

JULY 2024



A TOOLKIT FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS



STOP PROJECT 2025



STOP THE COUP 2025
www.stopthecoup2025.org



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ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

STOP PROJECT 2025: A TOOLKIT FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS was developed in response to the spring 2023 release of the US conservative movement’s “Mandate for Leadership” electoral transition document, also known as **Project 2025**. The Toolkit presents Project 2025’s vision, key policy proposals, proposed attacks on our US democracy, and rights under the Constitution. It is designed to support community discussion for community mobilization.

Audience

Community and grassroots organizers, activists, trainers, and educators.

Goal

To provide community organizers with information, analysis, discussion prompts, takeaway messaging, and resources to support understanding and discussion of Project 2025’s agenda, and provide tools for community engagement. The Toolkit can be adapted for other audiences, including for global grassroots organizing, given Project 2025’s global scope of assault. The Toolkit includes field lessons and concrete resources for taking action.

Contents

The Toolkit provides an introduction and overview of Project 2025’s key proposals, includes 13 modules and several spotlight topic boxes. Each module covers a case study including a scenario reflecting Project 2025 implementation plans, plus a short summary of current laws or policies on the topic, analysis, discussion prompts, strategies, and resources. Additional modules may be added to this Toolkit in the future.

Editor’s Note: This toolkit was developed by Stop The Coup 2025’s editorial staff and volunteers, including professional writers, editors, and community activists with teaching and training experience, with input from campaign allies.
Authors: Anne-christine d’Adesky, Sally O’Driscoll, Margaret McCarthy.
Additional review: Alexis Danzig.

We invite your feedback and any questions about it via our online Toolkit Feedback Survey at www.stopthecoup2025.org/toolkit-survey



A GUIDE TO USING THIS TOOLKIT

A GUIDE TO USING THIS

THE TOOLKIT PROVIDES community organizers, activists, and stakeholders with a broad introduction to Project 2025's agenda, key content, and potential impact on targeted communities and sectors. It highlights effective strategies and questions to engage communities in developing local responses to Project 2025.

Case Studies provide real-life scenarios to consider how Project 2025's proposals and reforms could impact US citizens and residents and curtail civil rights. Discussion prompts for organizers help audiences examine the possible impact of Project 2025 in local communities. The key talking points, strategies, and resources, are designed to lead discussion for community mobilization to Project 2025.

Our approach: Local Knows Best We believe that local organizers and community members are best poised to discuss how Project 2025 will impact their communities, with sensitivity to local concerns and priorities.

The Toolkit was written to convey real-world scenarios if Project 2025 is implemented in the future. Our hope is to support examination of Project 2025's impact on communities and target audiences, and spur discussion of local responses – local strategies, leadership, allies, and resources –to fight Project 2025's agenda.

Make it Personal We know that US voters and residents – and a global public – are more likely to respond to Project 2025 when they understand how it may directly impact them. We urge organizers to invite others to consider how a given scenario may impact them, and how they might respond – what resources they have or need or might seek out, what existing community lessons or models, what old or new allies – to take action.

The more personal the attack, the more people are likely to respond

Intersectional Attack – Intersectional Response

Project 2025 targets all sectors of our American system of government, rights, and economy. No group is spared. For this reason, it also calls for building an effective, intersectional response. There are natural allies and support to be



found in every community who may be targeted in different but no less harmful ways. We urge intersectional approaches to problem-solving that encourage solidarity and can multiply the impact of responses to Stop Project 2025.

Learning More - Accessing More Resources

The Toolkit offers a summary of Project 2025 and highlights its core components to use in community discussion workshops. A fuller range of educational materials and tools for taking action are available for free at our campaign website: www.stopthecoup2025.org.

Educational Materials

You will find a full summary analysis of Project 2025; bullet-point summaries of key proposed policy reforms and attacks by sectors; by-chapter breakdowns of Project 2025 for 30 federal government departments; social media tools, memes and more on our campaign website – free to download!

Ally Voices and Resources in Key Topic Areas

Our campaign [Resource](#) pages also provide links and information to key groups and action resources about core topics of the Project 2025 agenda. Our [Fighters](#) page lists frontline groups leading advocacy on key issues. Our [Ally Voices](#) highlights Project 2025-themed newsletters and those on [Other Topics](#) covering the unfolding right-wing attacks that mirror Project 2025's agenda. Access these resources for taking action at: www.stopthecoup2025.org

Please help spread our social media messages!

@stopthecoup2025 #stopproject2025

Many Toolkits & Strategies are also available on our website. We have collated extensive field-tested toolkits for responding to Project 2025's attacks *in all core topic areas* of its agenda. They include interactive digital trackers and mapping tools – all designed to provide you with practical tools to educate, mobilize, and inspire your community to respond and be better prepared. We invite you to [share this toolkit](#), resources, and our campaign message:

In 2025 you may wake up to find yourself a criminal.

We will not go back! #Stop Project 2025!



What is Stop The Coup 2025?

Stop The Coup 2025 was launched in the fall of 2024 as a nonpartisan, non-profit, public education and mobilization campaign to stop Project 2025 and quickly sound the alarm about the scope of Project 2025's implications for U.S. federal democracy, civil rights, and freedoms as we know them today. Our campaign also serves as a platform to consolidate and amplify news, information, research, and advocacy about Project 2025 and the growing grassroots resistance to its anti-democratic agenda.



Stop The Coup 2025 is a campaign of **GenDemocracy**, which was founded in fall 2024 as a 501(C)3 initiative focused on issues at the intersection of gender and democracy. GenDemocracy operates under the fiscal sponsorship of the Metropolitan Community Church, a 501(C)3 in New York City.

Our campaign core team of six is led by founder Anne-christine d'Adesky, a journalist and longtime activist, working with ~ 200 volunteers around the country, along with an initial coalition of ~100 New York City social justice and LGBTQIA+ activists. Stop The Coup 2025 has over 25 national and smaller partners (as of July) and is growing very quickly. These include federal unions, progressive national and local nonprofit organizations, faith groups, and grassroots activists working in various sectors targeted by Project 2025. We invite all groups and individuals who share our core mission of stopping Project 2025 to join our campaign and work in common cause.

Preparedness and Fighting Back: Our campaign is very focused on the key question many ask when they hear of Project 2025: **What can we do to fight back?** The answer is: many things. Our message is: **the time to act is now**. Our activities include hosting webinars and teach-ins on Project 2025 topics with allies, investigating the groups, issues, and money behind Project 2025, and seeking out and making public the many strategies, toolkits, and ideas for effectively responding and fighting back. Our campaign website provides comprehensive information about Project 2025, as well as strategies and tools for fighting back.

Help Sound The Alarm. We find that when people hear about how Project 2025 may affect them, they do not support the plan, even among conservatives. Polls show we are right: US opposition to, and fear of, Project 2025 has grown quickly following media coverage of the plan. But too many people are still unaware of Project 2025, and how it threatens their freedoms. That is why we developed this Toolkit. It is especially designed to support local organizers to broker community conversations about how to fight, prepare for, and resist Project 2025. Please see our campaign website for a growing menu of resources and tools for fighting back.



What Is Project 2025?

An Extremist Conservative Blueprint to Dismantle Our Democracy



WHAT IS PROJECT 2025?

Project 2025 Project 2025 is the conservative movement’s 2023 “Mandate for Leadership” vision blueprint for the next Republican administration. It was developed by dozens of Christian Right leaders in spring 2022, with funding from Catholic militant and judicial activist Leonard Leo and several right-wing billionaire families and foundations, including Charles Koch. Project 2025 is led by the right-wing think tank, The Heritage Foundation, and backed by 110 conservative groups (*as of July 2024*). Over 400 individuals helped develop Project 2025’s vision paper, which presents policy proposals to restructure the 30 departments of the federal government. Each chapter has a key author or co-authors, many of them former Trump administration or transition officials.

Four Pillars: Project 2025 is a project made up of four parts, or “pillars”: *Policy*, *Personnel*, *Training*, and the *Playbook*.

Pillar One is the main 920-page policy document that presents conservative proposals for the radical restructuring of our current system of federal government, should the Republicans win the presidential election in 2024. The document discusses proposed reforms that would dismantle the “administrative” state and strip specific populations of their federal rights.

Pillar Two is a personnel plan to recruit and vet 20,000 conservative Christian loyalists to join the next Republican administration.



Pillar Three is an online conservative Administrative Course that recruits take to learn about how to implement Project 2025's policies. Candidates are vetted for their ability to write policy and for their conservative Christian beliefs and willingness to implement Project 2025's agenda.

Pillar Four is a "180-day Playbook" of specific instructions for new recruits to carry out in each assigned federal department, starting on "Day One" of a new administration, January 20, 2025. recruits will be put into "Acting" or temporary positions of government, and Project 2025 calls for giving unprecedented decision-making authority. Project 2025 proposes using signed Executive Orders starting on "Day One" to provide these new recruits with authority to act and implement policy changes.

Current Status: As of July, the Heritage Foundation had already prepared 150 Executive Orders ready for next GOP president to sign on "Day One." They had received 11,000 resumes of would-be candidates who are then put through their online conservative administrative training course. Project 2025 is also assembling small training teams of experienced advisors to guide recruits in implementing their still-secret 180-day playbook.



Background Following the election of Ronald Reagan in 1981, the first conservative "Mandate for Leadership" was written as a policy guide for the incoming Republican administration. The first edition was a 20-volume, 3000-page publication focused on management and administration. In the ensuing decade, over 60% of its 2000 recommendations were implemented. Conservatives have released new versions of the Mandate since that time. In 2016, the Trump administration implemented 60% of recommendations. Project 2025 represents the ninth edition of the Mandate series, and reflects both the unfinished agenda of Trump's first administration, and sweeping new proposals.

"Deconstructing the bureaucracy means fewer people looking out for the things we care about, like clean water, clean air, food safety and better schools for our children." -- Common Cause



The 2023 vision paper marks a radical departure from prior conservative policy statements. It calls for a sweeping overhaul of our present system of government and democracy, including elimination, merges of agencies, reversing or erasing Biden policies, broad deregulation, putting a conservative Christian bureaucracy in place, and privatization of government duties.

Uniting Conservatives The ultra-conservative Heritage Foundation serves as the lead organization for creating, developing and promoting Project 2025. Eighty initial conservative groups were listed as Advisory Groups, including many rightwing nonprofits, legal groups and think tanks. Many engage in political and judicial advocacy linked to Project 2025's agenda (*see our Special Report, [Follow The Dark Money](#), on our website*). Eighty initial Advisory Group were listed as key supporters when the blueprint was released in mid-2023; that list had grown to 110 as of July 2024.



Dark money funding and Leonard Leo's role Project 2025 is funded by a main source and additional donations from right-wing billionaires who also fund the different Project 2025 advisory groups. This spring, Stop The Coup 2025 reported that Leonard Leo, a Catholic activist, lawyer and Co-Chairman of the legal Federalist Society, is a key architect and funder of Project 2025, working closely with Kevin Roberts at the Heritage Foundation, and with Federalist Society legal colleagues, to raise funds for Project 2025 and establish its judicial activist agenda. Leo is well known as the judicial “puppet master” who single-handedly put six arch-conservative justices on the Supreme Court, handing the names to then-President Trump.

60 of the initial 80 Project 2025 advisory groups have received money, directly and indirectly, from a Leo-directed trust

The money has flowed to a relatively tight-knit circle of Project 2025's now-100 advisory groups for Project 2025. A Stop the Coup 2025 investigation in early 2024 found that 60 of the initial 80 Project 2025 advisory groups received money, directly and indirectly, from a Leo-directed fund, the Donor's Trust, in 2022. A half-dozen other right-wing billionaire family foundations and contributors, including **Charles Koch**, have also put big money behind Project 2025, some directly to advisory groups who are advancing advocacy on such topics as abortion, antigay and anti-DEI bills, and deregulation. Their actions are part of a focused effort to pave the legal ground for Project 2025. (*see our Special Report, [Follow The Dark Money](#), for more details and maps*)



Political and Religious Evangelical Ties Project 2025's advisory groups include a relatively small number of conservative Catholic activists who are members or affiliated with the Catholic branch, **Opus Dei**, and other Christian evangelists, based on reporting undertaken by our campaign. Religious beliefs help bind members of Project 2025 who are united behind its greater vision of a Christian-led future America with laws and policies that are based on biblical principles.



Christian Nationalism and Dominionism A number of important Project 2025 authors and contributors are also adherents to a Christian branch known as Dominionism that includes the fast-growing **New Apostolic Reformation (NAR)**, a global evangelical Christian denomination that masks a political movement. Followers believe they have a spiritual duty to serve as 'living apostles' who must gain control of all aspects of modern society to remake it into a version of heaven as a step to welcome the predicted future return of the Holy Spirit – an end times apocalyptic vision.

***Project 2025 reflects a big-picture Dominionist
Seven Mountains Mandate agenda***

This view is summed up in the Dominionist **"Seven Mountains Mandate"** which calls for Christian conservatives to take control, or establish *dominion*, per biblical scripture, over the seven pillars of modern society (see *What is Christian Nationalism and What is the Seven Mountains Mandate* for more). Project 2025 reflects a big-picture Christian Dominionist-Seven Mountains Mandate agenda. (see *Spotlight: What is – and Isn't – Christian Nationalism?*)

The de facto GOP platform While Project 2025 is the work of conservative leaders and independent groups, it is viewed by many as the de facto Republican Party platform. Former Trump officials and current Trump campaign advisors make up 81% of the authors, editors, and contributors to Project 2025's blueprint. They include Steven Miller, who developed Trump's draconian immigration policy, and Russell Vought, policy director of the 2024 Republican National Committee.

***Ex-Trump officials make up 81% of Project 2025 authors and contributors***

In June and July, as negative media coverage of Project 2025 rapidly increased, Trump publicly denied his knowledge of Project 2025, but his disavowal has been roundly questioned since Trump has publicly spoken out favorably in support of Kevin Roberts and the Heritage Foundation's work and aspects of Project 2025's agenda. As it stands, Trump's official campaign, **Agenda 47**, closely mirrors many of Project 2025's policy proposals. Meanwhile, the Republican party platform, led by committee chair and Project 2025 author Russell Vought, also echoes a number of signature Project 2025 policy proposals. The latter include proposals for the mass deportation of immigrants, deregulation, elimination of gender identity, racial justice, and diversity (DEI) from federal rules, and climate denialism, among others.



A BLUEPRINT FOR AUTHORITARIANISM



Authors and Political Ideology: PROJECT 2025 OPENS with an introduction and background discussion of the conservative movement’s vision for remaking America, and its laws, governmental and social policies, to reflect arch-conservative principles and Christian right beliefs. The big blueprint is divided into 30 chapters, each one covering a department or key agency of the federal government. Many chapters were written by former Trump officials who held top positions in the very department they call to radically restructure or eliminate. Some 400 conservative scholars, think tanks, religious institutions, law schools, and sector experts contributed to Project 2025, which is presented as a consensus document of the Christian conservative movement’s political platform, social policy, and vision for reshaping America.

***Project 2025 would give the next GOP president
unprecedented “supreme powers”***

Executive Unitary Theory Project 2025 states its intentions in its opening pages: to dismantle the “administrative state” – meaning, the federal government – and eliminate entire departments or drastically restructure them. One alarming proposal calls for giving the next GOP president unprecedented “supreme powers,” while weakening the authority and oversight powers of Congress and the courts. This is an application of a political doctrine known as *executive unitary theory* that seeks to boost and consolidate executive branch power, allowing a president to act with impunity, supported by a group of hand-picked loyalists. Project 2025 calls for a “conservative army” to help lead the government. Its proposals are a direct attack on our current US system of checks and balances.



Putting a Christian conservative “army” into power

Religious Agenda and Ideology Project 2025 explicitly advances an extremist evangelical Christian Nationalist agenda. One alarming proposal calls for giving the next GOP president unprecedented “supreme powers.” It also calls for realigning all US policy – domestic and foreign – to reflect Christian biblical principles and doctrines. It would blur and even erase the Constitutional separation of church and state – the values enshrined by the Founders in the First Amendment – supplanting secular law with the Christian Bible.

Project 2025 would eliminate our present system of checks and balances and the Constitutional separation of church and state

Weaponizing Government and Schedule F Project 2025 calls for weaponizing a Trump-era Executive Order, Schedule F, that was rescinded by Biden in 2021. That would reclassify the jobs of at least 50,000 members of the merit-based federal workforce and place them into temporary political appointee positions, enabling reassignments and mass firings. In reality, federal unions have warned that *tens of thousands* of federal jobs may be at stake under a new Trump administration. (See *Module Six on Labor*.)



The Danger Project 2025’s proposed restructuring of the government is being denounced as a recipe for autocracy and corruption by current federal agency officials – a step toward authoritarianism, even dictatorship.

It also endangers the American people. If enacted, Schedule F would hollow out the US government by stripping key agencies of the experienced workforce needed to effectively run our country. It would weaken federal regulatory agencies tasked with overseeing consumer safeguards for Americans. Project 2025’s proposals to eliminate entire agencies and reverse existing protections in myriad sectors, including climate protections, will multiply the dangers to people, communities, our economy, our environment, and our larger planet.



KEY PROPOSALS & ATTACKS

Targeting the vulnerable Project 2025 calls for eliminating or curbing Constitutionally-guaranteed rights and protections for various groups. Key targets are federal workers; LGBTQIA+ people, especially transgender communities; immigrants; women seeking abortion and other reproductive healthcare services; the media; providers of medical and other services to LGBTQIA+ or women seeking abortions; activists; and educators.

Project 2025's agenda would strip major federal protections for gay people

Anti-Gender Project 2025 calls for eliminating gender identity and LGBTQIA+ identity from all federal rules and regulations, a move that would strip major federal protections for gay people. It criminalizes transgender and nonbinary identity, and equates transgender identity with pornography and obscenity. It outlaws funding of gender-affirming medical care, extending the threat of criminalization to medical providers of such services. It goes further to propose labeling those who promote LGBTQIA+ content – a school librarian stocking LGBTQIA+ stories, a drag night -- as a sex offender. If enacted, LGB TQIA+ activists warn that Project 2025's agenda could reverse the major gains of the US LGBTQIA+ rights movement such as same-sex marriage, gay adoption and foster parenting, and gays serving in the military, while removing anti-discrimination laws on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. *(see Module 3)*

Anti-choice, anti-health In health care, Project 2025 calls for a federal ban on abortion and would target birth control and access to fertility methods like in-vitro fertilization (IVF). Globally, Project 2025 calls for reinstating the Mexico City Policy or "Global Gag" rule that would implement a ban on US federal funding of any foreign program that provides abortion information, counseling, referrals. or services. *(see Modules 2 and 11, and Spotlight on PEPFAR)*

Imposing traditional "Family Values" Project 2025 embraces narrow traditional "family values" when it comes to gender roles: men are presented as leaders and decision makers; women are supporters of their husbands, with a primary role as caretakers and mothers of children. Much of Project 2025's discussion focuses on threats to children's safety and exposure to progressive ideas. The Christian Bible is used to justify a regressive, 1950's patriarchal view of men as the natural leaders of women. Married heterosexual couples are deemed the only legitimate families, not single heads of households or gay couples. *(see Module 9 on Religious Freedom)*



Anti-Immigrant Project 2025 takes a draconian, cruel approach to immigration with a call to mass detain and deport tens of thousands of immigrants and seal the US border, using troops to help border agencies (see Module 10).



Project 2025 calls for mass detention and deportation of tens of thousands of undocumented immigrants and sealing a militarized US border

Anti-First Amendment Project 2025 would revise the Executive Order related to the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, giving the next administration expanded powers to conduct domestic surveillance under the guise of monitoring domestic terrorism. These police activities would directly infringe on existing constitutional civil liberties, including First Amendment rights, including the right to protest. (see Module 5)

Project 2025 reflects a white supremacist agenda

Anti-Diversity | White Supremacy Project 2025 advances a racist, white supremacist agenda, eliminating all Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies and programs in the federal government, eliminating civil rights departments, and eliminating Title VII, and IX protections that currently enable individuals to file claims of discrimination on the basis of sex, race, gender, sexual orientation, and physical ability. Project 2025 goes so far as to claim that raising the issue of racial discrimination is itself racist. (see Module 1 on Race & DEI)

If implemented, these reforms would effectively eliminate inclusion or teaching of Black and Brown history and identity in public education, end data collection about racial disparities and inequity, and remove civil rights mechanisms created to address systemic racism. Project 2025 reflects a white supremacist agenda, one that denies and weakens the civil rights of millions of Americans who are not white, while advancing a false view of America as a “post-racial” society where racism does not exist. (See our Special Report on Christian Nationalism, “[White Supremacy and White Grievance](#)” online for a deeper reading.)



GLOBAL THREATS



Project 2025 calls for withholding US foreign assistance to groups who fail to agree to implement its conservative Christian agenda, including anti-choice, anti-diversity, and anti-LGBTQIA+ policies. Its domestic policy is nativist. It opposes “globalism” and the authority of international bodies such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and other international regulatory bodies in sectors such as defense, economics and trade, and the environment. It calls for freezing or eliminating Biden international treaties in a variety of sectors, including NATO agreements. *(see Module 12 for the global impact on health, HIV and science, and Spotlight on PEPFAR.)*

Project 2025 calls for immediately freezing all climate protection treaties

Planetary Impact Project 2025 also calls for immediately freezing all climate protection treaties of the Biden administration, and eliminating climate change policies and programs across all areas of government. The result of such proposals would be a devastating reversal of environmental protection and green energy programs and policies. Climate advocates have called Project 2025’s proposals a major threat to our planet, including all living species. If enacted, its proposals would greatly exacerbate the existing serious threat of climate change to our earth, seas, and sky, including the food we eat, and the systems that support human life. *(see Module 7 on Climate Change)*

For a full analysis of all Project 2025’s attacks, see our campaign materials online or read and download this bullet-summary of key reforms:

[REVISED+12.16+ For+Release {10+pgs} Key+Proposals+of+Project+2025+by+Stop+the+Coup+2025.pdf \(squarespace.com\)](#)



AT-A-GLANCE: PROJECT 2025 KEY PROPOSALS

AT-A-GLANCE:

PROJECT 2025 KEY PROPOSALS

- **systematically dismantle the federal government – a soft coup**
- give the next Republican president new “supreme powers” – an autocracy
- use Executive Orders to “legally” reverse many of our civil rights
- redirect military to support domestic law enforcement, surveillance
- criminalize & erase gender & LGBTQ+ identity from government protection
- reverse racial equality, attack diversity, and reverse all climate change laws
- replace secular education with Christian theocracy and a “pro-life” agenda
- Use “Schedule F” to remove 50,000+ federal workers starting on “Day One”
- Recruit, train, and place 20,000 hand-picked loyalists into government jobs
- Require government loyalty pledges to an extremist right-wing agenda
- Reverse historic US defense policy of deterrence to offense
- Require US foreign policy, USAID to align with pro-life agenda
- **launch their 180-day administrative takeover on Jan. 20, 2025**



MODULE 1: RACE & DEI

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



Project 2025 severely limits any discussion of racial discrimination, and dismantles regulations that prohibit discrimination based on race. Project 2025 declares that the US is a color-blind, race-neutral society in which acts of racism – bigotry against marginalized groups – simply no longer occur. It seeks to eliminate policies that try to level the playing field for people of color by considering the harm of racial discrimination.

CASE STUDY

LIKE MANY WORKPLACES in the US, the hospital where Anita is employed in a residency program, has a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policy. The hospital administration understands that diversity among its employees has many benefits for patient satisfaction, teamwork, and problem-solving. Anita has studied hard for many years, and is now training to be a surgeon. Medical school has been difficult, especially since Anita, who is Black, has had few role models from similar backgrounds to mentor her.

One day, the head surgeon tells Anita that there are no Black women surgeons because the candidates just aren't good enough. Anita is too shocked to say anything at the time, but later she goes to the hospital's Human Resources (HR) to complain. The head surgeon's offensive comments violate anti-discrimination policies, don't they? What about the hospital's commitment to DEI?

Anita learns that the hospital is struggling with its position on DEI because conservatives behind Project 2025 are pushing to eliminate DEI policies from all federal rules and policies. Her hospital isn't the only one withdrawing from DEI programs: it's a hot-button political issue that the US right-wing has embraced.

There are two hospital board members who are quite conservative, Anita learns. They have brought in a lot of donor money, and have sway over the board. The hospital's policy hasn't changed, but the issue is dividing the board.

RACE & DEI



HR agrees that racially prejudiced comments violate current DEI policy, but they aren't sure how to proceed: without a witness, it's also Anita's word against the head surgeon. If HR is going to take action against the head surgeon for creating a hostile workplace for Anita, they require evidence for taking disciplinary action. Anita sees that HR is reluctant to raise the issue.

Anita realizes that someone in HR must have told the head surgeon about her complaint, because he continues to make biased racial comments. Further, he's stopped choosing Anita to assist him in operations, so she's not getting the training experience she needs. In the operating room, the other residents ignore her and say nothing. Anita is feeling so demeaned by this treatment, she's not sure she can complete her training. But if she gives up now, she worries that she'll never become a surgeon.

What can Anita do?
What is the hospital's responsibility?
Who can help her?



Anita talks to a representative of her state's ACLU chapter. She learns that no single federal law specifically regulates DEI initiatives, but there are various laws that might apply. Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects employees from discrimination – including harassment – based on race and sex, which are both protected categories under the law. Most employees who have DEI-related complaints against their private sector employers do so under the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title VII. The ACLU has been fighting right-wing attempts to end DEI policies, and agrees to help Anita file an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission lawsuit.

It's harder to fight racist and sexist discrimination than it used to be. In 2020, former president Trump issued Executive order 13950, banning federal trainings to prevent systemic racism and sexism. This allowed state legislatures to write similar bills limiting instruction on systemic sexism and racism in 40 states, 20 of which are now law.

