date of birth
 - Your Social Security number
 - Your monthly payment amounts for rent, mortgage, or utilities
 - Proof of citizenship or immigration status
 - Proof of income, like paystubs or W-2s
 - A verification of what other government benefits you receive
 - Information about an insurance plan your employer has offered you or an insurance plan you currently have
 - Check with your State's Medicaid agency [here](#) to see exactly what documentation you may need
- Report any changes of income, household size, address, or immigration status to your state's Medicaid program as soon as possible to avoid losing coverage.
- Obtain and save required documentation of work, volunteer, or school hours to continue to be eligible for Medicaid – check with your State's Medicaid program to determine what documents will be required.
- Watch for renewal notices every 6 months and meet deadlines to avoid being dropped from your Medicaid coverage.
- Budget for increased out-of-pocket costs, if possible.
- If you believe you may lose Medicaid, look into:
 - Health Insurance (ACA) Marketplace plans
 - State and local health programs or community clinics
- Stay informed about changes to Medicaid through your State's program website.

- Tell others about the harmful effects of the OBBBA on Medicaid and how it will impact themselves and others.
 - Join an advocacy group such as [the Modern Medicaid Alliance](#) to fight against the OBBBA's harmful effects.
 - Contact your state representative and/or senator to inform them of the negative effects of this bill on your Medicaid coverage.
 - For more general advocacy tools, check out the [Advocacy 101](#) section of the Toolkit.
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Effects on Medicare

Medicare is the federal health insurance program for people age 65 and older and for younger people with certain disabilities. Along with helping to keep older adults healthy, Medicare is a major driver in reducing poverty, cutting poverty rates among seniors by nearly two-thirds since it was enacted in 1965 by reducing out-of-pocket health care costs.

The OBBBA blocks, until October 2034, a rule that would have made it easier for low-income people with Medicare to enroll in Medicare Savings Programs, which help pay Medicare premiums and out-of-pocket costs. CBO estimates this will reduce federal spending by about \$66 billion over 10 years. These coverage losses and increased costs are expected to strain emergency health services and safety net programs, drive worse health outcomes, increase financial burdens on state governments, and push more seniors into poverty (Center for Medicare Advocacy, 2025).

Under the OBBBA:

- Medicare eligibility will be taken away from many lawfully present immigrants who have worked and paid into the system, including refugees, asylees, trafficking survivors, domestic violence survivors, people with Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and others with humanitarian status.
- Low-income people with Medicare will lose a rule change that would have made it easier to get help paying premiums and out-of-pocket costs.

What to Do: Medicare Recipients

- If you're a legally present non-citizen (e.g., refugee/asylee), plan for the loss of Medicare eligibility in early 2027 and watch for a notice from the Social Security Administration. Look into other healthcare options like ACA marketplace plans, state specific plans, Medicaid (if eligible), or private coverage.
- Report any changes of income, household size, address, or immigration status to the Social Security Administration as soon as possible to not lose coverage (CMA Fact Sheet).
- If you believe you may lose coverage, fit in as many covered doctors' appointments as necessary.
- Meet with an Elder Law Attorney to discuss how to continue to be enrolled in Medicare and how to pay the least out of pocket for it.
- Prepare for higher out of pocket costs when going to the doctor.
- Stay informed with reliable news sources as well as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services bulletins. See the most recent ones [here](#).
- Tell others about the harmful effects of the OBBBA on Medicare and how it will impact themselves and others.
- Join an advocacy group such as [the Center for Medicare Advocacy](#) to fight against the OBBBA's harmful effects.
- Contact your representative to inform them of the negative effects of this bill on Medicare.
- For more general advocacy tools, check out the [Advocacy 101](#) section of the Toolkit.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA)

Federal policy changes will also impact Affordable Care Act plans:

- Plans will be more expensive.
 - Enhanced premium tax credits, which capped benchmark premiums at 8.5% of income, expired at the end of 2025. KFF estimates a 60-year-old couple earning \$85,000 will pay over \$22,600 more per year for a benchmark plan in 2026. The OBBBA ends premium tax credits for people who enroll through the year-round special enrollment period for those at or below 150% of the poverty level, and starting with 2028 coverage it requires eligibility checks before tax credits are paid, effectively ending automatic re-enrollment. Basic premium tax credits are still available.
- Those who enroll in the ACA marketplace after losing insurance or adding a child will have to wait until documents are processed (which can take weeks) prior to getting subsidies to help with premiums.
- Hundreds of thousands of lawfully present immigrants such as asylum-seekers, victims of trafficking, and refugees could lose their health insurance by removing their eligibility for the subsidies that make their premiums affordable.

What to Do: ACA Enrollees

- Ensure that you mark your calendar for the open enrollment date if you need to obtain a plan, which is from November 1, 2026 to January 15, 2027 on HealthCare.gov. Enroll by December 15 for coverage starting January 1. If your state runs its own marketplace, check its website for exact dates.
- Compare plan prices with the new changes being put into place.
- Report any changes in income, household size, address, or immigration status to the office as soon as possible.
- Make sure that you manually renew your plan every year since starting with 2028 coverage, automatic renewals with tax credits will effectively end.
- Respond quickly to any notices that you receive from your insurance office.
- Budget for increased out of pocket costs in your plan, if possible.
- Stay informed with reliable news sources on the changes to the ACA.
- Tell others about the harmful effects of this bill on ACA and how it will impact themselves and others.
- Contact your representative about the harmful effects of this bill on ACA eligibility and enrollment.
- For more general advocacy tools, check out the [Advocacy 101](#) section of the Toolkit.



Effects on Social Security

Prior to President Trump being re-elected, his campaign platform included eliminating taxes on Social Security (SS), but the OBBBA does not fulfill this promise due to the reconciliation process under which the bill was passed. Instead, there is a temporary tax deduction of \$6,000 on all income for people 65 and older, but this is not specifically for SS beneficiaries.

The law's tax changes will reduce revenue to the Social Security trust funds by an estimated \$168.6 billion over 10 years and move the projected depletion date of the combined trust funds earlier, from late 2034 to early 2034 (Social Security Administration, 2025).

What to Do: Social Security Beneficiaries

- Capitalize on the Short-Term Tax Break.
- Stay Informed by following updates from the Social Security Trustees, the CBO, and advocacy groups.
- Contact your representatives to tell them to take action to ensure long-term life of SS.
- Tell others about the uncertain future of SS and how it will impact themselves and others.
- For more general advocacy tools, check out the [Advocacy 101](#) section of the Toolkit.



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