Anita is also referred to the NAACP, and the Doctors Council of the national Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which represents physicians. She learns that the American Medical Association (AMA) has been fighting racial discrimination in the medical field, while medical students formed a "White Coats for Black Lives" campaign in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.



Further, Anita learns about the national Association of Black Women Physicians, which has a Sister-to-Sister mentorship. The group puts Anita in touch with a Black woman surgeon in another state who agrees to be her professional mentor and with whom Anita can discuss her struggles and strategies for dealing with racist attitudes on the job.

Anita learns that no single federal law specifically regulates DEI initiatives, but there are various laws that might apply

While the head surgeon is still ignoring her in the operating room, Anita feels supported and relieved because she has support outside her job. She's aware she's not alone, and that others have faced similar challenges – and won. Anita knows that her lawsuit will help others who find themselves in similar positions. Through the residents' grapevine, Anita hears that HR has warned the head surgeon that it will be costly for them to fight a discrimination and harassment lawsuit, if Anita decides to move ahead with the suit. Money talks, she knows.

Understanding that DEI is a national issue, Anita can ask the AMA and the SEIU's Doctors Council to consider providing her with a "friend-of-the-court" amicus brief to support her lawsuit. With right wing groups attempting to shut down DEI policies across the country, Anita shares a news article on attacks against DEI with hospital colleagues who she knows will share her concerns. Having support and resources, a new mentor and new allies, makes it easier for Anita to keep going, especially with encouragement from an expanding professional community.



What's at stake?

The US is not a color-blind society – racism has deep roots in our culture, and the only way to begin to heal that difficult history is to acknowledge it. Project 2025 wants to reverse that progress. They say that any analysis using race by a non-white person is seen as a form of discrimination against white people. In other words, if a person claims they have been discriminated against because of their race, they are themselves being racist by raising the issue, claims Project 2025. Any policies that try to level the playing field for people of color by considering the harm of racial discrimination will become illegal. There will be no protections for individuals or groups who suffer discrimination or harassment because they are non-white.

The bottom line? Project 2025 seeks to erase history. By pretending that race is meaningless, it will encourage real harm. It will remove on-the-job protections against racial discrimination.



Main points of Project 2025's attack on race and DEI:

- Project 2025 claims the US is a color-blind society and will ban all DEI initiatives as “racist.”
- Eliminate racial classifications and Critical Race Theory training: any reference to race as a category will be considered racist, and banned.
- Amend Title VII to stop all EEOC agency collection of EEO-1 data on employment statistics based on race/ethnicity that can provide evidence in discrimination claims and lawsuits.
- Public discussions of race will become almost impossible: if it is “racist” to discuss race, then people who continue to discuss it can be criminalized – teachers, professors, historians, school librarians, etc. There will be no legal way to teach about the US historical past of slavery, and no way to address the ongoing harm of race-based discrimination.

Effective Strategies:

- Educate yourself about the law, including state DEI law. While there is no single DEI law, a number of federal laws and regulations support racial equity initiatives. They include: the 1964 Civil Rights Act; the 1963 Equal Pay Act; the 1990 American with Disabilities Act (ADA); the 1967 Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA); Title IX; the Fair Housing Act; and Executive Orders (EO) and Affirmative Action.
 - EO 11246 requires federal contractors to take affirmative action to ensure equal opportunity employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or national origin.
- Would a union help at your place of employment? Organize to get union protection where you work, and look to unions for resources and allies. It's easier to fight back with a union for support.
- Identify other groups who will be at risk if Project 2025 undermines DEI policies to find allies and build a multisectoral response.
- Reach out to educators and groups fighting censorship of discussions of race, DEI, and racial injustice for First Amendment resources.
-



- “Anti-DEI efforts are the latest attack on racial equity and free speech,” says the ACLU. Contact your local chapter of the ACLU and NAACP – get involved in efforts to protect DEI initiatives and fight censorship.
- Seek out resources and learn from others: unions, the NAACP, Southern Poverty Law Center, Human Rights Campaign, Color of Change, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, and National Urban League are among frontline groups fighting racial injustice and anti-DEI attacks.

Take-away messages:

- DEI federal policies and initiatives are designed to promote diversity in hiring and personnel policies with a focus on equity and inclusion. Everyone has a right to compete for employment without fear of discrimination and to have a workplace free of harassment.
- While there is no one, single DEI law at the federal level, many established federal laws support racial equity initiatives and protect individuals from discrimination at work.
- Project 2025 seeks to eliminate DEI – and all public discussions of race – effectively disregarding racial bias while maintaining systemic racism.
- Efforts to ban DEI, as well as Critical Race Theory, reflect Project 2025’s white supremacist agenda by delegitimizing open discussions of race; by removing racism as a subject of investigation and discussion; and by undermining the fight against racial discrimination in the workplace.
- Project 2025 will end data collection related to race, removing a critical source of evidence used often to support racial discrimination claims.
- Project 2025 will prevent honest discussions of race and racism in schools; discussion of the history and legacy of US slavery will be banned.

Discussion Prompts:

- Has anyone in your group already been affected by Project 2025’s plan to ban discussion of race? At your job, your school, or your college, for example?
- Does your state have laws banning DEI policies or protecting them?
- Does your own workplace have DEI policies? Are they effective?
- Do you know people at work who are experiencing discrimination on the job?



- Have you had the experience of not getting a job you applied for, and wondering whether it's because of your race or ethnicity?
- If you're in high school or college, do your teachers assign readings and lead discussions about race and racism in the US?
- What groups in your local area are fighting DEI bans? Fighting for Black or brown rights?
- What local groups are vulnerable or targeted by Project 2025?
- What community leaders or public officials have shown leadership in fighting efforts to ban DEI programs or discussions of race?
- What are your ideas for building awareness about attacks on DEI in your community? Who should be invited to the organizing table? What about contacting local media?

RESOURCES

Congress:

- **How to Identify and contact your state representatives**
<https://www.congress.gov/state-legislature-websites>

Labor and workplace:

- **Pew Research gathers data and tracks DEI buy-in in the workforce:**
<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/05/17/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-in-the-workplace/>
- **National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC)** tracks news about attacks on DEI. <https://nmsdc.org/blog/the-pulse-naacp-challenges-anti-dei-legal-efforts/>
- **NAACP:** offers information, resources, action plans to protect DEI. <https://naacp.org/>
- **Congressional Black Caucus:** spearheading legislation to protect DEI initiatives. <https://cbc.house.gov/about/>



Education:

- **American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE):** organization for teachers, promoting equity and inclusion. Offers webinars on DEI, diversity, and how to talk about race in K-12 classrooms. <https://aacte.org/resources/dei/>
- **New York State Education Department:** offers information about DEI and a list of resources: <https://www.nysed.gov/dei>
- **Chronicle of Higher Education** legislation tracker: updates state and local government attacks on DEI. https://www.chronicle.com/article/here-are-the-states-where-lawmakers-are-seeking-to-ban-colleges-dei-efforts?emailConfirmed=true&supportSignUp=true&supportForgotPassword=true&email=nicholas.nehamas@nytimes.com&success=true&code=success&bc_nonce=ia8787fhwbmrpbr76yq4r9&cid=gen_sign_in&sra=true
- **Inside Higher Ed:** Report on "Truths about DEI on College Campuses: Evidence-Based Expert Responses to Politicized Misinformation." <https://race.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Harper-and-Associates-DEI-Truths-Report.pdf>
- **Why Are States Banning Critical Race Theory?**
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/why-are-states-banning-critical-race-theory/>



MODULE 2: REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS



Conservatives have already limited access to abortion through the Supreme Court's 2022 Dobbs decision that eliminated the federal right to abortion. Now Project 2025 plans to "enact the most robust protections for the unborn that Congress will support." It seeks to ban use of mifepristone and emergency contraceptives including Ella (ulipristal acetate). Some interpret Project 2025's plans to include a ban on additional emergency contraceptives like Plan B (levonorgestrel) and generic equivalents, which are available over the counter. Project 2025 also plans to promote the 'rhythm method' in federally-funded programs, despite the high historic failure rate of the rhythm method as a form of contraception.

CASE STUDY

MARISSA IS 15 when she becomes pregnant in a small town in Indiana, a state where most abortions are now illegal. She attends a public high school where she hasn't been provided with practical birth control information in a sex ed class. What Marissa knows about sex growing up comes from friends and the internet, which mostly shows porn. Her parents never discuss sex, and she doesn't feel comfortable asking her mother questions. Marissa doesn't know how to access birth control, and when she and her boyfriend have sex, her boyfriend doesn't want to use a condom. When Marissa realizes that she's missed her period, she buys a pregnancy test and is shocked to learn she is pregnant.

Marissa is scared; she doesn't want to tell her boyfriend. Who else can she talk to? Who could tell her what her options are? Her doctor is also a deacon at the church, so that is out. Her guidance counselor at school is an evangelical Christian. She considers an abortion but knows that she can't get one in Indiana. She's heard about Planned Parenthood on the news, but the nearest clinic is over a hundred miles away, in Illinois, the next state over. Marissa feels desperate, even suicidal.



Project 2025 calls for a complete crackdown on abortion

Marissa goes on the internet and, is even more shocked when she finds out about Project 2025, the conservative plan, which calls for a complete crackdown on abortion. Conservatives want to outlaw mailing of mifepristone, the abortion pill, and even support restricting birth control. Project 2025 hasn't been implemented yet, and the rules on abortion vary by state. What about Illinois? Freaked out, Marissa wonders what she can do. She's panicking.

Who can help her? What are her options?

Marissa turns to the internet again. She finds a link to a hotline for the National Abortion Federation: <https://prochoice.org/patients/naf-hotline/>. She has a long phone conversation with a knowledgeable woman at the NAF Hotline who helps her review her options. These include asking about the safety and effectiveness of mifepristone, the abortion pill. The hotline counselor offers Marissa financial and logistical help if she needs it. She gets answers to her questions and no longer feel so alone. She feels huge relief.

Marissa calms down. She realizes she still has a little time to make the decision that is best for her. The counselor also suggests ways to help her talk to her boyfriend and, if she wants to, with her parents. The choice is hers. Just the realization that she has options makes her feel more confident about thinking things through.

Since she's only 15, Marissa wants to know if she can get a legal abortion without parental consent. She is referred to the If/When/How Network: <https://ifwhenhow.org/> for legal information. She learns she might apply for a judicial bypass to avoid having to ask her parents for their consent – if a bypass is necessary in her situation. It depends on state rules. She is hugely relieved to know she can call the network at 844-868-2812 anytime for free, confidential support and if she needs further legal information.

Just the realization that she has options make her feel more confident about thinking things through

Through the NAF Hotline, Marissa learns that she can obtain mifepristone by mail after an online, virtual visit via various organizations including Plan C, Hey Jane, the National Women's Health Network, and Planned Parenthood. At Planned Parenthood in Illinois, a counselor informs her that Illinois does not require parental consent for an abortion, and that she can receive mifepristone by mail if it's still less than 10 weeks since her last menstrual period. Now she has concrete information and a time frame in which to decide what she wants to do. She's ready to talk to her boyfriend, too, newly armed with options and clear about what she wants.



Tanya lives in a rural area of Ohio. She goes to her local pharmacy to fill a birth control pill prescription. The pharmacist refuses to fill her prescription, citing his religious objections to birth control. Shocked, Tanya checks the ACLU website and finds that the pharmacist is legally entitled to refuse to fill her request. There is no other pharmacy close to Tanya's home. How can she get her birth control pills?

What's at stake?

Project 2025 wants to deny women access to abortion and some forms of birth control, including emergency contraception such as Ella for preventing pregnancy. These restrictions will make it harder for women to find reproductive health care and cancer screenings because the clinics that provide abortion services along with other health care will be denied federal funding. It threatens the rights of US women to access entire categories of contraception.

Project 2025's main points of attack on reproductive rights:

- Replace evidence-based sex education in public schools with a focus on abstinence.
- Modify the FDA's Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS) for mifepristone to require in-person visits with a physician, and to limit prescribing to 49 days (7 weeks) after the beginning of a last menstrual period.
- Reverse the FDA approval of safe, effective mifepristone for abortion.
- Revive use of the 1873 Comstock Act, prosecuting anyone who uses the US mail or another delivery carrier to ship or receive mifepristone for use in abortion.
- Remove all Medicaid funding from Planned Parenthood and other health care facilities that also provide abortions.
- Audit Medicaid programs to ensure compliance with the Hyde Amendment, which bars federal funding for abortion except in cases of rape, incest, and danger to the pregnant person's life.
- Withdraw Medicaid funding from states that require private health insurance funds to cover abortion, and from states that do not allow health care providers to refuse to provide abortions or refer patients to abortion services.¹

¹ The 2005 Weldon Amendment is the federal law that permits health care providers to refuse to refer patients to abortion services. It is deceptively written to prohibit "discrimination" against health care entities – including hospitals and health insurance plans, as well as individual nurses and doctors – that refuse to provide, cover, pay for, or refer patients for abortion.)



- Ban federal funding for travel to obtain an abortion.
- Ban emergency contraception, including Ella, which prevents pregnancy up to 5 days after unprotected sex.
- Seek additional legislative bans on abortion.
- Promote the “rhythm method” and fertility awareness–based (FABM) methods to prevent pregnancy.²

What current law and policies say:

On April 14, 2024, Democrats advanced a federal bill protecting In Vitro Fertilization (IVF); the bill failed, with most Republicans voting against IVF. Conservatives – and Project 2025 – argue that a fertilized embryo is a person. Promoters of “fetal personhood” erroneously argue that IUDs and emergency contraception such as Ella should be banned because they supposedly prevent implantation of already fertilized eggs, thereby violating fetal personhood. However, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists correctly states that those forms of contraception work by preventing fertilization in the first place.

On February 16, 2024, in a wrongful death case, the Alabama State Supreme Court ruled that frozen embryos are children. Then on March 7, an Alabama bill was quickly passed and signed into law, shielding IVF providers from civil and criminal liability so that IVF services could begin again. Three months later, on June 12, the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the US, voted to oppose IVF. A day later, June 13, in the case of Food and Drug Administration v. Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine, the US Supreme Court turned down a challenge to the FDA approval and relaxation of the risk evaluation (REMS) for mifepristone, ruling that pro-life medical associations and pro-life doctors had not been harmed and had no standing to bring the suit.

As of June 2024, 41 states have abortion bans in effect with only limited exceptions:

- 14 states have a total abortion ban. 27 states have abortion bans based on gestational duration.
- 7 states ban abortion at or before 18 weeks’ gestation
- 20 states ban abortion at some point after 18 weeks
- 9 states and the District of Columbia do not restrict abortion based on gestational duration

(https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/dashboard/abortion-in-the-u-s/dashboard/?utm_source=web&utm_medium=trending)

² The rhythm method is also called “the calendar method” because it involves tracking one’s fertility cycle on a calendar so that people don’t have sex during ovulation or use condoms when having sex during ovulation to avoid pregnancy. Used alone, without condoms, the rhythm method is a much less reliable form of contraception).



Effective Strategies

- Educate yourself on the law: what are your state's laws on abortion? What laws govern local insurance providers? Planned Parenthood has information about [state abortion laws](#), as well as further resources.
- Identify local groups working on abortion rights access, as well as local resources for counseling and access to reproductive health services. Consider giving a monthly donation to local and national organizations advocating for and providing health and reproductive care.
- Lobby your legislators to protect mifepristone/medical abortion by urging them to repeal the 1873 Comstock Act; educate others in your community about the dangers of the Act.
- Counter misinformation: the right wing is deliberately pushing false information linking mifepristone/medical and in-clinic surgical abortions to harm for women. Both medication and surgical abortions are very safe, with lower complication rates than other common medical procedures, such as having wisdom teeth pulled. Abortion is also very common: about 1 in 4 US women will have an abortion by the time they are 45 years old.
- The FDA has studied mifepristone extensively: mifepristone blocks a hormone called progesterone that is necessary for a pregnancy to continue; side effects from mifepristone are incredibly rare.
- Consider opportunities for raising community abortion awareness, including online forums that can support confidential sharing.
- Reach out to your local media by email and with letters to make sure that journalists are covering the news of right-wing threats to reproductive rights and access.
- Share the knowledge: how are women and providers coping in states where abortion has already been banned? What effective strategies have been developed to overcome or bypass these bans? What is being done in your local community?

Take-away Messages:

- Women and all people capable of becoming pregnant have a right to abortion care and reproductive health care – it's every woman's right to choose whether to carry a pregnancy to term.



- Project 2025 seeks to restrict, and ultimately to eliminate the right to abortion, by strengthening and expanding existing state laws limiting abortion.
- Fourteen states currently have near-total abortion bans. Twelve states require one in-person clinic visit before accessing abortion pills by mail.
- There are federal court challenges underway to abortion prohibitions and restrictions including waiting periods.
- Conservatives want to use the 1873 Comstock Act to ban mail-order delivery of abortion pills, and criminalize abortion and providers of abortion; we need to organize now to repeal the Act. We need to demand that Congress protect mifepristone access. The Kaiser Family Foundation provides [state-by-state updates](#) on mifepristone access.
- Project 2025 would cut federal funding for Planned Parenthood and similar providers. Federal funding cuts will disproportionately impact lower-income women who depend on federal assistance for access to reproductive health services. Defend Planned Parenthood and Medicaid.
- Project 2025 seeks to replace evidence-based sex education in schools with abstinence-focused lessons. Abstinence has a failure rate: when people fail to abstain, they often lack birth control information and planning, and become pregnant unintentionally. We need to support state educators and public officials who support students' rights to be educated about their own bodies and reproductive health.
- Because Project 2025 is a threat to many different groups and sectors, there is the potential for joining with others under attack to create intersectional organizing. Who are your local allies?
- There are many local communities, community organizers, and leaders in and outside the US winning battles to defend reproductive health access. Seek out and share effective strategies, models, and ideas with others.

Discussion Prompts:

- How will you be affected if there's a national ban on abortion? If you use birth control, what would happen if there was a ban on the method that you use?
- Where you live, do you have access to a clinic that offers basic health care for women, including pap smears and other physical check-ups?



- Do any of your local health providers also offer abortion services? If not, where do your local providers refer women to?
- Is there a confidential way for people where you live to access health care and information?
- What would you do if your local health care option closes? Where else can you go for health care and information?
- If you're trying to get pregnant, is there a nearby clinic that offers fertility treatments?
- Who in your community might have helpful resources and information?

RESOURCES

Information sources:

- **Guttmacher Institute**: provides data on reproductive health issues and tracks legislation and policies affecting abortion and other reproductive rights. [Interactive Map: US Abortion Policies and Access After Roe | Guttmacher Institute](#)
- The **Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF)**: also tracks abortion access state-by-state. https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/dashboard/abortion-in-the-u-s-dashboard/?utm_source=web&utm_medium=trending
- **National Abortion Federation**: provides support for abortion providers and those seeking abortion care; has a hotline for those seeking information. <https://prochoice.org/patients/naf-hotline/>
- **Abortion Finder**: provides information about verified abortion care and support. <https://www.abortionfinder.org/>
- **If/When/How Network's Reproductive Legal Helpline**: provides legal information about abortion restrictions by state, including parental notification laws, and offers financial assistance to those investigated or fighting charges regarding an abortion or pregnancy. <https://www.reprolegalhelpline.org/>
- **Planned Parenthood**: provides preventive reproductive health care, birth control, abortion care, and education. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/>
- **ACLU: the Abortion Criminal Defense Initiative** tracks cases that the ACLU is filing to protect abortion rights. <https://www.aclu.org/campaigns-initiatives/abortion-criminal-defense-initiative>



Sexual health sources

- **Planned Parenthood** provides sexual health information for teens: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/teens>
- The **Trevor Project** offers sexual health information for LGBTQIA+ youth: [Sexual Health & Educational Resources for LGBTQ+ Youth \(thetrevorproject.org\)](https://www.thetrevorproject.org)



MODULE 3: LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS



LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS

Project 2025 takes devastating aim at LGBTQIA+ people and their civil rights, within a broad attack on gender identity and a rejection of gender diversity, with a goal of making LGBTQIA+ existence invisible. It calls for the complete elimination of any references to gender identity and LGBTQIA+ identity in all federal rules and regulations – a move that would strip LGBTQIA+ people of federal protections. It also calls for criminalizing transgender identity, equating it with pornography, and cutting any federal funding for gender-affirming surgery. It would expel transgender individuals from the military. It also states that sex is a binary of male and female, while declaring heterosexual married couples with children as the only legitimate family unit.

The criminalization of gender extends to the global sphere, where Project 2025 would deny US foreign aid to any groups abroad that fail to adhere to an anti-gay “pro-life” agenda. No US funds will be given to groups who serve LGBTQIA+ communities, or to women seeking abortions. LGBTQIA+ activists warn that Project 2025 threatens to roll back the major gains of the modern US gay rights movement, including gay marriage, adoption, gays in the military, and protection from discrimination.

CASE STUDY

ONE EVENING, THE DeLeons get an unexpected email from the principal of the public school about a complaint related to their child Sam, in second grade. Sam, named Samuel at birth, feels more like a girl than a boy and prefers female pronouns.

The next day, the school principal and Sam’s teacher Ms. Isabel, who has always been responsive to Sam’s needs, informs them that another parent complained that his son is being forced to call Sam a girl, and that students are being indoctrinated to accept homosexuality. The parent is an evangelical Christian and says the school policy violates his family’s and child’s religious freedom. He threatened to sue the school. He wants the principal and Ms. Isabel fired.

***Project 2025 threatens to roll back the
major gains of the modern US gay rights movement***



That's not all. The parents learn that a second parent complained to the school soccer coach about Sam being allowed to join the girls' team. Both complaining parents attend a local Christian evangelical church and one is a member of a local Moms for Liberty chapter. That group has called for a ban on gay books in local school libraries, and is promoting its campaign on local Christian radio stations.

What can the DeLeons do? The principal?

The school board? Other parents?

The community? What does the law say?



The principal tells Sam's parents that the school is committed to defending Sam's rights and ability to attend school in safety and must do so by law. The school has a strong anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policy. Most importantly, Title IX is a federal law that forbids sex discrimination in most schools. New Title IX regulations that go into effect in August 2024 have strengthened protections based on gender identity. Title IX supersedes state or local anti-LGBTQIA+ laws or policies.

Under the Title IX regulations, everyone has the right to dress and present themselves according to the gender identity they have and to be called by the pronouns and name they want. The law protects an individual's right to use restrooms that match their gender identity. While Sam may prefer to use the school's unisex bathroom, that is Sam's choice: Sam cannot be forced to use a separate facility by law. Above all, the principal wants to make sure Sam is protected and feels safe to attend school. The DeLeons also learn that the US Department of Education is responsible for enforcing Title IX and that they can file a complaint with the agency if the school fails to respect Sam's rights.

Other actions:

The principal informs the DeLeons that she is taking several actions in response to the issue: the school will send out a letter informing all school families and their faculty about the new Title IX regulations, and remind them of the school's zero tolerance policy on discrimination and bullying. It will also remind them that the US Constitution upholds the separation of church and state. While private institutions may petition for religious exemptions to Title IX, public schools cannot: they are legally bound to respect Title IX rules. Under school policy, any student who fails to comply with its policies may face suspension or dismissal.



The school has informed the complaining parents about its policy and will send out a letter to them and one to the DeLeons in response to the incident. That way the school has a documented record of its required response, which can be useful in case of any future legal action.

Under current Title IX regulations, everyone has the right to dress and present themselves according to their gender identity

The principal has heard that a local right-wing legal group is connected to Project 2025 and is supporting the local Moms for Liberty chapter in its campaign. She has met with the school's lawyer and contacted the ACLU, which is available to help with legal defense, as needed. The principal plans to send an email to a large state listserv of educators, educational advocates, and public officials to discuss the Moms for Liberty campaign, which threatens the larger community and violates their 1st Amendment rights. She is calling on the larger community to speak out against the attacks and stand up for public schools and students.

That week, Sam's parents call a local gay organization and are invited to join a new parents' support group that is engaged around the issue. They learn about useful resources from the Transgender Law Project, the National Center for Transgender Equality, GLSEN (a national LGBTQIA+ education network), the ACLU, and PEN. They recognize that they need to plan to defend Sam's rights in the future.

What's at Stake?

Project 2025 recommends rescinding the new Title IX regulations and defining sex as "biological sex recognized as birth." If Title IX is narrowly interpreted in the future, which Project 2025 aims to do, transgender identity would no longer be considered legitimate, because sex would be defined as binary only. The DeLeons also learn that many communities and sectors are targeted, which means there are many potential allies outside of the school communities.

Above all, they learn, a public community response is needed. Speaking out is important, while taking steps to assure their child's and their family's safety.

- All reference to LGBTQIA+ identity will be removed from federal policies and laws, rescinding federal protections for gay people except in employment, where a Supreme Court decision, *Bostock v Clayton County*, held that prohibitions on sex discrimination in employment apply to discrimination based on sexual orientation or transgender status.



- Sex is defined as binary only – transgender and nonbinary identity are no longer recognized.
- Materials regarding transgender and nonbinary identity are equated with pornography.
- Teachers in school would be required to use only the pronouns compatible with biological sex to refer to a student, unless given written permission from the student's parent or guardian. Teachers can refuse to use the child's preferred pronouns, even when the parent has given permission, based on their own religious or moral objections.
- Project 2025 opposes allowing transgender girls to compete on girls' teams or in girls' sports competitions.

Current law and policies:

- As of May 2024, 15 states have passed legislation banning gender-affirming care for minors. <https://www.americanoversight.org/>
- The Equality Act was reintroduced in the 118th Congress on June 21, 2023, in the House of Representatives by Rep. Mark Takano (D-CA) and in the Senate by Sens. Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), and Cory Booker (D-NJ) and would provide federal anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQIA+ people; it has not yet passed. <https://www.hrc.org/resources/equality>

Effective Strategies:

- Inform yourself about local and state laws.
- Many effective strategies have been used by communities to fight book bans, bans on discussion of LGBTQIA+ issues, and right-wing religious attacks. See resources below for information on groups around the country who have successfully challenged library and book bans, attacks on school boards, and threats to educators.
- Work proactively with schools to protect trans or nonbinary youth.
- Work with your local PTA and school board to bring issues up for discussion.
- Run for your local school board in order to have a voice in policy.
- GLSEN, National Center for Transgender Equality, TLP, PEN, Lambda Legal Defense, and the ACLU are among national groups with useful resources (*see links below*).



- Organizing at the hyperlocal level works! Since many groups are targeted by Project 2025's attacks, every community has many natural allies. Reach out to local LGBTQIA+ groups to build an intersectional local community response, and learn from others.



Take-away Messages:

- Project 2025 calls for the removal of all references to gender identity from all federal rules and regulations, which will strip federal protections from LGBTQIA+ people (with the possible exception of employment rules).
- Project 2025 defines "transgender ideology" as pornography and calls for it to be outlawed. For example, school librarians who offer LGBTQIA+ books could be accused of being sex offenders.
- Project 2025 threatens to roll back the recent gains of the LGBTQIA+ movement – same-sex marriage, adoption, rights of parents, and transgender people in the military.
- Project 2025 will restrict health services and gender-affirming surgery for nonbinary people. It defines gender-affirming treatment for minors as child abuse.
- Project 2025 will restrict anti-discrimination protections on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. It also cuts civil rights offices and rules, and Title IX protections, making it harder to bring forward discrimination claims.
- Project 2025 has deliberately weaponized gender and LGBTQIA+ identity as a political tactic and wedge hot-button social issue to divide communities. This is a classic tactic of authoritarian regimes: to attack vulnerable groups and demonize them. Project 2025 is taking a page from the right-wing regime of autocrat Viktor Orban in Hungary.
- Orban signed an agreement with Heritage Foundation and is advising US conservatives on how to implement Project 2025's social policy agenda.

Title IX regulations protect gender identity and rights in education and supersede local law or anti-gay policies in education



- Orban is also uniting far-right European groups who espouse Christian nationalism and criminalization of LGBTQIA+ issues into a new bloc to gain control of the European Union.
- Project 2025's reach is global: it would strip US funding from any groups abroad that provide services to gay people and communities, as well as women seeking abortion services.

But as of now:

- LGBTQIA+ students have an equal right to education, safety, and protection from discrimination in public school.
- Title IX rules protect gender identity and rights in education, including transgender and nonbinary identity, and supersede
- State or local laws and anti-gay policies in education.
- The US Constitution supports the separation of church and state and secular education in public school.
- The 1st Amendment protects everyone's right to freedom of expression.
- You are not alone! LGBTQIA+ rights are human rights.



Discussion Prompts:

- What are some of the key threats of Project 2025 to LGBTQIA+ people?
- What are specific threats to transgender and nonbinary people?
- How do federal laws like Title IX relate to state or local education policies?
- How does the case study reflect what's happening in your community?
- What local groups may be targeted by Project 2025 or have resources to respond? Who might be natural allies in your community?
- What local groups focus on transgender rights? What about legal groups?
- In your local public schools, is information censored? Are books banned from the libraries? What does the law say?
- What strategies might the DeLeons consider in responding to complaints against Sam?
- What steps can schools' and school boards take to put policies in place to protect LGBTQIA+ rights? What about parents?
- What steps can schools take to protect themselves against attacks by Moms for Liberty or other right-wing conservative groups?
- What role do public educators and local officials play in this response? What outreach can you do to engage them?
- What about local media?



RESOURCES

Education:

- **NCTE's School Action Center:**
www.transequality.org/schoolaction
- **NCTE's FAQ** on what the proposed rollback of the federal guidance on transgender students means:<http://www.transequality.org/issues/resources/faq-on-the-withdrawal-of-federal-guidance-on-transgender-students>
- **NCTE/GLSEN Model School District Policy:**
https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/images/resources/trans_school_district_model_policy_FINAL.pdf
- **The Department of Education's** Examples of Policies and Emerging Practices for Supporting Transgender Students:
www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/oshs/emergingpractices.pdf
- **Schools in Transition:** A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools:
www.genderspectrum.org/staging/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Schools-in-Transition-2015.pdf
- **PEN America** report on banned books and how to fight bans:
<https://pen.org/issue/book-bans/>
- **Claim Your Rights** resources from PFLAG and GLSEN:
<https://www.glsen.org/activity/claim-your-rights-pflag>

Transgender issues:

- **Transgender Law Project:** <https://transgenderlawcenter.org/>
- **National Center for Transgender Equality:** <https://transequality.org/>
- **American Oversight:** tracks attacks on gender-affirming care in each state and challenges to the bans. <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/attacks-on-gender-affirming-care>
- **Anti-trans Legislation Tracker** (Trans Legislation Tracker): 2024 Anti-Trans Bills: Trans Legislation Tracker

LGBTQIA+ Equality issues:

- **State Legislation** about LGBTQ+ People (GLAAD). [GLAAD Media Guide: State Legislation About LGBTQ People | GLAAD](#)
- **State Legislation** on LGBTQ+ issues (Equality Federation). [State Legislation | Equality Federation](#)



MODULE 4: POVERTY & FEDERAL BENEFITS



Project 2025 would target Medicaid, Head Start, and public assistance programs that help the poorest, most vulnerable, and least advantaged Americans.

CASE STUDY

ADELE AND JOSE expected to be able to send their son, Michael, to the same Head Start program that Daisy, their older child, had attended. They are shocked to find out that the Head Start program might close because of inadequate funding. More bad news arrives by mail: if Project 2025 rules go into effect, the Section 8 voucher that pays most of the family's rent would end. Adele and Jose can't afford their rent without the voucher.

Their neighbor Kevin, a single parent caring for his young children since his wife died of COVID-19, has also received bad news. Under the proposed rules of Project 2025, Kevin will have to work 30 hours per week to keep his Medicaid and SNAP benefits. Kevin's children get free meals through the local elementary school's summer meal program. Under Project 2025, the program will lose its funding. How will he care for his children now? Even worse, as a single parent, he stands to lose his housing because Project 2025 favors married couples.

Mark lives in the same county as Kevin, and is struggling with a chronic illness that prevents him from working. While he's applied for disability benefits, they have not yet come through. Mark learns that if Project 2025 is implemented he will also lose his Medicaid benefits unless he works 30 hours a week.

What can they do?

These friends know that there are other people like them facing similar difficulties. Adele, Kevin, and Mark decide to call a neighborhood meeting. With their neighbors, they contact their local and state elected officials and

POVERTY & FEDERAL BENEFITS



community groups for a strategy meeting. They also reach out for help to their local public legal services office, as well as a local law school clinic.

A representative from legal services tells them that each case is unique: if Project 2025 is implemented and they each receive a letter telling them that they have lost their benefits, they must reply right away. Each of their letters will give them a deadline, a date by which they must ask for a “Fair Hearing” to protest the changes to their benefits. The legal services representative recommends that anyone who is denied benefits should file for a fair hearing. The public service lawyers will guide them through the fair hearing process.

If Project 2025 is implemented, Mark will lose his Medicaid benefits unless he works 30 hours a week

When they contact the law school, they learn that if Project 2025 is implemented, the Housing Clinic students are planning to join a national class action lawsuit to challenge the defunding of Head Start, Medicaid, SNAP, and school meals, among other public assistance programs. Adele, Kevin, and Mark also contact their local and state officials who tell them that every state will be affected differently. There are local officials and nonprofits who can help them figure out exactly which laws apply to each of their circumstances. Their local legislators agree to try to find state money if their federal benefits are cut by Project 2025.



What's at stake?

Project 2025 represents an attack on poor people and everyone who relies on public assistance, including people who are disabled and can no longer work. New rules will limit access to public benefits and threaten the livelihood, safety, and housing of low-income individuals. The cutbacks to school meals will have a huge impact on vulnerable children. If enacted, Project 2025 will increase hunger and poverty in America – the very opposite of what federal assistance programs were supposed to do.

Main points of Project 2025's attack:

- Make new work requirements mandatory for SNAP recipients.
- Prioritize nuclear families; offer fewer benefits to single parents.



- Limit the number of years that people can receive Section 8 housing benefits.
- Privatize public housing where possible; privatize responsibility for public housing.
- End universal free school lunch. End Head Start.
- Add new restrictions so that fewer people are eligible for Medicaid.
- Make people pay for some care under Medicaid, and cap lifetime benefits.
- Turn Medicare for people 65 and older into a free-market program.

***Project 2025 represents an attack on poor people
and everyone who relies on public assistance***



Effective Strategies:

- Reach out to legal services offices and local nonprofits for support and information about filing individual Fair Hearing requests to challenge benefit denials.
- Organize community members to join class action lawsuits to block cuts and restrictions.
- Contact local and state elected officials who are working to defend benefits and demand that they set aside state and local funding for health care, etc.
- Reach out to advocates like the Poor People's Campaign who are working to expose Project 2025 and the Christian fundamentalist agenda.
- Bring together a team of presenters who can hold community teach-ins on the threats of Project 2025. Invite low-income residents, local and state officials, as well as allied organizations and nonprofits, to attend.

Take-away Messages:

- Project 2025 intends to destroy the existing federal safety net for vulnerable and low-income Americans.
- Project 2025 will decrease vital public assistance programs including free school lunch, Medicaid, and Head Start.
- It will impose new mandatory work requirements for SNAP recipients.
- It seeks to privatize Medicare and public housing.
- Project 2025's proposed changes will be fought by progressive groups, while there are laws related to access to health care that may apply. Check with nonprofit legal and health advocacy groups for updates (*see resources below*).



- Some state and local governments also provide housing and financial assistance (*see resources below*).

What the law says now:

- Federal benefit programs cannot be cut unless *new* federal laws are created and regulations change.

Discussion Prompts:

- What are some of the key threats of Project 2025 to people living in poverty? On public assistance?
- How will poor and disabled people in your community be harmed by Project 2025's benefits reductions?
- What local groups and nonprofit organizations are already working to assist people in need in your community? What national groups?
- Before any cuts are made, what steps do you think you can take to organize people receiving benefits? Can you take proactive steps to inform people in your community? Are there identifiable local resources for those who will be harmed by cuts?
- Organizing at the hyperlocal level works! Since many groups are targeted by Project 2025's attacks, every community has many natural allies. Reach out to build an intersectional local community response, and learn from others.

RESOURCES

- **How Project 2025 would cut Medicaid:**
<https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2024/06/17/project-2025-blueprint-also-includes-draconian-cuts-to-medicaid/>
- **United for a Fair Economy** <https://www.faireconomy.org/>
- **Legal Services Corporation** <https://www.lsc.gov/>
- **National Housing Law Project** <https://www.nhlp.org/>
- **National Homeless Law Center** <https://homelesslaw.org/>
- **National Disability Rights Network** <https://www.ndrn.org/>
- **National Center for Law and Economic Justice** <https://nclej.org/>
- **Center for Law and Social Policy** <https://www.clasp.org/>
- **Legal Action Center** <https://www.lac.org/>
- **American Civil Liberties Union** <https://www.aclu.org/>
- **Poor People's Campaign** <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/>





1ST AMENDMENT & MEDIA

MODULE 5: 1st AMENDMENT

Free Speech & Media



Project 2025 takes an ironic position on traditionally conservative issues like free speech and censorship – all the while proclaiming its commitment to the 1st Amendment. It broadly attacks the right to free speech and expression in myriad ways. It calls for eliminating any reference to gender and LGBTQIA+ identity and rights in federal policy, and restricts public education of LGBTQIA+ issues, sexual and reproductive health and racial equality ideas and policies (DEI, Critical Race Theory). It goes further, criminalizing speech related to transgender identity which is equated with pornography, and would criminalize those viewed as promoting LGBTQIA+ content. Under the guise of “parental rights” and protecting children and older teenagers from exposure to pornography and “woke” ideas, Project 2025 seeks to rein in Big Tech and internet access, including TikTok.

It also attacks the press: mainstream and progressive media outlets are deemed left-wing, anti-American, and biased against conservatives and Christians. Also alarming, it calls for greater law enforcement surveillance of individuals viewed as critical of the president’s agenda within a framework of combatting domestic terrorism – a backsliding of the right to assembly.

CASE STUDY

MARIA AND JAMES are sexual health educators working for the local chapter of a state health department. The health department receives federal funds. They present a sexual health 101 workshop to a local seniors’ meeting at the county senior center. The senior center also receives federal funding.

The presentation covers healthy sexual relationships, pregnancy prevention, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases and candid explanations of sexual activities. James and Maria have always presented content that is applicable to all adults – including members of the LGBTQIA+ community. They bring referral information for local health providers that they distribute, along with pamphlets explaining sexual health topics with words and pictures.



During the presentation, Maria and James are asked questions about gender identity and sexuality. They give information that includes transgender and nonbinary identity issues, and point to a referral education sheet for providers who are sensitive to transgender patients. Another person in the audience asks questions about sexual activities between men. James answers the questions clearly and explicitly. Maria is also asked a question about how race, ethnicity, and disabilities figure into people's ability to negotiate safer sex and sexual activity. She explains that people's ability to negotiate their sexual relationships on an equal playing field may be affected by their identity and that all partners should be sensitive to this.

***Project 2025 would classify the purveyors of LGBTQIA+ content
– deemed pornography – as sexual offenders***

After the presentation, Maria and James are called into their supervisor's office. They find out that a complaint has been filed against them by a local conservative group with the state and federal funding providers. One of the people at the presentation who asked questions is in the conservative group that is linked to Project 2025. Their boss tells them that the conservative group is trying to get their funding revoked because of LGBTQIA+ content and DEI content.

What's at Stake?

Maria and James are at risk of being prosecuted under a new law classifying LGBTQIA+ content as pornography. In fact, Project 2025 would classify the purveyors of pornography as sexual offenders. That could potentially to anyone seen as promoting LGBTQIA+ content such as a school librarian or bookstore owner. Shocked, and afraid, Maria and James leave the office, uncertain what to do.

What can they do?

What does the law now say about pornography?

Don't they have 1st Amendment rights?



Maria and James consult with the local ACLU chapter and find out that their presentation *is* covered by the 1st Amendment: their speech on sexual topics *is protected*. Since Maria and James delivered accurate, truthful information based on well-established public health principles, they should be protected from prosecution.

They also learn they aren't alone: other educators are being targeted by an organized campaign by the same conservative group, and funded by backers of Project 2025.



Maria and James join a coalition of public health workers and community members to defend their rights. The coalition is fighting against limits on public education work with sexual health content and are looking for private funding to continue their work given the right-wing attacks. Maria and James also opt to join a lawsuit opposing the loss of federal funding for sexual health education that is LGBTQIA-inclusive. They learn that the Constitutional protections covering free speech are specific and complex, and relate to specific 1st Amendment protections.

What are 1st Amendment Rights?

The 1st Amendment to the US Constitution states: *“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”* The 1st Amendment also:

- Protects speech by members of the public on important issues.
- Protects journalists and the press/media who report and comment on events from government interference and censorship
- Allows members of the public to assemble and demonstrate, including sit-ins, regarding issues of concern.

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”

- Prohibits laws that restrict religion and the free exercise of religion. This is the basis of the doctrine of separation of church and state.
- Prohibits the government from compelling speech, such as requiring the Pledge of Allegiance in classrooms.
- Protects truthful yet unpopular speech.
- Protects the public’s right to speak at government meetings and public hearings, and participate in online public forums.

Are there limits on 1st Amendment rights?

- Some Supreme Court decisions in the past 30 years have interpreted the 1st Amendment and limited the application of anti-discrimination laws on businesses or organizations that assert a religious belief opposed to the LGBTQIA+ community, calling this “compelled speech.” (see box below)



- Some limited areas of speech are not protected by the 1st Amendment, including child pornography, obscenity -- a much narrower category than pornography, fraud, or perjury -- and actual threats that incite violence.
- Obscenity is not protected under the 1st Amendment, but adult pornography is. Now, Project 2025 seeks to equate pornography with obscenity, and by extension, with LGBTQIA+ identity and content and speech. The result is an attempt to criminalize speech that is currently protected under the 1st Amendment.

What is “compelled speech”?

Maria and James learn that Project 2025’s authors have tried to have topics they want to ban discussion about considered “compelled speech.”

Compelled speech is a 1st Amendment legal concept that protects an individual from being required to utter or otherwise express a thought with which that individual disagrees. For example, students cannot be required to say the pledge of allegiance and salute the US flag.

Some Christian Right activists argue that their religious opposition to homosexuality gives them 1st Amendment “compelled speech” rights to be exempt from laws that call for equal treatment of LGBTQIA+ people, and that outlaw discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Some Supreme Court cases have examined this issue and, in one case, the court held that a website designer would not need to design a wedding website for a same-sex couple, due to the designer’s religious beliefs. In 1995, the Supreme Court said that requiring a parade to include an LGBTQIA+ group would constitute ‘compelled speech’ for the organization that ran the parade.

Main points of Project 2025’s attack:

- Project 2025 wants to re-categorize speech about gender and LGBTQIA+ topics as “illegal content” – meaning obscenity and thus strip this speech of its current 1st Amendment protections.
- Project 2025 plans to eliminate DEI training, and claims it violates the 1st Amendment. (*see module on DEI*)
- Project 2025 wants to expand the idea of “compelled speech” to privilege Christian nationalist views over the speech rights of others, and to create large exceptions to anti-discrimination laws.



- Project 2025 says mainstream media outlets are left-wing, anti-American, and biased against conservatives. It says the media is the enemy of “ordinary” Americans.
- Project 2025 suggests putting the Voice of America under National Security Council or Department of State oversight, to assure promotion of Christian conservative views.
- Project 2025 proposes banning all public funding for nonprofit media like the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR). Its aggressive stance against public broadcasting would enable commercial exploitation of media channels.
- Big Tech is a bastion of “liberal wokeness” and biased against conservatives, says Project 2025. It would control and censor speech on “Big Tech” internet platforms and limit older teens’ access to the internet – under the guise of “protecting children”– while restricting access to LGBTQIA+ content, information about abortion and reproductive health, and progressive views.
- Project 2025 calls for limiting access to White House press briefings for mainstream media to limit criticism of the president’s agenda – and expand Christian media access.
- Project 2025 calls for greater law enforcement surveillance of individuals via a framework of domestic terrorism to track individuals or groups viewed as critical of the president’s agenda – a backsliding of the right to assembly.



Effective Strategies:

- **Know your rights** – and educate others - about 1st Amendment protections and the rule of law.
- **Know your state laws.** Inform and organize within community members and community leaders, including religious leaders, to oppose limitations on 1st Amendment freedoms.
- **Help monitor local attacks** on speech, assembly, the media, and religion. (*see Resources for more tools to do this*)
- **Identify allies in your local community** working on 1st Amendment issues, including press, legal and civil rights groups.

1st Amendment protections are central to our democracy



- **Reach out to local stakeholders** including religious leaders to discuss your 1st Amendment concerns about Project 2025 and support groups like PEN and the ACLU who are fighting attacks and bans on freedom of 1st Amendment rights.
- **Reach out to libraries and schools** to support their efforts to fight book and DEI bans.
- **Do outreach to local educators, youth, and students** to inform them about Project 2025's attacks on speech and internet access and how it may affect them. See our briefs on How Project 2025 Affects You on different topics including Race, DEI, CRT.
- **Collaborate across state lines and sectors** with others facing similar attacks.
- **Reach out to local media and use social media** to discuss the situation in your community, and share information they can use to inform the public.
- **Reach out to local interfaith leaders** to discuss Project 2025's agenda and the importance of educating their congregations about what is at stake.

Take-away Messages:

- 1st Amendment protections are central to our democracy.
- The freedom to practice a religion of one's choice, or no religion, is central to American society.
- Project 2025 directly attacks American's key Constitutional rights including our 1st Amendment rights. These attacks reflect key components of authoritarianism: one of the classic first steps of authoritarian regimes is to seize control of public information by cracking down or casting doubt on the authority of an independent press, and cracking down on the right to assembly.
- Project 2025 criminalizes speech related to LGBTQIA+ identity and seeks to eliminate and restrict public discussion of topics of race and racism, DEI, CRT, and reproductive health.
- It equates transgender identity with pornography, which is to be policed and outlawed.
- It criminalizes anyone viewed as purveying content that could be deemed pornographic, including LGBTQIA+ topics, and calls for labeling them sex offenders.
- It seeks to blur and even eliminate the Constitutional separation of church and state. It calls for promotion of Christian education to supplant secular public education.
- It supports religious exemptions to Christians who oppose homosexuality to discriminate against LGBTQIA+ people and disregard existing anti-discrimination laws.





- On the positive side, attacks on 1st Amendment rights have been successfully defeated in the past. There are many lessons to apply (*see our website Toolkits for examples*)

But for now....

- The law – the 1st Amendment – continues to protect our rights to speech, expression, assembly, and religion.
- While conservatives have won several victories using the “compelled speech” legal doctrine argument to allow religious exemptions for Christians to avoid providing services to LGBTQIA+ clients, they have also lost legal challenges.
- Attacks on 1st Amendment rights have been successfully defeated in the past.
- Allies exist in every community and may have experience fighting 1st Amendment battles: seek out allies and share their lessons with others locally

Discussion Prompts:

- Have people in your community already been affected by Project 2025?
- How would imposition of Christian nationalist views into the federal government adversely impact your community members?
- What 1st Amendment protections are most important to your community?
- How have DEI efforts improved life in your community?
- What positive changes have you seen as a result of LGBTQIA+ -inclusive policies?
- How important is public broadcasting to your community? Independent media sources?

Some Practical Toolkits to Fight Book Bans, Censorship:

- **5 Things You Can Do To Fight Book Bans** (PEN America) <https://www.pen.org/5-ways-to-fight-book-bans/>
- **Sample Scripts to Speak Against Book Bans, at School Board Meetings** (PEN America) <https://pen.org/script-book-bans-school-board/>
- **Guide to testifying at local School Board or Library Meetings** (PFLAG) <https://www.pflag.org/plan-to-testify-at-local-board-meetings/#SchoolBoard>
- **How To Speak Out Against Library Bans, At School Board Meetings: Tips** (PEN America) <https://pen.org/what-to-say-about-book-bans/>



RESOURCES

- **PEN America** <https://pen.org/>
- **Project Censored** <https://www.projectcensored.org/>
- **People for the American Way** <https://www.pfaw.org/>
- **Committee to Protect Journalists** <https://www.cpj.org>
- **National Coalition Against Censorship** <https://ncac.org/>
- **Reporters Without Borders | Reporters Sans Frontières** <https://rsf.org>
- **Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press** <https://www.rcfp.org/>
- **Media Freedom Coalition** <https://www.globalfreedomcoalition.org>
- **National Coalition Against Censorship** <https://ncac.org>
- **Freedom House** <https://freedomhouse.org>
- **Freedom of the Press Foundation** <https://freedom.press>
- **American Civil Liberties Union** <https://www.aclu.org/issues/free-speech>
- **Brennan Center for Justice** <https://www.brennancenter.org/>
- **American Library Association** <https://www.ala.org/>
- **Duke Law School First Amendment Clinic** <https://law.duke.edu/firstamendment>
- **Woodhull Freedom Foundation** <https://www.woodhullfoundation.org/>
- **Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University** <https://knightcolumbia.org/>
- **First Amendment Watch at New York University** <https://firstamendmentwatch.org/>
- **National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers** <https://www.nacdl.org/>
- **Center for Constitutional Rights** <https://ccrjustice.org/>
- **Americans United for the Separation of Church and State** <https://www.au.org>





MODULE 6: LABOR & THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE



Project 2025 proposes to radically restructure and “destroy the Administrative State” by replacing (firing) a large part of the federal professional workforce with a hand-picked, vetted Christian conservative bureaucratic “army” (see related box) loyal only to the president. It calls for eliminating and restructuring key federal departments and federal unions, while removing federal regulations that, Project 2025 argues, hinder big business. Labor analysts warn that Project 2025 would hollow out the federal workforce, remove critical consumer safeguards that protect the American people, and is a recipe for a partisan, authoritarian government.

CASE STUDY

MICHELLE MALMER WAS excited when she was promoted during the Biden administration to work as a legislative analyst for a federal agency. It was a secure job with benefits, and she was able to focus on her passion: policy. Her promotion gave her new status in a 301-level job in the General Services 15 category – one level up the federal ranking ladder from her previous job. With her promotion, Michelle received a slight income increase in addition to guaranteed federal benefits, with continued union representation from the American Federation of Government Employees, AFGE 1531.

She was also excited because her husband, Michael, a geologist, was hired by the Department of Agriculture. While he had taken a pay cut from his previous job as a college teacher, and was now a 110-level economist, in another year, he would be eligible for promotion to a G-13 supervisory position, taking on more



responsibility and earning more money. As a federal employee, Michael is also a member of the National Federation of Federal Employees, or NFFE.

Last fall, the Malmers got emails from their unions warning them about Project 2025's agenda, and its call to mass fire some 50,000 career federal workers. Schedule F was a 2020 short-lived Trump Executive Order that called for reclassifying federal workers and categorizing them as temporary "at will" employees who lack union protections and can be more easily fired. It was rescinded by Biden.

Project 2025 calls for mass firing some 50,000 career professional employees – and replacing them with inexperienced partisan recruits

Conservatives plan to place at least 20,000 Christian loyalist recruits in "acting" or "temporary" top leadership jobs, giving them the immediate authority to rewrite policy and quickly implement Project 2025's agenda to "dismantle the administrative state." They plan to remove experienced, trained professionals and scientists from key sectors like nuclear energy, defense, food and water safety, hollowing out the federal government's expertise on which we all rely, an alarming plan to many critics.

National Treasury Employee Union (NTEU) officials recently discovered Trump-era documents from the Office of Management and Budget that suggests that tens of thousands of additional federal jobs may be at risk under Project 2025 – including thousands of mid-and lower-level jobs – not just top policy jobs. Michelle and Michael realized their jobs and pensions could soon be lost.

What can the Malmers do?
What does the law say?
What rules protect them?



Should they start looking for new jobs outside the government? What steps are unions and the government taking to protect the federal workforce?

The Malmers learned that two actions have been taken to protect them: the Office of Policy Management has passed a new rule stopping civil service workers from being easily reclassified as "political appointees" or other temporary "at-will" workers. An appeal process to the Merit Systems Protection Board has been established so that civil service employees can fight job status changes. This has put the brakes on the potential damage of Schedule F, though it remains a threat.



A bicameral **Saving the Civil Service Act** (H.R. 1002; S.399) that would permanently end Schedule F has also gained bipartisan Congressional support. But labor watchdogs reported in June that it was not likely to be put up for a vote before the November election, despite growing pressure by progressives in Congress to do so.

Other actions:

The Malmers are joining labor leaders and workers to push for Congressional support and action on the pending bill before November 2024. They are also discussing Project 2025 with their department heads to consider what priority steps could be taken now to prevent the planned dismantling of key agencies if Trump wins the presidential election. US media have also increased their coverage of Project 2025's broad threats to labor, which could radically and negatively impact the US economy and the global economy, given its goal of overhauling US foreign policy, foreign aid, and global trade.

What's at stake?

Project 2025 would lead to major US job losses of a merit-based, trained, and experienced federal workforce, to be replaced by an inexperienced partisan corps loyal to the president's agenda. This represents a politicization of the civil servants working in government that the Brookings Institute calls "the most fundamental change to the civil service system since 1883. The plan also includes giving "supreme" governing powers to the president, backed by agenda loyalists – a step toward authoritarian rule.

Project 2025 also calls for deregulation of the federal government across all sectors, and seeks to outsource the duties of the federal government to private sector groups and give the private sector unprecedented authority to act on behalf of the federal government. That means unelected private groups or individuals would be making decisions for the American people.

Main points of attack:

- Activate Schedule F to reassign 50,000+ nonpartisan federal workers to become "at will" employees that can easily be fired and lose job benefits.
- Replace the existing experienced workforce with Christian conservative political appointees committed to implementing a radical conservative Christian agenda.
- Weaken the National Labor Relations Act.



- Congress will be encouraged to pass the “Worker’s Choice” Act (H.R. 8442), which would dilute the power of unions.
- Eliminate federal unions; make it harder for people to join unions. Promote management over worker rights, weakening labor organizing.
- Eliminate LGBTQIA+ employee protections.
- Repeal requirements for “racial equity” regulations, along with protections for hiring based on sex, gender, or sexual orientation – to eradicate protections against many different kinds of employment discrimination.
- Prioritize traditional Christian families in labor regulations.
- Enable the private sector to take over federal government agency duties, and give the private sector decision-making power to act on behalf of the federal government.
- Eliminate the two (of four) lowest wage levels for foreign workers.
- Businesses and corporations in general would be exempt from so-called burdensome bureaucracy, such as environmental, health, and safety regulations.
- Work visas for immigrants would be greatly reduced to prioritize hiring of Americans even with a low employment rate or sector-specific hiring needs (e.g., seasonal workers).
- Much of the administration of business regulations and unemployment benefits would be transferred to the states, who could adjust it as necessary without compliance to federal laws.

Effective Strategies:

- Support and enforce the new federal Office of Personnel Management rule that supports merit-based federal employment and that provides a new process of appeal for proposed job transfers.
- Educate community members and lobby Congress to support the bipartisan Save the Civil Service Act to block Schedule F changes permanently.
- Reach out to union leaders in your community, and contact state and federal labor officials, and stakeholders in key sectors targeted by Project 2025 to mitigate proposed reforms of key agencies.



- Outreach locally, host in-person meetings and create online gatherings to build public awareness of what's at stake if our federal workforce is fired and replaced.

Take-away Messages:

- Project 2025 is a recipe for a partisan, authoritarian government. It would gut agencies and radically dismantle our system of federal government.
- Schedule F represents the greatest proposed change to our civil service in 140 years. If implemented, Schedule F will lead tens of thousands of career workers to lose their jobs and benefits; the loss of an experienced workforce will be devastating to the US economy, business, and health sectors, and hollowing out our government puts the safety of all Americans at risk.
- An inexperienced partisan managerial corps of at least 20,000 recruits vetted to implement Project 2025 would be tasked to implement “reforms” advancing an anti-democratic imposition of US Christian theocracy.
- Project 2025 has sweeping negative economic US and global implications.
- The plan eliminates LGBTQIA+ employee protections, and agencies and policies that address racial and gender disparities in the workplace.
- Project 2025 is anti-organized labor, favors management over workers, and would eliminate federal unions.



Where there's hope:

- The new OMB rule provides an impediment to the planned use of Schedule F to mass-fire federal workers.
- Congressional support for the Save the Civil Service Act is growing; if passed, it would permanently end Schedule F. Unfortunately, this remains a longshot to succeed by fall 2024.
- Labor unions, federal agency directors, and legal groups are considering counter-strategies to mitigate Project 2025's proposed harms in different sectors.



Who's Most Likely to Lose Their Civil Service Job? Anyone and Everyone.

AN ESTIMATED TWO million federal workers belong to one of three types of services: the competitive service, excepted service, and Senior Executive Service (SES). The SES corps includes some 7,000 high-level federal executives who direct major programs and projects in departments and agencies. SES workers are governed by a separate regulatory structure from the competitive and excepted services. Career SES employees are hired via a merit-based process, but lack the same civil service protections as those in the competitive or excepted services.

As a result, career SES employees have few remedies if a political appointee boss wants to remove them from their position of employment entirely. Unless there is a change in the law, career SES employees will remain extremely vulnerable to undue political influence. Meanwhile, civil service protections are systematic protections that aim to prevent illegal or unethical behavior or political overreach in the government.

“This is less about providing a specific person with job protections and more about backing federal employees when they discover bad behavior or rogue apolitical appointees,” explains Steve Lenkart, head of the National Federation of Federal Employees. “If Schedule F is implemented, as promised by Republican officials, federal employees in the competitive and excepted services will be transferred into an “at-will” employment status without civil service protections.” And he warns, “the government will not be able to defend itself from corruption and political operatives, impacting the missions and operations of every department and agency in the government.” – ACD

RESOURCES

- **American Federation of Government Employees:** <https://www.afge.org/>
- **National Federation of Federal Employees:** <https://nffe.org/>
- **National Treasury Employees Union:** <https://www.nteu.org/>
- **What Is Schedule F?:** <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2023/09/trump-desantis-republicans-dismantle-deep-state/675378/>
- *For deeper reading and more resources on Labor & Economy, see our campaign website.*



MODULE 7: CLIMATE CHANGE



Project 2025 will reverse all policies that attempt to slow down climate change. This will speed up global warming, and more damage will be caused to people's homes and lives as a consequence.

CASE STUDY

DEE AND MARTIN live in a big town on the coast. Over the past few years, the beach has gradually washed away, and the cliffs near the sea have been crumbling – now it's too dangerous to walk there. Last year, two houses even fell into the sea, and three of the people who lived in them were killed. The town doesn't have enough money to repair the beach or shore up the cliffs.

The FEMA flood insurance program is so expensive that Dee and Martin can't afford to insure their house. The houses are worth almost nothing now, so people can't afford to sell them and move away, either – all their savings are sunk into those homes. Meanwhile, the town government keeps arguing that the rising water and the violent storms have nothing to do with fossil fuels, so there's nothing they can do about "acts of nature." Officials refuse to pay for the damage that the storms cause to the houses. It looks as if Dee and Martin are going to lose their home, and they'll have nothing to show for it.

Project 2025 seeks to roll back every climate change policy and will speed up global warming

Dee and Martin also learn that Project 2025's climate policy reforms may be implemented. Project 2025 calls for an immediate freeze on Biden climate treaties, and seeks to reverse any policies that attempt to address climate change. That will speed up global warming. Project 2025 also wants to ramp up oil drilling and fracking, and cut down on renewable energy. It will be a disaster for everyone in this country, and for future generations, climate activists charge.



What can they do?

The first step is to get better informed. Dee and Martin start reading, and realize their town council is wrong – all the reputable scientists agree that fossil fuels cause climate change.

Then they look around and see that Bucks County, PA, filed a lawsuit after seven residents were killed in flash floods – the county sued the oil companies, claiming that the companies had lied about the effects of fossil fuels, and should now pay to fix the damage. A recent Supreme Court decision (Rhode Island v. Chevron et al., April 2023) allowed the State of Rhode Island to proceed with a case against big oil companies for causing damage to coastal communities through climate change – just like what’s happened to them. (Unfortunately, a July 2024 Supreme Court decision has put that ruling in jeopardy.)

Dee and Martin seek out a lawyer friend, and start tapping into their social networks. They decide to create a local group; after all, many people in their area are impacted. Soon, they’ve connected with a local law firm that is managing a series of similar lawsuits. They agree to join the effort and speak out to community groups to warn others of the dangers of climate change. Their new group works together, among neighbors, to protect their local homes and towns.



What other steps might they consider?

Dee and Martin realize that there is a huge worldwide youth movement around climate change: – it affects their future, and they care. Youth leaders are raising awareness and pursuing litigation. They argue that their rights are being violated if others damage the planet. [World’s Youth for Climate Justice](#) is among groups pushing for the International Court of Justice to take action. In Montana, a group of young people have sued their state, claiming that they have a constitutional right to a livable planet; that case is moving forward, despite challenges.

Dee and Martin feel inspired by these young activists. Their local group learns from these strategies and commits to supporting the movement locally, nationally – and globally. They decide to propose talks at schools and community organizations for adults. Dee and Martin are still worried, but they’ve turned their fear into action. They’ve become newly-minted local climate activists with many new allies, locally and globally.

Dee and Martin are also becoming interested in [alternatives to fossil fuels](#) – nuclear energy and renewable energy resources. They’re [educating themselves](#) about other ways of generating



power: wind farms, hydroelectric dams, nuclear power plants, solar panels, geothermal systems, biofuel, and wood. When they talk to groups about climate change, they make sure to explain what all these alternatives are. They suggest that people should make sure their town is doing everything possible to switch to these alternative energy sources that will help slow down climate change. It feels much more positive to argue *for* renewable energy than just argue *against* fossil fuels – there are alternatives.

What's at stake?

Climate change affects everyone, and it is becoming a huge economic issue. As the earth warms, more people are forced to migrate in order to find food when their land dries out because of heat. Global food and water shortages are becoming more common and more serious. The weather across the globe is becoming more extreme, causing damage through hurricanes and tornadoes.

Main points of Project 2025's attack on climate change policy:

General:

- Deny that global warming is a problem
- In the EPA: dismantle all attempts to address climate change, and deny the accepted scientific position on the effect of human activities on the climate
- Dismantle any government initiatives to deal with climate change

Fossil fuels:

- Ramp up drilling activity for oil and fracking for natural gas on federal lands – even protected lands
- Deregulate nuclear reactor development
- Give states more power to decide about energy production and land use

Regulations:

- Roll back regulations that require corporations to deal with climate change
- Remove Biden "Climate Smart" regulations for environmental protection, climate change
- Loosen regulations if they get in the way of business and stop enforcing existing regulations

Policies:

- Stop offering support for production of electric vehicles
- Eliminate government support for renewable energy sources.



Effective Strategies:

- **Educate people:** look at your social networks and think about where you could do some consciousness-raising. For example, have your church or local library invite a speaker to explain how we can slow down climate change and why we need to.
- **Young people are at the forefront** of climate change protests – find local groups near you and do what you can to support them and amplify their voices.
- **Join a lawsuit:** there are more than 1500 ongoing lawsuits designed to halt climate change – people are suing corporations, oil companies, and local governments for allowing activities that increase global warming. Check to see what’s going on in your area and support it.
- **Look around in your community:** are there actions you can take to slow down the effects of climate change? Recycling, composting, other solutions? Discussions around these issues raise awareness. **Local mobilizing works!**

Young people are at the forefront of climate change protests – find local groups near you and do what you can to support them and amplify their voices

Take-away Messages:

- **All people have a right to be protected from the effects of climate change.** The United Nations states that “States have an obligation to respect, protect, fulfill and promote all human rights for all persons without discrimination. Failure to take affirmative measures to prevent human rights harms caused by climate change, including foreseeable long-term harms, breaches this obligation.”
- There are now many lawsuits where people are trying to hold corporations and governments liable for the damage they have caused.
- There are renewable energy sources available – we can switch.
- If Project 2025 goes into effect, use of fossil fuels will increase, and climate change will speed up.

Discussion Prompts:

- Do you believe that climate change and global warming are real? Do you believe we can do anything to stop the damage?



- Has anyone in your group already been affected by climate change? If so, how – through flooding, hurricanes, drought, etc.?
- Do you worry about how climate change might affect your children's future?
- In your neighborhood, do you see damage from violent weather and strong storms?
- Has the house or building you live in been damaged?
- Do you wish you could afford an electric car? Or solar panels? Is there any state or local financial support for getting those where you live?
- What people or groups in your area are already organizing around climate change and educating the community?
- Are local communities near you filing lawsuits?

RESOURCES

Facts about climate change:

- **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration:** provides educational materials about climate change and its consequences.
<https://www.noaa.gov/education/resource-collections/climate/climate-change-impacts>
- **United Nations** climate action: education about the consequences of climate change.
<https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change>

Fracking/fossil fuels:

- Why fracking is a problem for the environment:
https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/fracking/10_questions.html
- The effects of fossil fuels on the environment and the climate:
<https://www.eesi.org/papers/view/fact-sheet-climate-environmental-and-health-impacts-of-fossil-fuels-2021>

Youth movement on climate change:

- Stories from young activists and their successes in raising awareness:
<https://www.unicef.org/stories/young-climate-activists-demand-action-inspire-hope>
- **World's Youth for Climate Justice:** <https://www.wy4cj.org/>





- Montana youth argue their constitutional right to a livable planet:
https://wyomingtruth.org/montana-supreme-court-upholds-landmark-climate-ruling-that-said-emissions-cant-be-ignored/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=paid_search&utm_campaign=20836804946&utm_content=&utm_term=&gadid=&gad_source=5&gclid=EAlaIQobChMIsZSnsar3hgMVc01HAR3JTQNUeAAAYBSAAEgIS-fD_BwE

Climate change and human rights | litigation:

- **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to the 21st Conference** of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, “Understanding Human Rights and Climate Change”
<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/ClimateChange/COP21.pdf>
- **Climate Change Litigation databases** at the **Sabin Center for Climate Change Law** at Columbia University: <https://climate.law.columbia.edu/content/climate-change-litigation> and database of current lawsuits: <https://climatecasechart.com/>
- “**Yale Experts** Explain Climate Lawsuits,” <https://sustainability.yale.edu/explainers/yale-experts-explain-climate-lawsuits>

Facts about nuclear and renewable energy sources:

- **The International Atomic Energy Agency** explains nuclear power.
<https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/what-is-nuclear-energy-the-science-of-nuclear-power>
- **U.S. Energy Information Administration** explains the different types of renewable energy and their pros and cons. <https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/renewable-sources/>



PUBLIC EDUCATION

MODULE 8: PUBLIC EDUCATION (Grades K-12)



Project 2025 opposes secular public education – point blank. It calls for eliminating the Department of Education (DoED), or, short of that, sharply decreasing its authority and offices, while transferring federal education dollars to states and local agencies. It calls for transferring public funds to support private charter and faith-based educational institutions, career schools, military academies, and lifelong learning programs. Project 2025 advocates “parental choice” and proposes a parents “Bill of Rights” allowing parents to decide what school their children attend and what they are taught in class.

It opposes teaching LGBTQIA+ lives and history, Black and brown experience and history, and cuts funds for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and Critical Race Theory programs. It wants to restructure and privatize the federal student loan program while toughening penalties for student loan defaults.

CASE STUDY 1

ANA IS A middle school principal in a small school district. She has just found out that, if Project 2025 is enacted, there will be new federal rules for schools and she is not sure how they will apply to the following urgent situations: Joe, a 5th grade social studies teacher, plans a school trip to a museum so the students can see an exhibit about the civil rights movement that includes details about the harms of segregation. Kelly, a white parent of a 5th grader, complains, and asks that the trip be called off.

What can Ana do? What are the rules to follow?

Ana calls a meeting of the school board, and they vote to consult their lawyer. The lawyer advises that the social studies teachers may consider touring the museum exhibit to make sure the content on race complies with potential new federal regulations banning Diversity, Equity &



Inclusion (DEI) curricula and Critical Race Theory (CRT). The lawyer suggests that Kelly be reminded that parental permission is required for student classroom trips. Kelly can withhold permission, and her child will be given an alternative assignment. But the school will not prevent its staff from including the museum exhibit in their lesson plan – there is no federal law that bans the teaching of segregation.

The school board votes to join a coalition of school organizations working with the ACLU to protect the 1st Amendment’s application to school libraries and teaching.

What is DEI? What is CRT?

DEI stands for *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* — values and policies being promoted to help address historic discrimination of marginalized groups on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, ability, gender and sexual orientation. Put simply, DEI initiatives seek to level the playing field.

CRT stands for *Critical Race Theory* — an academic and legal framework that recognizes that racism is more than individual bias and prejudice, but is manifested as systemic racism embedded in the fabric of our culture and society.

CASE STUDY 2

MARIE, THE SCHOOL librarian, is about to order new books. She comes to the principal, Ana, with concerns that she could be targeted by parents who belong to a local Moms for Liberty group if she keeps books about LGBTQIA+ families in the library. She has researched this and doesn’t see a list of books they can’t carry. She’s concerned about not serving LGBTQIA+ students. She hasn’t got any actual complaints yet, so what steps can they take to protect their school?

What can Ana do? What guidance can the principal give her?

Ana calls a meeting of the school board, and they vote to consult their lawyer. The lawyer advises state non-discrimination laws and the 1st Amendment might protect the librarian and the school district’s choice of books about LGBTQIA+ families. The school board votes to join a coalition of school organizations working with the ACLU to protect the 1st Amendment’s application to school libraries and teaching.

Main points of Project 2025’s education proposals:





- Cut the Department of Education as a Cabinet-level agency, reorder the chain of command, put loyalists in charge.
- Redirect federal dollars to state and local governments.
- Set up a Parental Savings Account program to fund parents school choice; boost parental control (and censorship) of classroom discussions and disclosure of school information to parents, particularly topics discussed privately with teachers. (The latter include personal issues related to sexuality and gender identity including adoption of pronouns different from names /gender noted on birth certificate; use of puberty blockers, hormone treatments and gender-altering surgery.)

Project 2025 boosts parental control -- and censorship – of classroom discussions and disclosure of information related to sexuality and gender

- Support vouchers paid by the state for religious schools.
- Reverse the current federal government student loan program and make government only a guarantor, not a direct lender; treat student loans as investments and provide a market return to lenders. Set up new federal corporation run by presidential-picked loyalists to run the student loan program and task the Treasury Department to enforce loan collection.
- Block-grant and narrow funding to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and tribally-controlled colleges.
- Shift responsibility for education of “federal” children (students in military families, D.C. residents, Native Americans) to agencies serving these groups and expand school choice.

Effective Strategies (*Case Studies 1 and 2*):

- Organize community meetings to discuss the school district’s curriculum; build local support.
- Work with national organizations. Work with national and state-level coalitions to file lawsuits contesting regulation changes that affect public funding for higher education.

What Would No Longer Be Taught?

Project 2025 would erasure public school teaching about Black and brown lives, stories and history, and a more complete examination of US history, and LGBTQIA+ experience. States Project 2025: *“When critical race theory is used as part of school activities such as mandatory affinity groups (and) teacher training programs in which educators are required to confess their privilege, or school assignments in which students must defend the false idea that America is systemically racist, the theory is actively disrupting the values that hold communities together such as equality under the law and colorblindness.”* (pg. 342).



Take-away Messages:

- **Project 2025 has a strong anti-public education agenda**, shifting federal education dollars away from secular education to fund and promote private, Christian education.
- **Project 2025 will eliminate DEI, CRT and LGBTQIA+ content** from public education and erase teaching about Black, brown experience, America's racial equality movement, LGBTQIA+ lives and rights, sexual and reproductive health topics in public school.
- **Teachers, school health providers or counselors will be pushed to disclose to parents** any student discussions of personal topics including gender and sexuality
- **Student loans may become harder to access** with stiffer penalties
- **The 1st Amendment protects school libraries** having diverse content: we have rights and we can fight for them.
- **The 1st Amendment protects school teachers' and students' rights** to discuss issues like discrimination and the effects of segregation.

Discussion Prompts:

- Has anyone in your group already been affected by the Project 2025 plans?
- What is the law in your area?
- How does the new federal law differ from existing state and local laws?
What about the school's policies?
- What groups in your area are already organizing to fight school censorship?
- What options are available for dealing with a parent's complaints? Are there policies that affect class trips?
- Can you identify allies who would like to run for the school board?

RESOURCES

- **PEN America** <https://pen.org/issue/educational-censorship/>
- **American Library Association** <https://www.ala.org/bbooks>
- **GLSEN (LGBTQIA+)** <https://www.glsen.org>
- **National Urban League** <https://nul.org/education>
- **NAACP** <https://naacp.org/issues/education-innovation>
- **American Civil Liberties Union** <https://www.aclu.org/issues/free-speech>
- **National Education Association** <https://www.nea.org/>
- **National Coalition Against Censorship** <https://ncac.org/>
- **National Indian Education Association** <https://niea.org>
- **Hispanic Institute** <https://www.nationalhispanicinstitute.org>
- **LULAC** <https://lulac.org>
- **Latinos For Education** <https://www.latinosforeducation.org>
- **United We Dream** <https://unitedwedream.org/our-work/education-justice/>
- **Make Us Visible (Asian-American)** <https://makeusvisible.org>
- **Asian American Progressive Student Union** www.aspsu.org



CASE STUDY 3: PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

MARY'S SON CHAD was accepted to a state college. He would be the first person in the family to go to college. Chad was given a financial aid package that included federal student loans and a Pell Grant. But Chad found out that under Project 2025's proposals he won't get federal aid because whenever a state pays college costs for undocumented students, then students at public colleges in that state can no longer receive Pell Grants or student loans. He asks his mother what to do.

Mary hasn't been able to save money to pay for college and planned to take out PLUS loans. The PLUS loan program will be discontinued under Project 2025, and Mary doesn't know how Chad will be able to attend. When Chad asks the high school guidance counselor, they don't know either – this proposal is brand new.

Down the block, Dave is getting bad financial news too. Dave attended a trade school that closed before he completed his program, so he didn't get his certificate and can't find work. He still has thousands of dollars in student loan debt. The student loans were going to be forgiven under a federal program. Dave just found out that Project 2025 wants to cut the loan forgiveness program.

Project 2025 says that whenever a state pays college costs for undocumented students, public colleges in that state can no longer give Pell Grants or student loans

**What can Dave, Mary and Chad do?
Who can help them?**



Dave, Mary, and Chad decide to join a group of other students in their community to talk to the school about financial aid. They want to ask about any actions they can take to postpone repayment of loans, and if any alternative loans are being offered. They find out that the Student Borrower Protection Center – a national nonprofit – is working with law school clinics to challenge the proposed big changes to student loans.

They also plan to find out if there is one of those law school clinics in their area – if not, they want to gather a group of other students to work on this together.



Dave learns about other trade schools and programs he can take to get his certificates so he can find a job. He may even qualify for a paid apprenticeship from a local union while he studies. Chad hears about a local credit union that is offering special student loans with deferred repayment and fixed minimal interest.

What's at Stake?

Chad risks losing a family dream of attending college, because of the proposed shutdown of the PLUS student loan program, and the tougher lending terms and borrower penalties that Project 2025 seeks to put on student loans. Dave now faces a major student loan debt and must still complete his trade school certificate to get a job and begin paying it off. Project 2025 may make that task much harder and longer.

Main points of Project 2025's attack *(higher ed)*:

- Reverse Biden's student loan forgiveness programs. Make the federal government only a guarantor, not a direct lender and privatize student loans.
- Put a new federal corporation in charge, run by conservative loyalists.
- Put the Treasury Department in charge and crack down on student loan defaults.
- Blocks state public colleges from giving Pell Grants or federal student loans for in-state tuition if they give state aid to students without legal immigration status.
- Redirect federal education dollars to state and local governments.
- Redirect federal education dollars to private sector institutions: charter, trade, technical, and faith-based institutions.
- Eliminate equity and diversity regulations in Title IX and VI rules (SOGI, CRT).
- Block teaching of LGBTQIA+, DEI, CRT in public school and expand Christian teachings.

Effective Strategies *(for Case Study 3)*:

- Work with local and national organizations to bring class-action suits challenging new regulations and cuts to existing programs.
- Access services of education debt consumer assistance programs.
- Educate people about where they can get more information about loan programs.

Take-away Messages *(for Case Study 3)*:

- Project 2025 proposals will make it harder for students to borrow money to attend college or trade schools, and crack down on students failing to repay loans.
- Project 2025 reverses the Biden administration's student loan forgiveness programs.
- Deny federal student loans to students at state schools that give undocumented students and Dreamers in-state tuition.



- While Project 2025 favors pushing students away from higher education at universities and colleges toward alternative trade school, apprenticeships, charter, and private Christian-led institutions, its student loan programs make it harder to get any loans.
- The impact of Project 2025's loan proposals is likely to limit lower-income students who include many Black, brown, and immigrant students from accessing college money.

Discussion Prompts *(for Case Study 3):*

- How are people in this area being affected by this?
- What local groups or allies are working on this in their area?
- Are there local legal groups or lending groups who are working on challenging the new proposed student loan rules? When a trade school suddenly closes, is there any support or counseling for the students who are left without certificates and with debt?
- Are local educational institutions organizing to support students?
- What about immigrant rights groups? Latino, Asian-American. LGBTQIA+ educational advocacy groups? What information or materials do people feel they most need?

[Tip: The organizer should have handouts available on effective strategies and cases that others have developed related to student loans, including DACA Dreamers.]

RESOURCES

(on Student Loans)

- **Student Borrower Protection Center** <https://protectborrowers.org/>
- **National Consumer Law Center, Student Loan Borrower Assistance Program** <https://studentloanborrowerassistance.org/>
- **Student Debt Crisis Center** <https://www.studentdebtcrisis.org/>
- **Young Invincibles** <https://younginvincibles.org/>

Loan and Scholarship Programs for Dreamers:

- **TheDream.US scholarships** for undocumented students <https://www.thedream.us/>
- **President's Alliance Dream Advocacy Toolkit** <https://www.presidential-alliance.org/dream-advocacy-toolkit/>
- **Dreamers Graduate Loan Program** <https://socialfinance.org/work/dreamers/>
- **Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities** resources page https://www.hacu.net/hacu/Resources_for_DACA_Students__Family.asp

Financial Literacy Resources:

- **Federal Mymoney.gov** <https://www.mymoney.gov/>
- **AfSA Education Foundation MoneySkill** online personal finance course <https://afsaef.org/>



MODULE 9: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Project 2025 advances a view that Christianity and the Bible should serve as the basis of US law and policy, which goes against the 1st Amendment of the US Constitution, which establishes the right to religious freedom, stating: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion," guaranteeing the "free exercise of religion," with no one religious tradition raised above another. As a theocratic vision paper, Project 2025 is viewed by critics as an applied policy distillation of the US Christian nationalist platform (see box). It seeks to elevate Christianity above other religious and calls for US policy and law to adhere to conservative Christian "pro-life" values that are anti-diversity, anti-gay and anti-choice. Christian nationalism is often known as Christian fundamentalism.

Project 2025 closely reflects a conservative Christian theocratic belief known as Dominionism (see boxes), including members of a fast-growing Christian branch known as the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR). Dominionists believe that today's Christians have a biblical duty to fight non-Christian influences and gain control of all earthly political and cultural institutions until the second coming of Jesus. NAR leaders consider themselves "living apostles" and call on Christians to "reclaim the seven mountains of culture": government, religion, media, family, business, education, and arts and entertainment. That mirrors Project 2025's agenda, which calls for taking control of all spheres of the federal government, imposing extremist social policies over bodily autonomy and reproduction, and advancing a vision of America as a future Christian-led nation. Many of Project 2025's authors, and backers are high-ranking NAR members (see box).

CASE STUDY

Ted grew up and still lives in a small town in Mississippi where he also looks after his mother, who has Alzheimer's disease. He's a science teacher at the local high school. Ted was raised as a Baptist, but as an adult, he stopped going to church. Ted learns from his students that the high school football coach has been starting practice sessions and games with Christian prayer: he has the team members kneel on the field and pray out loud. When one student, John, says that he doesn't want to pray with the team, the coach removes him from the team. The principal supports the football coach, saying, "We are a Christian country."





Ted looks online and sees that in 2022, the Supreme Court upheld a coach's right to pray on the field with *Kennedy v. Bremerton*. Ted feels really uncomfortable about this, it doesn't fit with his understanding of religious freedom in the US – and he feels really sorry for John who is being shunned by his peers after being removed from the team. Sometimes, on weekends, a group of high school seniors drive past John's house and yell and scream and throw empty beer cans. They even shoot guns into the air. The cops don't do anything.

Because of his responsibility for his mother, Ted can't afford to lose his job, but he's worried about the escalating violence. He sees that John is suffering and tries to support John in class. One Saturday night, the rowdy seniors shoot at John's house instead of into the air, killing one of the family dogs. Ted realizes it's time to take action.

What does the Constitution Say About the Separation of Church and State?

The US founding fathers created what Thomas Jefferson called a "wall of separation between church and state." The US was purposely founded without a state religion, unlike countries such as Great Britain and France. The "Establishment Clause" of the 1st Amendment states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion," guaranteeing the "free exercise of religion," with no one religious tradition raised above another.

The 1st Amendment protects people's deepest beliefs and protects petitioning for laws and policies that one believes in. So *belief* in Christian nationalism does not violate the 1st Amendment. *But the 1st Amendment does prevent government from establishing a national religion.* So, passing a law based on Christian nationalism may or may not violate the 1st Amendment. Courts decide whether a government action or law violates the Constitution.

Project 2025 would destroy what Americans understand as our basic freedoms – the right to follow the religion of our choice – or none at all. It erodes the separation of church and state – and some authors of the Christian conservative blueprint call for the Bible to be the basis of our laws and policies (*see related box, What is Christian Nationalism?*).

What can Ted do to help John? What are John's rights?

What can or should Ted do as a teacher to address the bullying and violence?

Ted contacts the state ACLU and asks for help. They explain the Supreme Court ruling to him: the coach can't *require* or *coerce* students to pray, so it's possible that dropping John from the team wasn't legal. The ACLU puts him in touch with the Freedom From Religion Foundation (<https://ffrf.org/>), which is currently challenging book bans based on religion and the decision of some schools to declare a National Day of Prayer.



Ted also reaches out to local parents who are troubled by the way religion is entering schools, and they plan to present their concerns to the school board. In recent years, several families of Indian descent who practice Hinduism have moved into town. While none have had problems with the enforcement of Christian prayer in schools yet, Ted learns they're worried.

In fact, they've reached out to their own networks to better understand their rights. The group meets regularly to discuss the freedoms guaranteed to all under US law, and there is discussion about running to serve on the school board, to have a voice in policy decisions. The Freedom From Religion Foundation offers to advise Ted further about his rights, if the school board won't see that dropping John from the team when he refused to join in prayers was a form of coercion. The Foundation also gives Ted information about religious freedom to share with other parents, teachers and students who have concerns.

What is Christian Nationalism? Who belongs to this movement?

Christian nationalism is not a formal religious denomination or sect with a stated doctrine of beliefs; nor does any single person or council lead Christian nationalism or oversee its followers. The term "accurately describes American nationalists who believe American identity is inextricable from Christianity," states Georgetown University scholar Paul D. Miller, who studies the movement. About one-third of Americans now identify as Christian nationalists.

Today's US Christian nationalist movement is an outgrowth of what some called the Christian New Right in the 1980s, when Christian conservatives flocked to support Ronald Reagan's presidency, and many joined Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority. Christian nationalists share a common core belief that America was founded as a Christian nation, and that biblical principles should guide our laws and other aspects of our political, civic, and social life.

Christian nationalism is also explicitly white supremacist: it downplays the effects of racism, and argues that different races should not mix. It asserts that the US legal system, government, and education system, etc. should all follow "biblical" rules. Examples: marriage can only be between a man and a woman; abortion should be illegal for religious reasons; and public schools should teach Christian beliefs to all students, even non-Christians.

What's at Stake?

Project 2025 wants to fundamentally change the beliefs and values of the US Constitution and founding documents. If it succeeds, the US will no longer be a country where religion can be practiced freely. Project 2025 wants to create a **theocracy**, a country ruled by a specific set of



religious beliefs. While people are free to practice other religions, Project 2025 privileges and positions Christianity as being the only “true” religion and superior to other religions or faith practices. If enacted, non-Christians would be required to follow Christian laws and policies modeled on Christian interpretations of the Old Testament and other religious texts.

Main points of Project 2025’s attacks on religious freedom:

- Project 2025 seeks to destroy the foundational US principle of the separation of church and state described in the 1st Amendment.
- Project 2025 seeks to have the US declared a Christian nation, raising Christian nationalist beliefs over the beliefs of others who practice other religions – or none at all.
- Project 2025 seeks to introduce Christian nationalism into federal grant-making decisions to reward “biblically” based definitions of marriage and family.
- Project 2025 seeks to embed Christian nationalist ideas into all activities of government.
- Project 2025 seeks to force the schools that are under federal control – DC public schools and Department of Defense schools, and military academies – to follow a Christian nationalist agenda.



Effective Strategies:

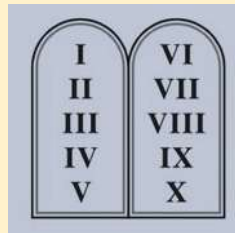
- Work with local community members to ensure that schools, school boards and local governments are not restricting religious freedom.
- Support local interfaith and progressive groups and leaders who are defending religious freedom and the separation of church and state, and elevate their voices.
- At schools, form groups of like-minded parents, teachers, librarians, and faith ministers and share intersectional, interfaith approaches to right-wing attacks, book bans, etc.
- Consider running for the school board and for local council offices or supporting progressive candidates in your local area.



What is Dominionism?

The 1980s gave rise to a blend of theocratic belief called **Dominion Theology (DT)**, or **dominionism**, that emerged from two Christian protestant traditions: a Reformed or Calvinist camp, and a Pentecostal or Charismatic one. Dominionism asserts that the Ten Commandments (or biblical law) should be the foundation of American law, and that the US Constitution should enforce biblical principles. Dominionism derives from the Book of Genesis, in which God tells Adam and Eve to have "dominion" over the Earth and its animals. Dominionists believe that Christians have a biblical duty to fight non-Christian influences and gain control of all earthly political and cultural institutions until the second coming of Jesus. Taking power, in other words, is doing God's work. That includes power over bodily autonomy and reproduction.

Project 2025 reflects these views: women and men are seen as having "different but complementary" roles in public life, the Christian church, and the home – and men are to be in charge. Conservatives call for women to assume a "traditional family values" gender role: to marry, have and raise children, be primary homemakers, and support men to lead the family.



What is the Seven Mountains Mandate?

One Pentecostal offshoot of Dominionism is the fast-growing and radical **New Apostolic Reformation (NAR)**, a global movement. NAR leaders call on Christians to "reclaim the seven mountains of culture": government, religion, media, family, business, education, and arts and entertainment. The idea is linked to Bible verse 9 from Revelation 17:1-18, which reads: "And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains." NAR followers believe that taking control of the seven mountains will bring about the return of Jesus – and the end times. Mike Johnson and Ted Cruz are believers, along with others in Project 2025's orbit. Meanwhile, NAR members are being actively recruited to support Project 2025.

- Work with local and national organizations to bring class-action suits challenging threats to religious freedom.
- Support non-religious groups, like American Atheists and the American Humanism Association, to form a popular consensus that religious freedoms are a key American value – to be defended by all, regardless of one's beliefs.



- Organize to educate your community, stakeholders, and voters about Project 2025's threats to religious freedom and our Constitutional rights.

Take-away Messages:

- The US Constitution establishes religious freedom – including the right to practice no religion and the separation of church and state. No religion is above another.
- Public school employees have the right to challenge any use of religion in schools that implies an *endorsement* of one religion or any religion as superior. Starting a discussion about such behaviors and how they violate the 1st Amendment can raise awareness.
- All students have a right to a public education without having any particular religion taught to them or imposed on them.
- We're proud to say "America is a free country" – meaning that we enjoy freedom of conscience, and are free to follow the religion of our choice, or none at all.

Discussion Prompts:

- Has anyone in your group already been affected by the Project 2025 plans?
- What's the situation in your community? Do schools near you require Christian prayers in sports or school assemblies?
- How about city council meetings – do they open with a prayer too?
- Have any groups in your larger community already challenged attempts to impose Christian prayer?
- What groups and ally organizations may already be working on this in your community and in your state? What national groups?
- Organizing at the hyperlocal level works! Since many groups are targeted by Project 2025's attacks, every community has many natural allies. Reach out to build an intersectional local community response, and learn from others.

What's happening now?

Regressive recent Supreme Court decisions about religious freedom:

- The Supreme Court has ruled that the courts cannot enforce federal anti-discrimination laws – including those requiring accommodations for sick and disabled employees – to protect the civil rights of lay teachers at religious schools.





- It ruled that a Catholic social services agency could break its contract with the city of Philadelphia requiring the agency to work with same-sex couples applying to be foster parents.
- It ruled that closely held for-profit corporations could refuse, on religious grounds, to abide by a federal law requiring insurance to cover contraception for their employees; it ruled that city councils and other public boards are free to open their meetings with explicitly Christian prayers.
- It ruled that a 40-foot cross honoring soldiers who died in World War I could remain on state property at a busy intersection in suburban Maryland. (*see additional discussion in Free Speech module*)
- On June 14, Republican Louisiana governor Jeff Landry signed a first-of-its-kind state law (House Bill 71) requiring all state-funded schools and universities to publicly display a poster or framed copy of the Ten Commandments in every classroom, school library and cafeteria. Schools can also receive private money to cover the cost of printing the posters. The controversial law was immediately challenged by legal groups who argue that it violates the 1st Amendment.

RESOURCES

- **Americans United for Separation of Church and State** <https://www.au.org/>
- **Christians against Christian Nationalism** <https://www.christiansagainstchristiannationalism.org/endorsers>
- **Political Research Associates** <https://www.politicalresearch.org>.
See also PRA's reports on Dominionism and the New Apostolic Reformation movement at:
 - 101: Dominionism | Political Research Associates and
 - Christian Right Denialism is More Dangerous Than Ever | Political Research Associates
- **Freedom From Religion Foundation** <https://ffrf.org/>
- **American Atheists** <https://atheists.org>
- **American Civil Liberties Union** <https://www.aclu.org/>
- **American Humanist Association** <https://americanhumanist.org/>
- **State representatives guide:** <https://www.congress.gov/state-legislature-websites>





SPOTLIGHT:

What is – and isn't – Christian Nationalism?

Above all, it's a political movement, say experts.

THE SIMPLEST DEFINITION of Christian nationalism is as a belief that the United States is a country defined by Christianity. In practice, this means that the government should take steps to keep the country's Christian roots and identity intact. The government should advocate Christian values and pass laws and enact policies that reflect those values. The separation of church and state is not a formal law that should be followed. God's plan, say Christian nationalists, is for the U.S. to be a successful nation based in Christian ideals.

That last part is where this belief may conflict with US law, as stated in our Constitution, which protects religious liberty and establishes the separation of church and state in law and policy.

Is it a religion?

Christian nationalism is *not* a formal religious denomination or sect with a stated doctrine of beliefs; nor is there any single person or council leading Christian nationalism that oversees followers. The term "accurately describes American nationalists who believe American identity is inextricable from Christianity," states Georgetown University scholar Paul D. Miller, who studies the movement. About one-third of Americans now identify as Christian nationalists.

Today's US Christian nationalist movement is an outgrowth of what some called the Christian New Right in the 1980s, when Christian conservatives flocked to support Ronald Reagan's presidency, and many joined Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority. Today's Christian nationalists share a common core belief that America was founded as a Christian nation, and that biblical principles should guide our laws and other aspects of our political, civic, and social life. While many people debate how "Christian" this movement is today, there is no debate that its religious project is political in nature and



the goal is power. Such beliefs are found throughout Project 2025's vision paper, which critics view as an applied distillation of the US Christian nationalist platform.

Who are Christian Nationalists?

Christian nationalists are found among the many Christian denominations. Christianity is broadly divided into **Roman Catholic, Protestant, and (Eastern) Orthodox branches**. In the US, Catholics and Protestants are the two main denominations. The larger Protestant groups are the **Southern Baptist Convention**, the **United Methodist Church** (including the **African-American Methodist Church**), the **National Baptist Convention**, the **Lutheran**, and the fast-growing **Pentecostal** churches, who include **Presbyterians**. (1)

Dominion over America

The 1980s gave rise to a blend of theocratic belief called Dominion Theology (DT), or *dominionism*, that emerged from two Christian protestant traditions: a Reformed or Calvinist camp, and a Pentecostal or Charismatic one. Dominionism derives from the Book of Genesis, in which God tells Adam and Eve to have "dominion" over the Earth and its animals. The term was first defined by right-wing watchdogs Chip Berlet and Frederick Clarkson at Political Research Associates, who warned that dominionists were leading the Christian nationalist movement.(2)

In a nutshell, dominionism describes the theocratic belief that Christians have a biblical duty to fight non-Christian influences and gain control of all earthly political and cultural institutions until the second coming of Jesus. Taking power, in other words, is doing God's work.

Dominionists share three key beliefs, noted Berlet and Clarkson: One is that America was, and should again be, a Christian nation -- a denial of the Enlightenment roots of our democracy. Two, the Ten Commandments, or biblical principles, should be the basis of American law, while our Constitution should serve to implement biblical doctrine. Three, Christianity is the "true" religion that matters; no others are equal, while dominionism reflects what God really wants.

Today's Militant Dominionists

The two main schools of modern dominionism are **Christian Reconstructionism** and a newer Pentecostal offshoot known as the **New Apostolic Reformation** (NAR), which political leaders such as Mike Johnson and Ted Cruz openly embrace. Christian Reconstructionism evolved from the ideas and writing of Rousas John (R.J) Rushdoony, a towering figure of the 1980s Christian right. Followers believe that the Kingdom of God



was established at Christ's resurrection and is progressively evolving, and that Jesus will **return** once Christianity has transformed the whole

Kingdom. They have a postmillennial – some say apocalyptic – worldview. They believe the God of the Bible is the sovereign source of all authority. Some believe that biblical law, with punishments such as stoning for adultery, should replace secular law.

The New Apostolic Reformation has its roots in Pentecostalism and dates to 1863, and also blends in evangelism. C. Peter Wagner is considered the father figure of the NAR, which draws on dominion theology and a critique of humanism/pluralism. Followers believe the Holy Spirit is the true God, who emanates from God the Father and Jesus his son, who have continued to send Apostles to carry out the unfinished work of creating a Christian kingdom on earth. Church leaders call themselves apostles and prophets and view themselves as spiritual warriors determined to bring dominion over the “seven pillars,” or mountains, of society.

The “Seven Mountains” Mandate

NAR leaders call on Christians to “reclaim the seven mountains of culture”: government, religion, media, family, business, education, and arts and entertainment. The idea is linked to bible verse 9 from Revelation 17:1-18, which reads, “And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains.” NAR followers believe that taking control of the seven mountains will bring about the return of Jesus – and end times.” (3)

The Seven Mountains Mandate exploded into American public awareness in 2016, when former President Trump tapped NAR leader Paula White, a Florida ‘prosperity theology’ megachurch televangelist, to chair his evangelical advisory board. It was soon revealed that many other top Republicans are NAR members. They include Mike Johnson; Rafael Cruz, father of Ted Cruz, and his son, Ted; Lauren Boebert; and Tom Parker, Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court.

Sources and additional reading:

1. “America’s Christian Landscape: A Comprehensive Overview of the Largest Christian Denominations,” *Christian Pure*, January 10, 2024
2. Berlet, Chip and Clarkson, Frederick. “Dominionism Rising, A Theocratic Movement Hiding in Plain Sight,” *The Public Eye*, Summer 2016. Political Research Associates. August 18, 2016.
3. Stewart, Katherine. *The Power Worshipers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Christian Nationalism*, Bloomsbury Publishers, 2019.



MODULE 10: IMMIGRATION & DOMESTIC MILITARIZATION



IMMIGRATION & MILITARIZATION

Project 2025 presents the most serious attack on immigrants in modern times. It proposes to detain tens of thousands of undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers in mass tent cities, including unaccompanied children, and then deport them. Other hardline proposals are to seal and militarize the US border and merge the US Department of Homeland Security with other border control agencies to create an uber-law enforcement agency with cabinet-level authority – the third largest department in the federal government. Project 2025 also seeks to decrease seasonal visas for agricultural workers, and clamp down on short-term visas for construction workers. It also aims to cut off chain migration, including spousal visas, and end the automatic birthright citizenship for children born in the United States. Project 2025 would also resurrect and possibly expand the Trump-era Muslim ban while favoring immigration of “highly skilled” workers. That’s why immigration activists brand Project 2025 a draconian and racist plan, one that recalls one of the darkest chapters of American history – the mass internment of Japanese-Americans in World War II.

CASE STUDY

On his way to work on an early Monday morning, Raul Garcia, 40, stops at a local food truck. His nephew Wilmer, 26, is with him. Raul, a Venezuelan-born green card holder and a US resident for seven years, has asked his boss to consider sponsoring Wilmer for a temporary H-2B visa for an entry-level job.



Raul waves to a group of men, work colleagues, sitting together at a picnic table near the food truck. Two of the men are Venezuelan friends from near Raul's hometown village. One of them, the foreman, looks very worried. The foreman tells Raul that it might not be safe for Wilmer to join them at work: he's just heard a rumor that US immigration agents may turn up, looking for undocumented immigrants to arrest. The foreman tells Raul that he phoned another undocumented friend, warning him not to come to work.

Project 2025 plans to round up tens of thousands of undocumented immigrants and detain them in tent cities, and then deport them

As part of Project 2025, a new federal law has been proposed allowing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to question workers on work sites – something that ICE agents were previously not allowed to do. The men at the picnic table tell Raul that things are getting worse. They've heard that the US government plans to round up tens of thousands of undocumented immigrants and detain them in tent cities before deporting them. Anyone without the proper paperwork permitting them to work legally will be vulnerable. The men repeat rumors that they're hearing: that the government plans to seal the US border, send US soldiers to enforce border control, and let local police question anyone who looks like an immigrant, too. It's a new war on immigrants.

Raul is scared. His wife, Lourdes, is also Venezuelan. It's been 18 months since Lourdes applied for a spousal visa. They've been waiting a long time to hear whether or not the visa has been granted; their immigration lawyer keeps telling them to be patient, that long wait times aren't unusual. Raul and Lourdes have two children, both born in the US, who are US citizens. Raul worries, could Lourdes face deportation? The political situation in Venezuela is very dangerous and the economy is devastated: if Lourdes is deported, he worries for her safety; if Lourdes is sent back to Venezuela, Raul doesn't know how he will raise the children in the US without her.



A worker sitting at the picnic table tells them that his cousins who come to pick fruit in Georgia every year are staying home this season. The proposed law will limit H-2A visas for agricultural



workers; farmers who don't follow the rules can face criminal charges. The cumulative news is devastating. Raul worries for the future of his family. He can't imagine returning to Venezuela.

What can Raul do to protect his family? His wife? Wilmer?

When Raul first applied for a green card at a local immigration legal clinic, he was told his rights: in the US, all immigrants are protected by civil rights, including undocumented immigrants, and people with pending visa applications. Undocumented immigrants have “due process” rights, including the right to a fair hearing, to present their history before a judge – and, at their own expense, they have a right to legal representation. Like all people within the US regardless of legal status, undocumented immigrants have protection against unlawful searches and seizures, and the right to defend themselves in court.

Project 2025 wants to deny undocumented immigrants “due process” rights, including the right to a fair hearing

When questioned by law enforcement, immigrants have the right to stay silent and not incriminate themselves. They have rights to medical care, education, freedom of religion and speech, and immigrants are protected by labor rights that include safe working conditions and the right to a minimum wage. Raul isn't sure what rights immigrants will have under the new law, but he intends to find out.

Know Your Rights:

Raul always carries his green card with him, as legally required, and he has the number of the immigration legal clinic on his phone. As a green card holder, while he cannot vote, Raul is a permanent citizen and has full legal rights. He can't be arrested by ICE just because he was born in another country. Understanding this, Raul always carries the “Know Your Rights” card he got from the clinic, in case he's ever stopped by the police or ICE. The card asserts that Raul has the right to remain silent and to not answer questions; he has the right to speak to an attorney first, if he's detained; and he has the right to refuse to sign a document without a lawyer present.

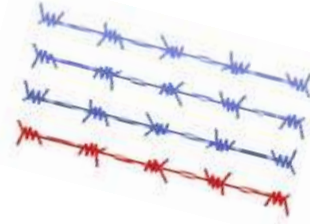
Both Raul and Lourdes also carry *copies* of their Venezuelan passports with them when they leave the house, keeping all the family's important original documents at home in a safe place. Raul shares this information with his crew buddies, reminding them to keep their original documents at home. He urges his friends to get “Know Your Rights” cards from the legal clinic to understand their rights and to carry with them in case they are harassed by the police or ICE.



Lourdes has learned that the proposed law will still allow spousal visas, so she seems to be safe – for now. But the people behind Project 2025 intend to eliminate spousal visas and end the right of immigrants to apply for asylum because of persecution in their home countries. Project 2025 also seeks to end the practice of granting US citizenship to children of non-citizens who are born in the US.

Raul and Lourdes are scared.

***What if the law changes before her visa is approved?
Will it count that she's been waiting so long?***



The lawyer has promised to check her visa status and will continue to advocate for her. But, the lawyer says, it's best to prepare for the worst, too; preparedness is essential. Immigration activists are fighting back, in the courts, and in the streets. The clinic is hosting an educational event next week to discuss changes to the law. Raul and Lourdes are planning to attend, and have promised to bring friends from the immigrant community.

ICE never shows up to the worksite that day, but the threat that they might show up made two work crew members stay home, even though they have work visas. They didn't want to risk being questioned or arrested during an ICE raid. The boss won't punish them for missing work, this time, but he also can't afford to have workers miss their shifts, either. The boss is originally from Columbia. While he's a US citizen now, he's also sympathetic to the worries of his crew. The boss is planning to go to the clinic event, too, to understand his rights and how to support his crew.

What other steps can be taken? Who can help them?

At the educational event, clinic lawyers remind everyone that even undocumented immigrants have rights under the law. Other immigrants have experienced ICE raids, and have tactics to share. The immigration clinic website lists resources for immigrants who are stopped by the police and ICE. Resources for immigrants are also available through United We Dream, an organization for young immigrants known as "Dreamers," and the American Immigration Council. The clinic's legal representatives point out other allies: grassroots advocacy groups and churches are likely to join in protesting the proposed new anti-immigrant laws.

Raul's boss stands up to complain that the new immigration laws are hurting small business owners like him, and he anticipates that the new laws will hurt the larger US economy. He plans to say that the law should be repealed at a local Chamber of Commerce meeting, and he



promises to share his views with local legislatures. Immigrants are part of our community, he plans to tell them.

What's at Stake?

Project 2025 will be the most sweeping attack on immigrants in decades. It is an attempt to return the US to the racist, nativist policies that led to the imprisonment of thousands of Japanese-American citizens during WWII. Immigration policies promoted by Project 2025 will lead to mass arrests, involuntary detention, and the deportation of millions of immigrants. The ability of immigrants to petition for asylum from persecution will end, returning people to danger in countries where there is violence and political instability. Project 2025 will militarize the southern border, placing soldiers on domestic border control. These plans will destroy families and disrupt communities by separating parents from children and spouses from each other. Unaccompanied immigrant children will be placed in fresh peril by sending them back home, alone. The US economy will suffer without experienced, hardworking laborers, including the critical sectors of construction and agriculture.

The ability of immigrants to petition for asylum from persecution will end

Main points of attack:

- Project 2025 will eliminate the Department of Homeland Security and create a Cabinet-level “super agency” with a 100,000-strong work force focused on domestic border control and law enforcement.
- Revise existing laws to allow for the mass detention of undocumented immigrants with a single nationwide federal detention standard.
- Set up beds for up to 10,000 detainees to be housed in mass tent cities.
- Treat unaccompanied immigrant children as adults and send them back, alone, to home countries. Revise trafficking laws to facilitate deportation of children.
- Drastically expand ICE’s mandate to arrest, detain, and expel undocumented immigrants – without warrants. Direct Congress to fund 20,000 Expedited Removal Officers (ERO) and 5,000 attorneys at the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor to support this effort.
- Direct ICE to arrest and detain all undocumented immigrants with felonies, DUIs, crimes of violence, prior removals, or records of any crime who may be viewed as a threat to a “public security.”



- Expand ICE authority to arrest, detain, and remove “immigration violators” anywhere, and expand workplace search warrants (‘Blackies Warrants’) that enable ICE to enter a workplace and question everyone present.
- Fully implement the Remain in Mexico Protocols.
- Bring back horseback-mounted Border Patrol.
- Fund and expand the border wall with Department of Defense troops to build the border wall.
- Have Congress authorize state and local law enforcement to join immigration and border security actions detaining and questioning undocumented immigrants suspected of violating no-work rules.
- Obtain information about “criminal aliens” in jurisdictions across the United States, particularly those inside designated sanctuary jurisdictions.
- Overturn every immigration decision rendered by Attorney General Garland and any successor attorney general appointed during President Biden’s term.



Regarding Rights:

- Reduce the rights of legal immigrants and cut off federal benefits for all immigrants, documented and undocumented.
- End the US Refugee Admission Program (USRAP), which now accepts referrals of refugees deemed especially vulnerable, including LGBTQIA+ refugees in need of protection via third-country resettlement, under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). INA applies to refugees who are outside of their country of nationality and who are unable to return, or who have a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, gender, nationality, or membership in a social group.
- Forbid non-citizens from living in federally subsidized housing, including mixed status families.
- Limit and then eliminate H-2A visas (agricultural workers) and H-2B visas, for other temporary workers.
- Abolish “chain migration” – but prioritize H-1B visas for immigrants who are considered to be “highly skilled.”



- Make it harder for people to seek asylum in the US by removing the categories of “credible fear” and fear of gang violence as legitimate asylum grounds, tightening eligibility requirements.
- Roll back visa eligibility – including T and U visas – for victims of human trafficking.
- End Congressional funding for NGOs to process and transport undocumented immigrants into and throughout the US.
- Eliminate or significantly reduce visas issued to foreign students from enemy nations, resurrecting the “Muslim ban” put in place by Trump.
- Add a citizenship question to the 2030 US Census – despite a 2020 finding that citizenship inquiries violate the Administrative Procedures Act.

Effective Strategies to counter Project 2025:

- Share educational materials about Project 2025’s potential impact on immigrants in your community, including with immigrant groups.
- Ensure that Spanish language information about the proposed changes in US immigration law are available, as well as materials in other languages spoken by immigrants in your area. Can you identify people willing to be translators in your community? Distribute information to local immigrant advocacy groups.
- Reach out to local immigrant rights advocates and legal groups to discuss your concerns, and to learn what they are doing to mobilize, prepare, and protect undocumented immigrants and their families.
- Build your own rapid response team: identify allies among non-immigrant groups also targeted by Project 2025, and hold meetings to build a local intersectional action response network.
- Invite local immigrants and leaders to community meetings to discuss their concerns and amplify their voices.

Share educational materials about Project 2025’s impact on immigrants in your community, including with immigrant groups

- Gather allies to share educational preparedness materials for immigrants from organizations such as the National Immigration Law Center. NILC has resources for what to do when encountering ICE or law enforcement, during an ICE raid, when seeking health care, etc.



- Identify progressive local stakeholders and local officials, and ask for a meeting to discuss the possible impact of Project 2025 on the local community and how to educate the community about their rights.
- Urge local media to cover Project 2025's impact on immigrants, and invite local experts to the conversation.
- Support current petitions and actions by immigrants' rights groups to raise awareness about Project 2025 and take steps to protect immigrants.
- Reach out to local educators and schools to discuss how Project 2025 may impact immigrant students, including US citizens whose parents may be undocumented, and to discuss what steps they are taking to educate teachers and school staff.
- Consider hosting in-person community meetings and webinars with immigrant community members and immigrant rights advocates to spread awareness of the issues and to learn about what is happening locally.

Take-away Messages:

The creation of a fully empowered Homeland Security agency, the use of soldiers to seal off and police the border, as well as granting ICE and police enhanced powers to target immigrants merely *suspected* of being undocumented is a dramatic militarization of domestic law enforcement and an attack on American civil liberties.

Project 2025 will have a devastating impact in the US, criminalizing undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers, and targeting them for deportation. The proposals to arrest, detain in tent camps, and deport tens of thousands of people, including unaccompanied children, back to home countries in crisis, marks a radical reversal of the longstanding US policy of welcoming refugees and providing newcomers with paths to citizenship.

The plan stands to harm the US economy by freezing and then eliminating critically needed H-2A seasonal agricultural and H-2B non-agricultural worker visas. The elimination of spousal visas and the end of automatic US citizenship for all children born in the US will tear families apart, and may compel US citizens to leave the only homes they have ever known to keep their families together.

But as of now....

- Undocumented immigrants continue to have rights under the law, including the right to due process, the right to a fair hearing and access to the courts, the right to legal



representation at their own expense, and to protection against unlawful searches and seizures.

- Undocumented immigrants have labor rights that include protections for minimum wage and safe work conditions.
- The Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) ensures that *all* patients – regardless of immigration or citizenship status – have access to emergency room treatment.
- While many undocumented immigrants (DACA recipients, TPS holders, and nonimmigrant visa holders) *are not* eligible for most federal benefits, including Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), undocumented immigrants *may access some benefits if deemed necessary to protect life or guarantee safety in dire situations*. These include access to emergency Medicare, hospital emergency room treatment, as well as healthcare and nutrition programs under the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) – when they meet *all* of Medicaid’s other non-financial and financial eligibility requirements.

Discussion Prompts:

- Has anyone in your group already been affected by the Project 2025 plans?
- What local groups in your community now advocate for immigrants?
- Who advocates for immigrant rights at the state level?
- Are there any local groups who provide free or low-cost legal services for immigrants?
- Can you list the basic rights of undocumented immigrants now?
- What rights does a person have if ICE come to interrogate them at home/work/in public?
- What are preventive steps undocumented immigrants should take to be prepared in case of an encounter with law enforcement or ICE?
- What will happen to H-2A agricultural visas if Project 2025 is enacted?
- What is the role of national immigration organizations in fighting Project 2025?
- What caution do undocumented immigrants need to have when attending public protests or street rallies? What documentation should they carry with them?
- How can local officials and local media help in educating the public about Project 2025?

RESOURCES

- **ACLU** has excellent **Know Your Rights and legal resources:** <https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/immigrants-rights>
- **National Immigration Law Center (NILC):** Defends low-income immigrants; provides legal and policy resources. <https://www.nilc.org>



- **United We Dream (UWD):** A youth-led organization advocating for rights of immigrant youth, DACA, Dreamers. <http://www.unitedwedream.org>
- **American Immigration Council:** Provides legal and policy analysis, educational materials, advocacy. <https://americanimmigrationcouncil.org>
- **Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC):** ILRC provides trainings, legal and policy resources, and advocacy. <http://www.ilrc.org>
- **National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR):** immigrants' rights advocacy, education, organizing. <http://www.nnirr.org>

More Transgender / LGBTQIA+ immigration resources:

- **National Immigrant Justice Center** - including LGBTQIA+ services: <https://immigrantjustice.org/services/legal-services-lgbtq-immigrants>
- **Immigration Reform** <https://www.immigrationreform.org>
- **Immigration Equality** <https://immigrationequality.org/>
- **Rainbow Railroad** <https://www.rainbowrailroad.org/>
- Check local organizations for additional resources.





MODULE 11

HEALTH and SCIENCE

HIV and Risk Preparedness



Project 2025 attacks America's federal health and scientific research system, including key health agencies: Health and Human Services (HHS), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Its proposals threaten the health of millions of the most vulnerable Americans, including those with HIV, while jeopardizing national disease preparedness. Veterans also face calls to privatize veteran health services. It also threatens global health by proposing to change USAID into a "pro-life" agency and ending US foreign aid to groups who refuse to adhere to that Christian conservative Christian agenda (see Module 12).

CASE STUDY

Mike and Cynthia live in Arlington, Virginia, and have two children. Cynthia has a PhD in public health and works as a top administrator at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) division at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Mike is a PhD epidemiologist at the CDC, who works on polio research and tracking rare viruses. They are taking a very early commuter train into work today, facing busy days. Mike has an early physical therapy appointment; Cynthia has been called into an emergency HHS budget staff meeting.

Cynthia is worried: her meeting will discuss potential Project 2025 HHS budget cuts that would hugely impact HRSA, which now provides equitable health care to over 30 million Americans in the highest-need communities. It serves 58 million pregnant people and their families, and 560,000 people living with HIV, the latter through the Ryan White HIV/AIDS program. Many also get food and nutrition in federal programs slated to be cut back (*see module 4 on Poverty and Federal Benefits*) if Project 2025 is enacted. Project 2025 also proposes to restructure the CDC, and Mike wonders what programs could be affected, and how this would impact America's vaccine and disease prevention programs.



Mike is an Army veteran who gets care at a nearby Veterans Affairs hospital. He injured his back on his first tour of duty. VA scholarships helped cover his education, and he has led a CDC polio vaccine preparedness program for two years. His back injury flares up under extreme stress, which he feels now. What will happen to controlling polio if they cut research? What about needed next-generation vaccines for the flu, STDs, HIV, hepatitis B, COVID-19, and monkeypox?

Cynthia's meeting is sobering: the head of HHS personally delivers the bad news – Project 2025 calls for radical budget cuts to HHS, and they must prepare for this possibility. Project 2025 calls for restructuring the NIH, FDA, and CDC, and the VA also faces reforms that could cut benefits and shift care to private contractors. Project 2025 also attacks the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), and calls for boosting private sector insurance instead. Medicare and Medicaid will also face new restrictions, she learned; conservatives want to turn Medicare into a free-market program. Many more Americans will lose health care and coverage, her bosses warn. It's terrible news.

***All federal agencies will be required to implement Project 2025's
Christian pro-life, "family values" agenda***

The cuts are only part of the mandate: all federal agencies will be required to implement Project 2025's Christian pro-life, "family values" agenda. Top-level federal workers may be fired and replaced with political appointees who would pursue this agenda. Most of the people Cynthia works with are dedicated, nonpolitical public servants, but what will happen to them if they don't agree with policies that withdraw health services from women, the poor, or LGBTQIA+ people?

**What can Cynthia and Mike do to protect themselves?
Their clients? Their departments?**



Cynthia's head is reeling. How steep will cuts be to HRSA? To Ryan White funding? To pre- and post-exposure HIV prevention programs (PrEP and PEP) that have proven so effective? How will people with HIV living on disability or limited incomes get treatment now? What about PEPFAR, the global AIDS program run by USAID? (*see related modules 11 B on HIV; 12 on Global Health*)

She meets Mike at lunch to compare notes: the news about Project 2025 is shaking everyone in Washington and across the global health world. They could both lose their jobs, while Project 2025 calls for eliminating federal unions (*see module 6 on Labor and Federal Workers*). Mike's VA health care could be impacted, too. They worry about the health of poor and rural Americans, and the elderly.



Meanwhile, America’s scientific and research capacity faces a major threat. Project 2025 proposes eliminating COVID-19 vaccine mandates and decreasing funding for disease prevention and preparedness. Project 2025 also proposes to revive a Trump-era ban on acquiring new human fetal tissue from aborted fetuses for research. Project 2025 also goes even further, proposing a ban on use of human embryonic stem cells in research – it is a “pro-life” anti-abortion agenda. Mike worries that agency funding for HIV vaccines will dry up, along with vaccines for COVID-19 and his focus, polio, all of which depend on use of human fetal tissue. Project 2025 is a terrible recipe for bad science policy, his bosses agree. What’s going to happen to America’s science agenda and its ability to protect Americans now and in the future?

Project 2025 proposes eliminating COVID-19 vaccine mandates and decreasing funding for disease prevention and preparedness



What can they do?

Mike and Cynthia waste no time: they join briefings for union members in their departments to learn what union officials are thinking. The first step, they are reminded, is to know your rights now and share that information with others. They learn that laws are still in place to protect federal workers, including a new ruling by the Office of Policy Management to boost protections for nonpolitical merit-based workers – at least a delay tactic to avoid overnight firings (*see module 6 on Labor and Federal Workers*).

Looking ahead, they find out they will be able to join in future federal class-action lawsuits to fight back, too. Federal lawyers and the ACLU are already discussing potential court challenges.

They are relieved to learn the current administration has ordered NIH officials to take steps to protect the work of its agency from future partisan attack. That message is spreading across the government: every department should do the same, and assess how the reforms impact key clientele and the American public. They have to inform the public, too – and fast. Cynthia joins an HRSA team to start an analysis of her division.

They learn that outside working groups have been formed on different sectors and topics, led by Democracy Forward, a nonprofit organization that brings sector experts together with federal officials, think tanks, scholars, and community activists to brainstorm critical steps to block Project 2025’s agenda. They share that information with work peers, too.

***Health continuity has implications
for the entire community***



What about their clients? Millions of Americans are now getting benefits, and many are getting Ryan White funds to pay for HIV medicine.

Education: Health continuity has implications for the entire community. If Project 2025 is enacted, the American health safety net is at risk. The attacks will disproportionately impact Black, brown, Native and other communities, based on existing health data. Local, state, and regional public health and other officials must be informed to prepare and mobilize.

Protecting programs: This isn't the first time the Ryan White program has been attacked. Cynthia is aware of earlier fights by AIDS activists going back to the 80s and 90s and aughts. She reaches out to DC-based AIDS health policy and funding groups to learn what they are thinking and how they can work with HHS, CDC, and FDA officials to fight back. Mike is also aware that the CDC has faced years of attacks by conservative groups, and looks to past lessons and strategies to see what can be done now, including fighting anti-vaxx COVID disinformation and legislation.

We're not alone think Mike and Cynthia; we're actually the majority.

New Allies: On the positive side, they know, there are natural allies across all sectors of the health system, and at all levels, since all Americans will be impacted by Project 2025's plan. That means a lot of different ideas and possibilities for fighting back and seeking alternative strategies to provide continuity of health care for the neediest. There is strength in numbers. *We're not alone, think Mike and Cynthia: we're actually the majority. But we need to get the word out to warn everyone, and invite community leaders and solutions to help guide our response.*

Global fallout: The negative **global health implications** of Project 2025 are equally sweeping and likely to disproportionately impact the most vulnerable communities, including women and infants, LGBTQIA+ people, and the socially marginalized. The reforms call for turning USAID into a pro-life agency and cutting US funding to groups abroad who fail to align with an extremist pro-life agenda. The impact on the HIV epidemic could be dire. (*see module 12*)

Main points of Project 2025's attack:

- Represents a major assault on the US federal health system and threatens health for the most vulnerable Americans, and those living with HIV.
- Would overhaul the Affordable Care Act, limit federal insurance benefits, and push private insurance, reducing coverage for the most economically vulnerable.



- Would overhaul key federal health agencies, including the HHS, FDA, CDC, NIH. Project 2025 proposes reviving a Trump administration ban on using fetal cells and banning NIH and HHS research using human embryonic stem cells.
- Aligns US domestic and foreign policy to reflect a conservative Christian “pro-life” agenda that would define marriage and family according to the Bible and eliminate or restrict health access and certain services.
- Puts federal health and science departments under the direction of Christian loyalists to implement major restructuring.
- Project 2025 plans to further restrict abortion and “enact the most robust protections for the unborn that Congress will support”; it seeks to ban mail-order delivery of mifepristone abortion pills and eliminate the ACA’s coverage of the morning-after pill, Ella. It would cut all federal funding from Planned Parenthood and prevent Medicaid funding for abortion

The negative global implications of Project 2025 are sweeping

- Promotes the “rhythm” method to prevent pregnancy (fertility awareness–based methods).
- Conservatives (and Project 2025) argue that a fertilized embryo is a person (the “fetal personhood” claim); that would potentially result in a ban on any form of birth control that prevents implantation (e.g., IUD, Ella). *(see module 2 on Reproductive Rights for detailed discussion on impacts and strategies)*.
- Eliminates federal funding for gender-affirming care under Medicaid and the VA
- Puts America’s children and broad public at risk by removing COVID-19 vaccine and future mask mandates as needed.
- Proposes that states administer Medicare, and partially privatizes it.
- Establishes a work requirement for Medicaid; makes Medicaid recipients people pay for some care; puts a lifetime cap on benefits.
- Establishes work requirement for SNAP; tightens eligibility for WIC; also restricts K-12 school lunch programs *(see module 4 on Poverty and Public Benefits)*



- Proposes supporting home-based childcare rather than “universal day care,” and eliminating Head Start
- Opposes physician-assisted suicide policies in favor of palliative care (says HHS should serve “all Americans from conception to natural death”)
- Ends or loosens food safety and USDA product consumer safety labeling (*see our analysis of Dept. of Agriculture reforms*)
- Eliminates climate change policies and protections – these impact our health (*see brief on Climate for more*)

What the Law Says Now:

- *Insurance*: the ACA (Obamacare) mandates that state Medicaid eligibility standards must include all individuals at or below 138 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL).
- *Benefits*: Employment is not a requirement for Medicaid benefits; there is no lifetime cap on Medicaid benefits
- *Abortion policy*: There is no federal protection for abortion since the *Dobbs* Supreme Court decision. As of June 2024, 14 states had enacted total bans on abortion; 27 states had bans based on gestational duration; 7 banned abortion at or before 18 weeks (see the Guttmacher Institute’s legislative tracker for updates: www.guttmacher.org)
- There is a pending Congressional bill, H.R. 12, the Women’s Health Protection Act of 2023, gaining widespread progressive support, that would prohibit governmental restrictions on the provision of, and access to, abortion services, at various points of fetal gestational development.
- For welfare and eldercare policies, *see module 4, Poverty and Federal Benefits*.

Effective Strategies:

- **Collect data about how cuts in federal funds or programs will impact people** at the community level (local health facilities are likely to be impacted, as are local health workers, local clinics, and hospitals). Make that information public.
- **Identify possible alternative resources to the cuts** in federal funds and health services that will impact clients at the community level – local and state laws and policies may help. Contact local legal groups, community and local health activists, and allies in the nonprofit and private sectors, too.



- **Consider who could be impacted** by Project 2025's attacks on health and science. Health groups are already mobilizing against right-wing attacks; so are people impacted by specific issues such as HIV or COVID-19. Reach out and share your concerns about Project 2025 and find out what your colleagues know or may be doing. Use our campaign tools and fact sheets to start the conversation.
- **Find out which groups in your area are already working on issues** such as Medicaid or Medicare reform, or Ryan White funding – you can research national organizations to see if they have state affiliates, or contact nonprofits focused on public health access. Build a local counter-plan and include self-care and support in it.



- **Project 2025 affects the health of all Americans: reach out** to your Congressional, state, and local representatives, and ask if they know about Project 2025's plan and what they are doing to protect healthcare services in your state or local community. Urge them to hold public meetings and engage in public communications to inform the public and identify local responses to protect public health.
- **Consider forming or joining local or topic-specific working groups** to discuss priority community health threats and needs. Build upon the existing local health activism infrastructures that may exist: others have mobilized around different health issues for years. They can offer local experience and strategies, and identify local leaders and stakeholders to join the fight.
- **Amplify the voices of those who will be most affected:** Given Project 2025's threat to the health of Black and brown communities, the poor, people with HIV or COVID-19, and women seeking reproductive care, it's critical to seek out and amplify the voices of those targeted by Project 2025. Help give a local voice to the threat; put a personal, local face on it. Help raise these targeted community voices in media, social media, online platforms, and in public, community, and workplace discussions.
- **Join and help organize local meetings:** Local officials and community stakeholders have a critical role to play in discussing Project 2025's possible impact on their community. Consider asking them to join or host local meetings, or community Town Halls, or speak on local media to help spread the word. One key question to address: what local or state sources are available for continuity of care or services if federal funds or programs are eliminated? What local stakeholders need to be engaged?
- **Healthcare is a right – it's a human rights issue.**
- **We need to make clear what's at stake**, and engage media, especially health and science journalists and health networks, to help educate the public and specific scientific communities about what Project 2025 would do. Universities and think tanks can help



host conversations and provide data analysis to support evidence-based responses to attacks. Here, too, local and state working groups can help identify local strategies to fight back and what's at stake locally for communities.

- **A national public education campaign is a major priority**, along with media messaging. We need a national PR campaign, across all media, to inform Americans about the threat of Project 2025 to our health and our scientific agenda. We also need to engage healthcare media and stakeholders to help deliver the message to targeted constituents.
- **We need the top voices across the science and the healthcare industry to speak out** against Project 2025 and the plans to restructure the HHS, CDC, FDA, and NIH. Americans need to loudly defend science, and counter disinformation, including and false statements made about the merits of vaccines and public health. COVID-19 and older threats like polio can't be allowed to return: the US must embrace epidemic prevention and preparedness against Project 2025's anti-science agenda.

Discussion Prompts:

- Who in your community will be most affected by the Project 2025 proposals?
- What local groups are already working with Medicaid and Medicare recipients, LGBTQIA+ populations, and other groups who are likely to be strongly impacted?
- What local groups can help you get the message out about Project 2025's proposals?
- What about unions: do your unions know about Project 2025 and how it will affect healthcare?

RESOURCES

Media:

- **Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF)**: leading source for US and international health research, analysis, information. www.kff.org

Public Health (general):

- **Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP)**: Policy organization that works at federal and state levels to promote (health) policies to reduce poverty and inequality.
- **Families USA**: national non-profit organization that advocates for affordable, quality health care for all Americans; big Medicaid protection focus.

Medicaid:

- **National Association of Medicaid Directors (NAMD)**: Represents state Medicaid directors; Medicaid advocacy, policy, leadership focus. www.medicaiddirectors.org
- **National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP)**: a nonpartisan nonprofit helping states achieve excellence in health policy, practice, including Medicaid. www.nashp.org.



- **National Health Law Program (NHeLP)**: advocates for the rights of low-income and underserved individuals to access health care. www.healthlaw.org
- **National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC)**: community health centers and advocates for policies that support health care for Medicaid beneficiaries. www.nachc.org
- **Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC)**: non-partisan legislative branch agency providing policy and data analysis, recommendations to Congress, the HHS Secretary, and states on issues affecting Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). www.macpac.gov

Medicare:

- **AARP (American Association of Retired Persons)**: nonpartisan nonprofit focused on issues affecting older Americans, including health care and Medicare. <https://aarp.org>
- **Medicare Rights Center**: national, nonprofit consumer service organization dedicated to ensuring affordable health care access for older adults and people with disabilities. <https://www.medicarerights.org>
- **National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare (NCPSSM)**: advocacy organization to protect the financial security, health of older Americans, including strengthening Social Security and Medicare. <https://www.ncpssm.org>
- **Alliance for Retired Americans**: nationwide grassroots advocacy organization representing more than 4.4 million retirees and seniors. <https://retiredamericans.org>
- **Center for Medicare Advocacy**: national legal nonprofit law providing education, advocacy, legal assistance with Medicare, health access to older people, people with disabilities. <https://www.medicareadvocacy.org>

HIV (US):

- **The AIDS Institute**: national nonprofit providing education, advocacy, policy work to support the rights of people living with, and affected by, HIV and hepatitis. <https://www.theaidsinstitute.org>
- **GMHC (Gay Men's Health Crisis)**: nonprofit, community-based organization that provides HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and advocacy services. <https://www.gmhc.org>
- **HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA)**: organization of medical professionals dedicated to advancing HIV care and treatment via advocacy, education, research. <https://www.hivma.org>

Population-specific:

- **Black AIDS Institute**: national organization addressing HIV/AIDS, health disparities in Black communities. Training, capacity building, advocacy. <https://www.blackaids.org>
- **Latino Commission on AIDS**: nonprofit organization addressing HIV and health challenges and disparities facing Latinos via prevention, advocacy, education programs. <https://www.latinoaids.org>



- **Women's Collective:** community health agency in Washington, DC, providing direct services, advocacy, policy work for women, girls, families living with/at risk for HIV. <https://www.womenscollective.org>
- **SisterLove, Inc:** Atlanta-based HIV organization dedicated to improving the lives of women with HIV and their families via education, prevention, and support services; strong women of color focus. <https://www.sisterlove.org>
- **Positive Women's Network - USA (PWN-USA):** national group of women living with HIV, inclusive of transgender women. Focus on policy change, leadership development, community organizing to support rights of women with HIV. <https://www.pwn-usa.org>
- **Transgender Law Center (TLCL)** national group led by and for trans people living with HIV; advocacy, leadership, community mobilization. <https://transgenderlawcenter.org>
- **APIAHF:** national health justice organization that influences policy, mobilizes communities, health programs for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, including HIV. <https://www.apiahf.org>

HIV POLICY & ACTIVISM:

- **Health GAP (Global Access Project):** International advocacy organization doing advocacy, activism, policy analysis to boost affordable HIV drug access <https://www.healthgap.org>
- **ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power)** <https://www.actupny.org>
- **Treatment Action Group (TAG)** independent, activist and community-based HIV research, advocacy and policy think tank. <https://www.treatmentactiongroup.org>
- **Housing Works:** HIV multi-services agency and healing community led by people living with HIV that does advocacy, activism. <https://www.housingworks.org>
- **The SERO Project:** network of people living with HIV and allies fighting HIV criminalization, doing advocacy. <https://www.seropproject.com>
- **National Minority AIDS Council** <https://www.nmac.org>
- **Latinx+** <https://latinxplus.com>
- **Asian & Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS (APICHA)** <https://www.aipcha.org>
- **Human Rights Campaign:** national LGBTQIA+ advocacy <https://www.hrc.org>

Benefits: *see module 4 on Poverty and Federal Benefits.*

HIV Legal Services: *see module 3 on LGBTQIA+ issues.*

Global HIV programs: *see module 12 on Global Health and HIV.*

Reproductive health: *see module 2 on Reproductive Rights.*



MODULE 12: GLOBAL HEALTH & HIV Reproductive Health & Criminalization of Care

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH | CRIMINALIZATION OF CARE

Project 2025's call to realign all US policy with an extremist Christian nationalist "pro-life" agenda will cut US funding for groups whose values are not in agreement. Project 2025 will eliminate services to LGBTQIA+ communities and dismantle global HIV and health programs that serve the most socially marginalized around the world. Project 2025 will ban funding for abortion services and to health providers that provide abortion as part of their medical services.

CASE STUDY

MARTIN THOMAS AND Edith Byombe are longtime colleagues and staff directors of a nonprofit HIV prevention project, Health Impacts, an agency with a long track record of worldwide HIV prevention advocacy. Health Impacts is headquartered in Washington, DC, with six agencies abroad, with an emphasis on services in Africa.

Martin is a program officer in the DC office. Edith directs its Uganda program. As an openly HIV-positive nurse she is a beloved local leader in the Kawempe community, the poorest district in Uganda's capital city of Kampala. A majority of poor Kampala residents are unemployed, and find occasional work in the informal economy. In Kampala, sex work – primarily survival sex – is common because of extreme poverty and limited employment opportunities for women. Health Impacts serves people who are vulnerable to HIV, including men who have sex with men (MSM), women, as well as transgender and nonbinary individuals, and all people who do sex work to survive.

Health Impacts receives funding from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), among other government and private sources. Funding for HIV/STD prevention and teen health programs comes from the US global HIV funding program PEPFAR (*see PEPFAR Spotlight*), while funding for its supplemental food service for low-income HIV+ clients comes from the UN programs, UNICEF and the World Food Program.



What's at Stake?

Health Impacts staff learn that Project 2025 is a major threat to their programs: Project 2025 seeks force USAID and PEPFAR to conform to its anti-choice, antigay, anti-diversity agenda. That will undermine the health programs of the World Health Organization and UN agencies.

Possibly a full 50% of Health Impacts' budget could be lost. Health Impacts' most vulnerable clients are at risk of the most harm. Additionally, Project 2025 opposes mandatory Covid-19 vaccinations and – contrary to guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and World Health Organization – takes a broad anti-vaccination position. The staff at Health Impacts, and more importantly, their clients, face a devastating public health scenario.

What can Martin and Edith do? How can Health Impacts respond?

The board and staff of Health Impacts face a major ethical decision: if they don't go along with Project 2025's policies, they risk losing PEPFAR funding. Any funding loss means that the organization will be forced to let staff go, reducing their ability to offer life-saving education and prevention services to vulnerable communities at risk of HIV and STDs. Health Impacts realizes that they need to find alternative funding to keep their programs going – and fast.

Project 2025 seeks force USAID and PEPFAR to conform to its anti-choice, antigay, anti-diversity agenda

With its emphasis on Christianity, Project 2025 demonizes LGBTQIA+ populations – which includes three of Health Impact's core populations: men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender people, and sex workers. The staff are very concerned that Project 2025 will forbid them from providing life-saving, non-judgmental health prevention materials to their at-risk clients. Project 2025 calls the rainbow pride flag and the Black Lives Matter flag "divisive symbols," and says they have "no place next to the Stars and Stripes." Back in DC, Martin considers that the office will have to remove the trans flag outside their Washington headquarters, and worries about the message that will send to everyone involved in the struggle for LGBTQIA+ rights and freedoms.

The Health Impacts staff know that by reducing prevention services, there will be a spike in HIV transmission in the communities where they have worked hard to educate people and save lives. Additionally, new cases of hepatitis B, STDs, Covid-19, TB, polio, cholera, and water-borne



parasitic diseases will rise. In East Africa, they worry about the damage to their dengue fever prevention efforts. If maternal and teen health prevention education is cut, the staff foresee a spike in teen and adult unplanned pregnancies. They worry about a resurgence of Covid-19 if vaccination programs are ended.



In Uganda, Edith is facing the threat of being criminalized as a person with HIV, following passage of the 2024 Anti-Homosexuality Act, that further entrenched discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people and prohibited health workers from serving gay communities. In Nairobi, where Health Impacts has a Kenya office, a similar harsh anti-gay bill has become law, and the staff anticipates that Project 2025's strict policies will have a devastating effect on poor and LGBTQIA+ people there, too.

Project 2025's assaults on health care represent a very personal threat. Edith is passionate about preventing sexual violence prevention and teen pregnancy based on her own experience: Edith is HIV+, and so is one of her daughters. Edith was raped at age 17 by an uncle who was unaware he carried the virus. As a teen, Edith had no HIV prevention education, and abortion is outlawed in Uganda. She became a nurse to help prevent harm to others.

How should they move forward?

Principled Action: Health Impacts decides it must reject the Project 2025 mandate: the organization will continue operating and will not stop serving its neediest clients. It immediately informs its supporters and clients about the unfolding USAID policy and its possible impact on its operations, staff, and community services. Martin invites clients and donors to a global online Community Town Hall to discuss their concerns and responses.

Edith joins a national Ugandan NGO working group to strategize responses to Project 2025. Other Health Impacts directors do the same in the countries where they work, creating networks to share information and strategies to continue helping their at-risk clients. Aware of



the vulnerabilities of both their clients and their workforce, they brainstorm ways to meet the safety needs of their communities. Working together, they can implement safeguards to protect staff and clients. Martin contacts Health Impacts' global community of supporters to ask for help. To his delight and relief, several private US, Dutch, and South African companies immediately pledge to increase donations to make up for the projected loss of the PEPFAR funding under Project 2025.

Project 2025's main points of attack on Global HIV and Health:

Anti-choice proposals:

- **Replace current, experienced USAID officials** with committed anti-abortion political appointees; revise agency regulations to reflect anti-choice values as a main goal, with a focus on family, defined according to the Bible as a married, heterosexual couple.
- **Reinstate the "Mexico City Policy" or "global gag rule"** ("Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance," PLGHA), which makes policies excluding abortion a condition for receiving US assistance.
- **Rename the USAID Office of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment** (GEWE) to become the USAID Office of Women, Children, and Families – and realign resources.
- **Remove all references**, examples, definitions, photos, and language on USAID websites, publications, policies, contracts, and grants **that use the terms: "gender," "gender equality," "gender equity," "gender diverse individuals," "gender aware," "gender sensitive,"** etc.
- **Remove all references to "abortion," "reproductive health," "sexual and reproductive rights,"** and "controversial sexual education materials."
- **Designate a political appointee** to help coordinate cross-agency efforts to hold the US global partners (UN, WHO, etc.) accountable to financial and programmatic benchmarks, "including assurances that language promoting abortion will be removed from UN documents, policy statements, and technical literature."

On religion:

- Make "international religious freedom" central to USAID's development efforts and connect religious freedom to development.
- Integrate religious training into all the agency's programs.



On humanitarian assistance:

- Transfer large awards away from established, “corrupt” UN agencies and global NGOs, and fund local, faith-based entities.

International treaties and agencies:

- Project 2025 attacks the credibility of the WHO and UN agencies and calls for cutting WHO funding and curtailing its authority.
- Suspend President Biden’s international treaties in multiple sectors. (*See PEPFAR Spotlight*)



Effective Strategies (*immediate and long-term*):

- **Stay informed:** track the implementation of new policies; participate in various HIV and disease-specific listservs; communicate with other agency heads. While PEPFAR funds may be cut under Project 2025, the UN programs may not. USAID, PEPFAR, etc. will be providing guidance documents if policy is changed.
- **Strategic planning:** all NGOs abroad, in all sectors, are urged to develop emergency strategic plans to assess the possible impact of Project 2025 – leading global public health officials see Project 2025 as a dramatic threat to global public health. Analyses will be needed, including global epidemic, disease, and economic impact forecasting.
- **Local steps:** bring together local health and community leaders in the HIV and women’s health sectors; invite regional WHO officials to join. Work with WFP local officials to consider similar meetings for food aid recipients. Joining forces will help providers to identify cross-cutting, intersectional strategies to respond to the new policies, and may reveal new opportunities for collaboration and new resources.
- **Conduct population surveys** to better understand the true scope of what will be lost when Project 2025 is enacted.
- **Implement strategies to identify new allies** and resources locally. Reach out to LGBTQIA+ and sex-worker communities.
- **Outreach:** agencies can inform their global community of supporters and members about what is happening.



- **Fundraising:** describe the importance of the health work, and highlight the ethical call to action to support LGBTQIA+ people globally and the need to advocate for reproductive health services.
- **Consider strategic alliances, merging programs, pooled funding,** and private-public partnerships with agencies and local stakeholders in the same country with similar missions to leverage limited or lost resources or funding.
- **Conduct a SWOT** (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) **analysis** of each program, and do strategic brainstorming. Each country will have different challenges and thus different solutions.
- **Global advocacy:** to make up for PEPFAR cuts, global health activists are urging governments around the world to increase their funding for HIV and other diseases, as well as their national contributions to the Global Fund for AIDS, Malaria, and TB. Vaccine advocates are similarly mobilizing to oppose Project 2025's anti-vaccination positions.
- A global advocacy campaign to fight Project 2025 is urgently needed.

***All populations have a right to health care –
discrimination is not acceptable.***

Take-away Messages:

- **Current programs such as PEPFAR are successful** in cutting HIV infections – we know this works.
- **All populations have a right to health care** – discrimination is not acceptable.
- Women around the globe have a right to manage their fertility – through birth control, reproductive care, abortion, or IVF.
- **Under Project 2025, USAID's main goals will be anti-abortion and pro-religion,** neither of which are legitimate global health focuses.
- **Funding will be withheld** from services that offer a full range of reproductive health care.
- **Project 2025 argues that abortion and LGBTQIA+ rights contradict the traditional values of the cultures that receive aid** from the US, and should not be forced on them. American religious groups, including Family Watch International and C-FAM, will be allowed to encourage anti-gay legislation and the criminalization of LGBTQIA+ people.



Discussion Prompts:

- If offering healthcare is criminalized, how will that affect your community?
- In your community, how will health and prevention funding cuts be felt? Beyond health providers and clients, what other sectors in your community will be impacted?
- What steps will providers need to take to maintain safety for staff and clients, as well as continuity of care to clients?
- Are there other local and regional HIV program coordinators to whom you can reach out and make common cause?
- Are there organizations who can help with housing, transportation, broader services, providing legal assistance?
- Are there lessons to be learned from other countries that have decriminalized? (*See O'Neill report in Resources.*)
- What opportunities do you have for public education and advocacy – local and broader?
- How can community education and outreach help to protect marginalized communities and counter the hate discourse?

RESOURCES

See Module 11 – Health and Science for a list of global HIV, health and science resources including frontline international organizations doing advocacy, providing analysis, monitoring, and tools to support provider and community responses to the threats of Project 2025. See **Module 2 – Reproductive Rights** for resources in reproductive health care.



SPOTLIGHT on PEPFAR



WHAT IS PEPFAR?

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) helps 20 million people living with HIV worldwide who are able to access treatment and antiretroviral medication through PEPFAR. It has been credited with saving 25 million lives across the globe and slashing HIV infection rates in half in some of the more than 50 countries that benefit from it. Created under President George W. Bush in 2003, the program has mostly maintained bipartisan support and consistently been extended on five-year cycles.

What is PEPFAR'S current status?

PEPFAR's future is threatened. Because of conservative legislators' demands to include anti-abortion language in PEPFAR, the program was re-authorized for only one year (starting in March 2024) and runs out in March 2025 unless it is re-authorized. Project 2025 echoes the call to make PEPFAR reauthorization contingent on adherence to a "pro-life" anti-abortion position.

What's at Stake?

If PEPFAR funds are restricted, this will cut funding to key grassroots groups supporting the most vulnerable including LGBTQIA+ communities, people who engage in survival sex, and mothers and children needing access to services at clinics with reproductive health services.

Project 2025's main points of attack on PEPFAR:

- Support and replicate PEPFAR's "localization" model of successful, rapid scale-up HIV and health programs, including its data reporting system that supports transparency.
- Build Global Health Bureau's portfolio, increasing grants to faith-based institutions.
- Reinstate PLGHA ("Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance"): this agreement "requires foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that receive global health assistance from affected Federal Departments and Agencies to agree that they will not perform or actively promote abortion as a method of family planning or provide financial support to any other organization that conducts such activities."
- Assure that groups receiving PEPFAR funds align with presidential agenda values.

***Conservatives are already implementing the Project 2025 proposals:***

House conservatives declined to reauthorize PEPFAR unless restrictions were added to prevent federal funds from going to organizations that provide abortions. Evidence that PEPFAR funds have directly supported abortions is lacking, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. Lawmakers have spent months debating over whether to reauthorize it for five years, one year, or not at all. As a result, lawmakers failed to reauthorize PEPFAR by a Sept. 30, 2023, deadline.

While the program would continue absent a reauthorization – provided the funds are appropriated – some time-bound requirements would end if a reauthorization bill isn't passed or if Congress doesn't address them through another legislative vehicle. Notable provisions that are expiring include a one-third threshold for Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) contributions (US funding for the Global Fund cannot exceed one-third of total contributions from all donors to the Global Fund, serving as a matching challenge for other donors), as well as an allocation for orphans and vulnerable children.

Project 2025 threatens to harm the tremendous progress we've made towards ending HIV as a public health threat

Aside from PEPFAR, the House Appropriations Committee's State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations (SFOPs) bill for fiscal year 2024 would cut the foreign assistance budget by nearly one-third. While this bill largely flat-funds many global health programs, it also proposes cuts to programs that support family planning, HIV testing, and maternal and child health. The bill would also slash United Nations' funding, including funding for UN Women, the World Health Organization, and UN Development Programme. This year (2024) the House proposed drastic cuts to US domestic HIV spending, but failed to achieve this.³

Project 2025 threatens to harm the tremendous progress we've made towards ending HIV as a public health threat by cutting off funding and political support for HIV testing, treatment, and prevention; these programs will shrink without adequate funding. Project 2025's emphasis on bypassing existing governmental and non-governmental agencies in favor of only local funding also threatens to harm malaria and tuberculosis treatment and prevention efforts.

Effective Strategies:

- **Work with other organizations:** UNAIDS is hosting a proposed global HIV Working Group (<https://jointsiwg.unaids.org/>) to assess risks and opportunities for new and alternative funding sources to offset the PEPFAR cuts. The UN, WHO, and other colleagues at the Global Fund are discussing needed responses.

³ <https://hivhep.org/press-releases/congress-agrees-to-maintain-funding-for-domestic-hiv-programs/>



- **Do Risk Assessments Now.** Grantees, NGOs, and donors are urged to do a quick **SWOT analysis** (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) of Project 2025's possible impact to inform their emergency plan and transitional strategic planning. Groups such as the **Council for Global Equality** are available to offer guidance for NGOs. (*see Resources at end of toolkit*)
- **Provide Guidance for PEPFAR recipients:** The US State Department's Office of the US Global AIDS Coordinator and Health Diplomacy, the primary agency that manages and oversees PEPFAR, should take a lead to provide guidance, updates, and preparedness trainings for community-based NGOs and PEPFAR recipients to help them assess possible risks, threats, and negative impacts of Project 2025's policies on PEPFAR funding and HIV service delivery, as well as the criminalization of LGBTQIA+ people.



- **Conduct research now.** USAID and multilateral partners including WHO could quickly conduct field research and impact case studies on Project 2025's likely impact on HIV education, prevention, and treatment programs, learning from the experiences of countries like Uganda or Russia where criminalization of LGBTQIA+ communities has had major negative public health implications including in HIV program delivery.
- **Talk to foreign government officials.** US HIV officials and agencies and activists must engage national government health ministries and leading HIV scientific agency heads to assess the public health and HIV control implications of Project 2025 policies at country levels and what alternative sources of funding could be sought to assure continuity of care and programs including HIV prevention, epidemic surveillance, treatment, and care for Key Populations that will be disproportionately impacted by Project 2025's policies.
- **Community convenings** Community HIV organizations and activists have an important role to play in raising awareness, sharing educational information, and engaging members of local HIV communities to learn about Project 2025 and discuss their concerns and fears related to continuity of care and services if HIV funding is being threatened, and groups such as transgender people are being criminalized.

Actions to Take:

- **Defend PEPFAR - Write to Congress:** Congress failed to reauthorize the \$6.9 billion-a-year PEPFAR program in October 2023. Write letters to Congress and the White House in support of PEPFAR, and consider writing Op-Eds for media outlets to counter the disinformation being pushed by conservative groups about PEPFAR.



- **Focus on SFOP's appropriations** – HIV and health activists need to pay close attention to the foreign assistance budget and redouble efforts to safeguard US funding for family planning, HIV testing, and maternal and child health.
- **Defend UN health programs, including WHO, UN Women and UNDP** who are being attacked by Project 2025, often in relation to abortion and family planning services.
- **Speak out** and defend global public SHRH programs, and science budgets and programs at public forums and in the media. Counter disinformation and attacks on science.
- **Private and nonprofit philanthropy**: philanthropy represents 2 percent of overall HIV response financially around the world. Philanthropists can be nimble, innovative, and responsive in ways that government is not. As US funding is threatened, philanthropy is poised to make a significant contribution to assure funding is provided to sustain lifesaving global public health and HIV programs.

Positive Actions for Donors *(source: Funders Concerned About AIDS):*

- Consider reaching out to bilateral partners who work closely with PEPFAR, and ask them to share the impact of the program in their country.
- Donors who fund organizations that receive PEPFAR money also have a unique message to share with the White House, embassies, and fellow donors to communicate the importance and impact of US governmental support in the HIV response.
- Domestically, philanthropic organizations should use their connections to open doors that aren't always accessible to non-funder advocates. In addition, grantmakers can direct more funding to state and local groups to help build a groundswell of support to counter the anti-LGBTQIA+ and anti-SRHR policies and rhetoric coming from state legislatures.

If you're interested in learning more about state groups, FCAA (Funders Concerned About AIDS) can help you connect: <https://www.fcaids.org/>.

- Consider **rapid-response funding** for organizations that can advocate for PEPFAR reauthorization and HIV-friendly legislation. With the right resources, grantees can quickly mobilize to host press conferences, organize public education events, and buy advertisements to get the message out.



“When you’re doing grantmaking, remember the state-level fights—that’s where all of these attacks originate,” says Leslie McGorman, Director of Policy and Strategy at AIDS United. “Congress never comes up with these ideas themselves; they are something that we’ve already seen at the state level.”

Take-away Messages:

- Restricting PEPFAR funding will have an enormous effect on global public health.
- Service providers will need to act quickly to address the potential loss of PEPFAR funds in order to maintain their programs.
- The foreign assistance budget and appropriations are other contested arenas where Project 2025 could restrict health funding, requiring vigilance by HIV and health activists to assure funding for HIV testing, family planning, and other targeted programs.
- Project 2025’s agenda is already unfolding; the threat is not abstract. Agencies and activists should step up to provide guidance and resources now to community HIV organizations and multisector groups to respond to the unfolding attacks.
- The attacks on LGBTQIA+ communities, including transgender individuals, and against sexual and reproductive health education and services, and against abortion, are not new: we have seen them before, and many communities have learned important lessons in effectively fighting back. It’s important to seek out local lessons and strategies and share them with the wider HIV community, while focusing on intersectional responses, given that many sectors are impacted by Project 2025’s attacks.

RESOURCES

- **Information about PEPFAR:** <https://www.hiv.gov/federal-response/pepfar-global-aids/pepfar>
- **USAID:** <https://www.usaid.gov/>
- **Kaiser Family Foundation:** <https://www.kff.org/policy-watch/pepfars-short-term-reauthorization-sets-an-uncertain-course-for-its-long-term-future/>. See also: <https://www.kff.org/policy-watch/pepfar-reauthorization-the-debate-about-abortion/>
- **How to perform a Swot analysis for NGOs:** <https://www.fundsforngos.org/featured-articles/55465>



THE MILITARY

MODULE 13:

Project 2025 wants to ban transgender people from the military. This would mean discharging thousands of service members who are willing to fight for their country. Discharged soldiers could lose not only their careers but also the benefits they have earned.



THE MILITARY

LAVERNE IS AN eight-year veteran of the US Navy. She comes from a tight-knit Christian Latino family and is the first of her siblings to join the military service. Laverne is also transgender and transitioned before enlisting. Laverne is a specialist in logistics and has served overseas. She's been promoted twice, and likes her job. She may not stay in the service forever, but it's been an excellent career for her up to now. Laverne has a close circle of Navy friends, including some who are also LGBTQIA+.

One evening, Laverne is approached by her superior, who knows she is transgender. He tells her the Department of Defense may be implementing a new policy that would remove federal anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQIA+ service members, forcing the dishonorable discharge of all transgender employees. Project 2025 proposes to re-implement the 2019 ban on transgender service members instituted during the Trump presidency, which was reversed in 2021 by the Biden administration.

Laverne's boss knows that while she isn't out to everyone in her unit; it is quietly understood in her company that she is transgender. Is she aware of the threat to her safety and career? He knows Laverne is up for another job promotion, but maybe she should consider leaving the service, instead of getting fired? She doesn't have to decide right away, but he's worried about the potential harm to Laverne, and the effect that discrimination will have on unit morale. He's going to talk to his own superiors, but he wants to let her know right away.



What should Laverne do? She's not going to talk to her family; they have never been comfortable with her gender identity. The news isn't a surprise; she's been hearing about possible changes in Navy policy from other service members. But Laverne didn't think it would happen so quickly – she was planning to serve at least another two years.

Project 2025 proposes to re-implement the 2019 ban on transgender service members

She isn't worried about being outed; she learned to deal with that a long time ago. But she's worried about losing her benefits, including her health benefits if she is discharged dishonorably. She was recently injured on the job, and her disability claim is pending. What will happen if the new rule is passed? Will she lose everything? What are her rights?

What can Laverne do? What are her options?

Laverne talks to her friends; they all feel worried. They suggest she call a counselor at the Military and Family Line Counseling program, which she does. It helps to share her fears with a sympathetic person. They suggest that she also contact the Military Crisis Line website; the crisis line is trying to understand and explain how LGBTQIA+ service members will be impacted, but the rules haven't been passed yet.

Her friends suggest Laverne take some proactive steps: she should start by documenting her service experience in writing, including incidents in which she may have experienced discrimination, which is standard protocol for any harassment claim. Laverne also contacts her armed service branch's Equal Opportunity Office – in Laverne's case, for the Department of the Navy – for any guidance they can provide, and does an assessment of her financial situation. She gets a referral to the Modern Military Association of America to ask about what guidance they can provide.



What's at Stake?

If Project 2025 is enacted, thousands of highly qualified transgender service members will lose their careers, and may also lose the veterans' benefits they have earned; Laverne, a dedicated Navy specialist, is one of them.



What else can she do?

Civil rights organizations, Laverne learns, are already discussing actions to take if Project 2025 is implemented. A legal counselor tells Laverne that she will have the opportunity to join a class action lawsuit if and when discriminatory rules are passed, and a challenge to the new rules is brought, which is in the works. In the past, there have been many cases where discriminatory rules have been challenged – with some important victories.

Laverne decides that it's important to spread the word to her professional community, but discreetly. She decides to pen an article, anonymously, in the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper, discussing her deep commitment to serve her country, and the threat she and other transgender service members are facing from Project 2025. She shares the article with a national gay newspaper to mobilize support and advocacy.

Civil rights organizations are already discussing actions to take if Project 2025 is implemented

Laverne gets ready for the backlash. She considers her options for staying in or leaving the service. She joins an online discussion group for transgender service members, where she can get support and information. She contacts her insurance providers about her disability claim – she wants to understand what will happen if she decides to leave the service. Will disability claims filed by transgender service members be denied if Project 2025 rules are implemented?

Laverne reads up on cases of other service members, LGBTQIA+ men and women who faced involuntary dismissals in prior chapters of US history. Their stories of courage inspire her to stand her ground and organize with other service members. She organizes online, on listservs for other LGBTQIA+ service members, and other civilian platforms. While she's not volunteering to be the face of the movement, she feels that taking action is the best step to protect herself now. The threat of being fired for no good reason has made her feel more confident about her gender identity and her Navy service record than ever before.

What does Project 2025 say?

- Refocus the military on war fighting and counter diversity initiatives.
- Align all armed services policies with conservative Christian principles, ideology.
- Discharge individuals with “gender dysphoria” (transgender individuals)



- Cut public monies for service members' gender-affirming care and abortion, a policy that Project 2025 will also impose on the Veterans Administration.
- Privatize the process for reviewing disability claims.
- Increase DOD support to Dept. of Homeland Security for domestic border security
- Restore the previous Trump-era Veterans Administration policy – MISSION, Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks – to outsource Veterans Administration care and benefits.
- Cut all policies upholding DEI and CRT. "The Army can no longer serve as the nation's social testing ground," says Project 2025. (*see module 1 on Race and DEI*)

Current law and policy:

- Defense Department policy on transgender military service: DoD INSTRUCTION 1300.28 allowing in-service transition for transgender service members bars adverse action or mistreatment solely based on gender identity.
- Under current law, a service member's self-identified gender is registered in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) and is used to determine military standards they must follow. The gender marker in DEERS can be changed when a service member transitions.
<https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/130028p.pdf>
 - Currently the Department of Veterans Affairs "covers almost all transition-related care for veterans, including hormone therapy, voice training, fertility preservation and hair removal. However, if trans veterans want to receive surgery — such as genital and breast procedures — they are required to either use private health insurance or pay out of pocket. Such operations are covered for active-duty service members.⁴ (*Note: The failure to provide coverage for gender-affirming surgery is the subject of a pending federal lawsuit filed by the Transgender American Veterans Association (TAVA).*)



Effective Strategies:

- **Know your rights:** reach out to existing military and advocacy organizations for LGBTQIA+ service members for policy updates.
- **Check with your supervisor or the EEO office** of your military branch for information about current Human Resources policies and programs concerning transgender service members.

⁴<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/amp/rcna135566>



- **Seek support:** there are existing groups and online listservs for LGBTQIA+ service members. Reach out to local and national organizations that provide services for veterans.
- **Document your experiences** in the service, including your military record and health issues. Guides and toolkits are available in the resources below.
- **Check with the Transgender American Veterans Association** to learn the current status of lawsuits.
- **Consider joining a future class action lawsuit:** civil rights legal groups already plan a legal push back against proposed, discriminatory changes.
- **Education and advocacy are key:** writing articles for the public and informing colleagues are essential to creating community.
- **We can learn from past victories:** in 2011, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” was successfully repealed.
- The legal resources listed below can explain the potential impact of dishonorable discharge on benefits.

Take-away Messages:

- **Project 2025 calls for eliminating gender identity** from all federal rules and protections, which will impact service members who are serving honorably.
- **Project 2025 will roll back 30 years of progress** supporting transgender service members: those who assert an experience of gender dysphoria will be discharged.
- **The military will deny funding for gender-affirming medical care** for transgender service members, including veterans. Funding will also be denied for abortions. Currently it is estimated that there are 10,000 veterans receiving gender-affirming care in VA hospitals.

Discussion Prompts:

- How will Project 2025 impact the lives and careers of LGBTQIA+ service members?
- What steps can Laverne take to learn more about the threat of Project 2025?
- What groups exist to support Laverne and other military members?
- What groups exist in your local community or sector that have resources or materials to support LGBTQIA+ service members?
- What lessons have we learned from ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,’ and other chapters of anti-gay policies directed at LGBTQIA+ people in the military?
- What legal precedents exist for a Navy employee like Laverne to fight being fired? What unions or other organizations protect Navy employees?
- Are there local LGBTQIA+ or veterans’ groups that could mobilize support for Laverne?
- What other groups in the military or government are being targeted by Project 2025?



RESOURCES

Military and Veterans Groups:

- **Modern Military Association of America** <https://modernmilitary.org/>
- **Blue Alliance** (Air Force LGBTQIA+) <https://www.blue-alliance.org/>
- **Knights Out** (West Point LGBTQIA+) <https://www.knightsout.org/>
- **National Military Family Association**
- **Transgender American Veterans Association** <https://www.transveteran.org/>

Legal Organizations:

- **American Civil Liberties Union** <https://www.aclu.org/>
- **National Center for Lesbian Rights** <https://www.nclrights.org/glad>
- **GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders** <https://www.glad.org/>
- **Lambda Legal** <https://lambdalegal.org>
- **Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund** <https://transgenderlegal.org/>

Other resources:

- *Debussy, Dorian Rhea, Freedom to Serve: The Definitive Guide to LGBTQ+ Military Service.* 3rd edition. Eds. Jennifer Dane and Emily Starbuck Gerson. Washington, DC: MMAA, 2023. <https://modernmilitary.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/MMAA-Freedom-to-Serve-Guide-2023-Online-version.pdf>





SPOTLIGHT: Soldiers and Veterans

Project 2025 would ban trans people from the military, reverse Biden protections for veterans, and push veterans into the costlier private marketplace.



VETERANS SUPPORT THE United States through their service in the armed forces; Americans have an obligation to return that service with support and health care when their service is done. Unfortunately, Project 2025 plans to *erode* those benefits rather than improve them (as they claim to do). Its radical plan to purge the federal civil service of 50,000 career employees (*see related papers on Labor*) will highly impact veterans, including disabled veterans (*see below*).

In the name of efficiency to address VA claim backlogs, Project 2025 wants to further privatize and outsource Veterans Administration (VA) programs. It would close many VA facilities and shift federal VA dollars, clinical care, and claims administration to outside private clinics and private VA subcontractors, pushing veterans into the private insurance market. The result? Expect possible caps on VA claims and higher health insurance costs for veterans, warn critics.

Expect caps on VA claims and higher health insurance costs for veterans

Project 2025 also targets LGBTQIA+ soldiers by calling for a ban on transgender people from the military. This would mean discharging thousands of service members who are willing to fight for their country. Discharged soldiers could lose not only their careers but also the benefits they have earned and deserve. Project 2025 calls for banning federal funds for gender-affirming surgery as well as abortion services; this extends to the military and Veterans Administration (VA).

Project 2025's main points of attack on military:

- Refocus the military on war fighting – as opposed to “left” “woke” policies like Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) (*see paper on DEI*); this extends to the VA, too.



- Align all armed services policies with a Christian-right anti-choice and anti-diversity ideology.
- Discharge all transgender service members (gender dysphoria).
- Stop approving the use of Veterans Administration monies for service members' gender-affirming care and abortion.
- Reverse Biden VA policies starting on "Day One" of a new administration. (*see below*)
- Restore the previous Trump-era Veterans Administration policy known as MISSION (Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks) to outsource Veterans Administration care and benefits.
- In the arena of education, Project 2025 would require students in public schools to take a military entrance exam, but not students in private schools.

Specific VA proposals and impacts:

Political appointees:

- On "Day One" of the new Republican administration, transfer all executive-level appointees to ensure political control of the VA.

Cut Federal Workforce:

- Currently 31% of federal executive-branch employees are veterans, *of whom 53% are disabled veterans*. Project 2025 propose to reclassify 50,000 civil service jobs and replace them with conservative political appointees.

Privatize VA health care:

- Project 2025 will restore the previous Trump-era Veterans Administration policy. It proposes outsourcing more VA health care and administration to private community-based health care facilities and contractors, based on a Trump-era Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission study of the VA and a plan referred to as AIR.
- Project 2025 embraces the Trump-era MISSION plan which would transfer VA care and administration to more community health centers and private subcontractors, pushing veterans into the private healthcare insurance marketplace. (Overall, Project 2025 wants to get rid of Obamacare health insurance, or the Affordable Care Act). (*see Health paper for more*)

Fact check: veterans' health care improved under the Biden Administration:



- **Care for service members affected by toxins:** As of March 2024, a huge expansion of veterans' benefits took place, covering any service member who was exposed to toxins. This was a planned extension of the PACT Act, which was signed into law in 2022:
- Legislation enacted by Congress in 2022 now makes it easier and faster for veterans who have become sick through exposure to toxins to receive disability benefits. So far, almost one million claims have been processed through the PACT Act. (*see main Global Health module*)

Fact Check: VA quality and safety of care are superior or comparable to non-VA centers:

In 2023, the American College of Surgeons published a study showing that “the quality and safety of care across surgical specialties at VA healthcare sites is as good as, or better than, non-VA health centers on several quality measures.”⁵ A recent Stanford University study found that “Veterans treated at Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals had survival rates at least 20 percent better than veterans treated in non-VA hospitals.”⁶

Fact Check: Availability of VA healthcare facilities:

Under President Trump, the VA performed a study of VA health care facilities to develop a plan for closing many of them and pushing more healthcare for veterans into the private sector (the plan is the Asset and Infrastructure Review, or AIR, Commission). This plan was blocked by a *bipartisan* group of senators in 2023.⁷ The plan would have forced veterans to find health insurance for themselves in the private market. Project 2025 hopes to reintroduce the AIR plan.

The Take-Home Facts?

Project 2025 would weaken, not strengthen, the military workforce as well as the VA health system and its support for veterans

⁵ <https://www.facs.org/media-center/press-releases/2023/veterans-affairs-healthcare-is-as-good-as-non-va-care-for-many-operations/>

⁶ <https://siepr.stanford.edu/news/veterans-rushed-va-hospitals-have-significantly-better-outcomes>

⁷ <https://thehill.com/opinion/congress-blog/3550684-by-blocking-air-commission-congress-ensures-veterans-get-the-best-care/>



SPOTLIGHT: RISK PREPAREDNESS

Emergency Planning for Unforeseen Change / Criminalization / Underground Survival Tips



RISK PREPAREDNESS

Given the looming threat of Project 2025 and its myriad attacks on rights, as well as possible future restrictions on PEPFAR, many organizations realize the urgent need to assess a range of possible risks, impacts, and future threats to their agencies, operations, staff, clients, and community – as well as their governments. That calls for doing **risk assessment, emergency planning, and strategic analyses** of various scenarios they could face in the future.

As the saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

As it stands, Project 2025's anti-gay, anti-choice, and anti-DEI agenda is already unfolding in the US at the state level, in Russia, and many countries in Africa, where criminalization has driven communities underground. Globally, the Christian nationalist agenda is being exported by right-wing 'hate' groups including Family Watch International and C-FAM, as well as the Alliance Defending Freedom, a Project 2025 advisory group. They have spent years courting conservative politicians abroad and view the present moment as ripe to push their regressive agenda further.

The task at hand also includes assessing what other groups may be impacted by Project 2025 or restrictions on US federal funding or policy changes. There may be fresh opportunities and resources available to work with groups across sectors in strategic alliances. Many people feel threatened by Project 2025 and may be more ready to mobilize and engage in advocacy around issues they care deeply about. The task calls for a global mobilization, solidarity, learning lessons and insights on how to respond from activists and groups under fire already, and sharing this with others.



Disaster Preparedness: When a hurricane is approaching, you know to plan for it. You create an emergency survival kit. You include a flashlight, extra batteries, water, and find out where to seek safer shelter in case you must evacuate. You charge your phone; you may get a manual crank-up radio because you need to hear emergency public service announcements. You talk to your neighbors about their preparedness plans. You think about lodging and transport and food and stockpile medicine you may need. You take money out in case the ATMs don't work. Clinics and pharmacies, especially in low-resource settings, know to have backup generators to assure electricity for medicines. Disaster planning, which involves risk analysis, is useful because it pushes you to prepare for the worst. It reveals areas of priority importance to survival and vulnerability and steps you can take to protect yourself and mitigate against possible harms. The worst may not happen, but whatever comes, you are better prepared.

Disaster planning, which involves risk analysis, is useful because it pushes you to prepare for the worst.

The same thinking applies to planning for political change and unforeseen threats. That's what we need to do now, with Project 2025. We may not be able to predict the exact changes and scenarios that may impact us, but its agenda is already unfolding in the US and in areas of global policy, and that won't stop, regardless of who wins the November election in the US. *Everyone can prepare -- starting right now.* There is a lot one can do BEFORE a disaster hits, and, as the saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

How do you do that? Start with yourself and your organization and local community. You can expand from there. Consider the worst that could happen and what you need now, or may need in the future, to address the impact or losses. Learn from others in your community, social movements, and leaders. There are many movement lessons. Others have been here before.

Use the blueprint to make a counter-plan: While Project 2025 is a policy blueprint, its ideological agenda and targets are clear. Its proposals can serve to inform a counter-plan, whether you're an individual or representing an organization, at all levels. How might Project 2025 affect you? Your work or operations? Your community or clients? That's a base question to use as a departure point to assess your vulnerability and possible impacts, and to identify others likely to be affected. Locally, and all levels, you'll likely have a pool of future allies ready to mobilize to work intersectionally, in common cause.

While Project 2025 is just a blueprint, its agenda and targets are clear. This can serve to inform a counter-plan.



Criminalization. In countries where homosexuality is being criminalized, the stakes are very high. Criminalization drives people underground. That's happening not only in Uganda, Russia and elsewhere, but in the US, in states like Florida that offer a preview of what Project 2025 might enact. Since passage of the statewide "Don't Say Gay" bill in 2022, led by GOP Governor Ron DeSantis, some Florida public school teachers are afraid of using the words gay or transgender in a classroom, while others have stopped teaching LGBTQIA+ or Black history, seeing the attacks on DEI and gay topics and threats to educators by conservative activists.

One consequence of threat is its chilling effect. History has shown us that self-censorship is one the hallmarks of rising authoritarianism. People respond to threats by hiding, by silencing themselves. While this can be protective, it also silences critics and drives people underground.

Self-censorship is one the hallmarks of rising authoritarianism

In the US, this chilling effect and self-censorship can be seen in the form of businesses and institutions who are voluntarily shutting down DEI programs, or ending their funding to LGBTQIA+ organizations – two new trends. Autocrats count on that: a threatened populace is a silenced populace. Post-Dobbs, abortion providers have been under fierce attack and threat across America. But many Americans are speaking out loudly about their right to safe and legal abortion. Abortion rights activists represent a frontline of experienced allies who have learned hard lessons about how to work under the radar in and with activists in so-called red states where anti-abortions laws have passed, and globally, with global partners. Lawyers are playing a critical role there; so are policy experts, and journalists reporting on the frontlines. In Uganda, lawyers have helped lead the legal effort to repeal the draconian Anti-Homosexuality Act. They're part of a multisector 'rapid response network' that has emerged since the bill's passage. At Health Impacts, Edith reminds colleagues that it's important to see ahead of the curve, and focus on what is coming. Don't wait for others to give you permission to act; step up to lead and invite others.

It's important to see ahead of the curve, and focus on what is coming.

The bottom line is that criminalization is a public issue. Criminalization affects everyone, not just the person or community most directly targeted. Looking to Project 2025, censorship and first amendment rights are also at stake. It's critical to speak out, and to do with an eye on safety, and to be informed. Not everyone faces the same risks in a hurricane; some live in hurricane-proof houses. That's why it's important to consider the needs of the most vulnerable when making your community plans or organizing a public rally. That's why global solidarity is



also so critical: to support those forced underground to survive who face danger if they speak out publicly.

Looking to criminalization, it's useful to ask: how might I or my team be affected or respond if a future law or policy is enacted? If you run an agency or business, how will you protect your staff and clients? Do you have a lawyer ready to help community members? What is your agency's responsibility if a staff member, volunteer, or client is arrested? How will you respond to a threat or order to stop serving gay people, as in Florida? Do you know your rights? Do your clients? What is your agency plan? *Even at the local level, consider creating a rapid-response team or task force, and invite other community stakeholders to join you. Learn from what others are doing.*

The chilling effect of criminalization

In Russia, where homosexuality is outlawed and foreign LGBTQIA+ NGOs are also banned, activists have had to adopt a resistance bunker mentality to continue doing work in areas of social justice and health, including HIV and reproductive rights. It's very dangerous: activists, providers, and journalists face risk of arrest and penalties. Russia LGBTQIA+ activists report that NGOs there can only engage with media that haven't been banned as "foreign agents" and choose to avoid topics such as HIV prevention when talking to the media or in public, as these are deemed controversial. They also avoid signing petitions, open letters, or mass media campaigns. Their advocacy is confined to behind-the-scenes engagement with municipal stakeholders, at the city level, to try to assure the continuation of their work without drawing more government ire and possible arrest and closure of their operations. They've also had to try to diversify their funding, having lost most of their foreign funding. One emerging strategy is to work with new allies in sectors like the environment, for example, who aren't being criminalized like LGBTQIA+ activists or groups.

LGBTQIA+ activists are also creating and strengthening national and local partnerships with others across Europe and sharing field lessons and insights regarding resistance to criminalization. It's critical to engage in advocacy and do so strategically with allies to avoid public exposure, they advise. Now, with Project 2025, grassroots activists in and outside the US are discussing the need for a global rapid-response network for advocacy and sharing preparedness and survival lessons, particularly from activists and communities under siege from right-wing attacks and criminalization. There are myriad field lessons, tools, and strategies to employ. Check Stop the Coup 2025's campaign website for updates to our Resources on this topic.



Organizing Under the Radar. How do groups operate underground? Provide community services? In Uganda, Edith is living this experience. So is Markus, who joined Health Impacts' program in Poland, where right-wing politicians aim to outlaw foreign NGOs, unregistered foreign agents, and "undesirable organizations." Markus is gay and had to leave Russia; he brings first-hand experience to the team. In Russia, HIV NGOs and LGBTQIA+ activists have had to radically and quickly adapt to survive in the face of increased threats and violence (*see above box*). Some have left Russia and organize from exile. They need help and funding to re-establish operations. Others keep a very low profile on social media and avoid any LGBTQIA+ symbols or references in their public profile or communications to minimize their risk. But they actively engage in strategic advocacy with global allies and provide insider knowledge about the on-the-ground situation. Even deep under the radar, they have a critical leadership role to play and they need support.



Emergency Planning: The Washington, DC, branch of Health Impacts starts by organizing a first Zoom call to consider their vulnerability to Project 2025 and the threat of criminalization of LGBTQIA+ clients and of women seeking reproductive and family planning services. For the agency, client needs and safety are paramount. They are aware that their agency data and communications security protocols may need to be beefed up. Staff and volunteers have been trained on security, confidentiality, and consent protocols, but personal safety and client safety are bigger concerns now. The HR department plans virtual trainings by allies on these issues.

In Uganda and in Poland, Edith and Markus convene focus groups of clients, community leaders, and municipal officials to discuss Project 2025 and how its agenda may compound an already fraught political climate, and criminalization of LGBTQIA+ people. This feedback informs their risk assessment activity. They engage a local lawyer to review legal concerns and local laws. They decide to do a **SWOT analysis** and a subsequent **PEST analysis**. Both are basic business tools used to help companies assess planning and growth, and how internal and external factors may impact on operations, including political, social, and economic factors. (*see box below*)

Taking Safety Seriously. In Uganda, LGBTQIA+ clients are too afraid to come to clinics for HIV medicines, and providers are also working underground, at great risk if they violate the AHA. One effect of criminalization is to make it harder for clients to access information as well as services. Clients are afraid of even leaving their homes; other have been evicted. How do they survive? Communications, continuity of client services, and safety are priority areas of NGO risk



assessment planning. So is the well-being and security of staff and providers who serve LGBTQIA+ clients, including those with HIV. Such planning extends to delivery of education and prevention services in areas of family planning and reproductive health, given Project 2025's plan to resurrect and enforce the Global Gag rule. Such steps were advisable before; now the task is urgent.

Know Your Rights: Another priority is to make sure staff and clients know their rights. Health Impacts works with a lawyer to distribute an educational flyer adaptable to country needs.

What's a SWOT Analysis? What about PEST?

SWOT stands for **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats. A "SWOT analysis" involves carefully assessing these four factors in order to make clear and effective organizational plans. It can help you identify and challenge risky assumptions, uncover dangerous blind spots, and reveal important insights. A SWOT analysis process is most effective when done collaboratively, taking into consideration the key stakeholders and other important voices. A SWOT analysis is a common tool in business but can be adapted to address any issue or problem that requires analysis. It analyzes both internal and external factors in a given organization or group and how these may impact operations.

How do you do a SWOT analysis?

This task can be as simple or complex as you wish. A SWOT analysis is often broken down into a grid, or matrix, of four squares. In each, one writes the questions that are relevant to that factor. Turning to Project 2025, the questions can address how its proposals would impact these factors. A SWOT analysis can help to pinpoint where risks exist and strategies to address this. We know that losing US government funding, including PEPFAR HIV funds, represents a major threat with Project 2025, so undertaking a financial analysis of one's organization and resources within a SWOT analysis is likely to be important for many organizations and PEPFAR grantees.





Strengths are things your organization does especially well, or resources you have. These are also referred to as **core competencies**, and can include people and experience as well as assets that help your organization succeed. *Weaknesses* can be also be people, resources, systems, and procedures – or, with HIV groups, limited funding sources, or over-reliance on US government funds. It can be location – for example, limited transport, or operating in a less secure area. *Opportunities* can be whatever exists or may be tapped to help address identified gaps or *threats*. The threats can be internal, or external. Project 2025 presents a potential external threat.

A **PEST analysis** involves looking at the **P**olitical, **E**conomic, **S**ocial, and **T**echnological factors that can impact on an organization's activities. The first task – a political analysis – calls for assessing the political climate, including laws, rules, and policies that hinder or facilitate operations. While the PEST analysis was developed as a business forecasting tool, it's easily adaptable for nonprofits and community groups and even individuals seeking to undertake a risk assessment analysis and develop an emergency strategic response plan to Project 2025. There are myriad online sources to learn more about these and other risk assessment, forecasting, and disaster management tools. Stop The Coup 2025 has listed links to such resources on our campaign website.

Self-Care & Mental Health.

Edith daily reminds her clients, staff, and herself to engage in self-care, and avoid isolation. Stress, fear and anxiety are draining including worry about others will cope, and how you may be impacted. US federal workers face the uncertainty of possible mass layoffs with Project 2025. Mental health is not a luxury but a necessity. It's important to talk to others, and work with those who are mobilizing, who offer practical help and hope, amid an uncertain future. Edith is not optimistic that Uganda's political climate or laws will change overnight, but she looks back at Uganda's history and reminds herself and others of past social movements that overcame colonial rule and reformed its laws. She takes inspiration from that history and the bravery of others before her. *We must have a long lens on the road to equality and social justice*, she tells others.

What lies ahead.

We're all now at war, Edith reminds her colleagues. *But we've overcome even worse in the past and so have movement leaders in all your countries. We mobilized to fight AIDS globally. Our ancestors have paved the way for us to act now, to resist tyranny. What is happening now in Uganda and elsewhere reflects a worst-case scenario for gay rights, and a backlash to women's rights and democracy. But that is because we have had many victories, too. Project 2025 is poised to make things worse. But this is not the last chapter. We have to help shape what comes next.*



Edith's take-away message?

*There is no time to waste or wait, she advises. Plan today. Prepare for the worst but keep your eye on what you want, the democracy you dream about. You must vision it to build it. Speak up for the most vulnerable. Learn from others. Identify your local allies, gather resources, and share them. Take informed action. Become the leader your community needs. **Act today for a better world tomorrow.***



WHAT ARE BIG PICTURE **TAKE-HOME** MESSAGES?

- 1.** PROJECT 2025 IS A THREAT TO OUR BASIC DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOMS AS AMERICANS.
- 2.** PROJECT 2025 WOULD DESTROY OUR SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES. IT IS A RECIPE FOR AUTOCRACY.
- 3.** PROJECT 2025 WOULD ROLL BACK WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND TAKE AWAY REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOMS. IT VIEWS A WOMAN'S PRIMARY ROLE AS A HOMEMAKER AND PUTS MEN IN CHARGE – A 1950S VIEW OF GENDER ROLES.
- 4.** PROJECT 2025 SEEKS TO ELIMINATE THE CONSTITUTIONAL SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE. IT WOULD ELEVATE CHRISTIANITY TO BE THE BASIS OF US LAW AND POLICY AND THUS SUPERIOR TO OTHER RELIGIONS.
- 5.** PROJECT 2025 WOULD REVERSE CRITICAL CIVIL RIGHTS AND SEEKS TO ERASE BLACK AND BROWN HISTORY AND RIGHTS. IT IS A MANIFESTO OF WHITE SUPREMACY.
- 6.** PROJECT 2025 WOULD ELIMINATE LGBTQIA+ PROTECTIONS AND CRIMINALIZE TRANSGENDER IDENTITY, WHILE SEEKING TO REVERSE THE MAJOR GAINS OF THE GAY RIGHTS MOVEMENT.
- E7.** PROJECT 2025 POSES AN EXISTENTIAL GLOBAL THREAT TO PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD BY DENYING THE REALITY OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND REVERSING POLICIES TO PROTECT OUR PLANET.



THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW.



***... IN 2025, YOU COULD WAKE UP
TO FIND YOURSELF A CRIMINAL ...***



PROJECT 2025

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT, TRAINING WORKSHOPS,
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