

45 Ways We Disrupted 45's Executive Branch Corruption



Over the course of its long four years in power, the Trump administration presented extraordinary challenges to the rule of law and sound policymaking. We launched in 2017 to help expose and challenge the rampant corruption in and of the Executive Branch. There certainly was a lot to do — and we've gotten a lot done.

Here are 45 ways we disrupted the 45th president's Executive Branch corruption:

1. **Ken Cuccinelli** was unlawfully appointed by Trump to lead a key federal immigration agency and used his post to strip protections from asylum seekers. In a **landmark victory**, we **sued** and **won**, unwinding his harmful directives and giving asylum seekers a fairer shot.

The Trump administration tried to do an end-run around federal vacancies law to install the xenophobic Cuccinelli (who once **compared** immigrants to pests) at USCIS. On behalf of **RAICES** and seven asylum seekers, we sued with **CLINIC** and **Debevoise & Plimpton, LLP**. A federal court ruled that Cuccinelli was illegally

appointed and lacked authority to perform the functions of the USCIS director. The court, therefore, invalidated two harmful immigration directives that Cuccinelli had issued and gave our clients a second chance. The court's decision was **the first to hold** that a Trump administration official was unlawfully appointed, setting the stage for a number of other successful challenges.

- 2. President Trump's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) **unlawfully canceled** the collection of equal pay data. So we **filed suit**. And **won**. Our legal victory – with the **NWLC** and the **Labor Council for Latin American Advancement** – **forced collection of pay data** by race, gender, and ethnicity, which will shed light on wage disparities.**

You can't fix what you can't see, so it defied reason that the Trump administration would halt a requirement that large employers collect aggregate pay data based on sex, race, and ethnicity. A court agreed, finding the Trump administration's justification for halting the pay data collection "misdirected, inaccurate, and ultimately unpersuasive." But that's not all! Trump's EEOC delayed compliance with the court's order, so we took them back to court. In the end, because of our case, **90% of companies** submitted two years of pay data to the EEOC.

- 3. Trump's Secretary of Interior **Ryan Zinke** unlawfully tapped an outside advisory group stacked with hunting and gun advocates to advise on the trophy hunting of threatened wildlife. We teamed up with environmental and animal advocacy groups to bring a **lawsuit** challenging the misnamed 'International Wildlife Conservation Council.' The Council **disbanded** in the face of our lawsuit.**

With the **Natural Resources Defense Council**, **The Humane Society of the United States**, and the **Center for Biological Diversity**, we were **quick to pounce** on the Trump administration's use of this illegal advisory body.

- 4. The Trump administration inexplicably cut grant funding for the **\$100 million**, evidence-based Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Program. We brought multiple **successful lawsuits** to reinstate the grants and exposed the folks behind the scenes who tried to transform the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program into an abstinence-only initiative.**

The Trump administration made an ugly pattern of discarding evidence-based strategies. We stepped in when it cut funding for over 80 TPP programs in the middle of their 5-year grant cycle. On behalf of **King County, Washington**, **the City of Baltimore**, and **Healthy Teen Network**, we fought back and secured complete



victory. A federal court [ruled](#) HHS's termination of the TPP Program violated federal law.

And when the Trump administration again tried to push its ideological, abstinence-only agenda on teens, we went back to court on behalf of [Multnomah County, Oregon](#). Once again, a federal court ruled against the Trump administration and stopped its unlawful scheme. In 2019, Power to Decide [awarded](#) Democracy Forward, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, and Public Citizen its Sarah S. Brown award for successfully preventing the Trump administration from abolishing the TPP Program.

- 5. Despite the mounting toll from the [COVID-19](#) pandemic, the Trump administration's Labor Department continued to stall progress on a long-pending workplace standard that would protect frontline healthcare workers from infectious diseases. We [sued](#) with four labor unions — [AFT](#), [AFSCME](#), [WSNA](#), and [UNAC](#) — to challenge this dangerous disregard for America's frontline workers. The Biden-Harris administration has since [told](#) a federal court, in response to our suit, that it will [prioritize the standard](#).**

There is currently no occupational safety and health standard on the books designed to protect healthcare workers from infectious diseases spread by contact, droplets, or the air — like influenza, COVID-19, Ebola, and more. The Trump administration's cruel decision to unreasonably delay progress on this standard left healthcare workers dangerously unprotected in the face of a once-in-a-generation pandemic.

- 6. Trump's Commerce Secretary, [Wilbur Ross](#), illegally used his private email account to discuss government business and, among other things, set up a [meeting](#) with a white supremacist. We [uncovered](#) his unlawful use of private email and forced the Trump administration to [admit](#) as much in court — and conduct a search of his private email accounts.**

But it's not clear all of Ross's private emails related to government business made it back to the government for preservation. So, we [shared](#) what we know with the National Archives to aid its [investigation](#) into Wilbur Ross's improper conduct. Our investigation revealed that Ross used private email to correspond with corporations with business before the Department; to discuss meetings with foreign officials, lobbyists, and CEOs; and to correspond with [Holocaust denier Chuck Johnson](#), Speaker of the House [Newt Gingrich](#), and then-Ambassador [Richard Grenell](#), among others.



7. Throughout his presidency, President Trump tried to **sabotage** the Affordable Care Act, making health insurance more expensive and inaccessible. We **took** Trump to court on behalf of five major U.S. cities to prevent him from deliberately undermining millions of Americans' access to high-quality, affordable health insurance. And we **won**.

A federal court ruled the Trump administration undermined the ACA and struck down four Trump-era policies that undercut the ACA's success.

President Trump followed through on his threats to sabotage the Affordable Care Act with, among other things, his Department of Health and Human Services' 2019 rule governing the ACA's implementation. The rule weakens the ACA's exchanges, drives up premiums, and forces out health insurers, ultimately increasing the number of uninsured and underinsured Americans. We filed suit on behalf of five major cities — Columbus, Ohio; Baltimore, Maryland; Cincinnati, Ohio; Chicago, Illinois; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania — and two citizens from Corvallis, Oregon. A federal court ruled **Trump's HHS undermined the ACA** and invalidated four of its unlawful policies.

8. Trump's USDA head **Sonny Perdue** rolled back healthier school nutrition standards for 30 million children. We **sued** and **won**, reversing the rollback and helping to ensure students across America have access to healthier school meals.

Under Trump's Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, the USDA weakened whole-grain requirements and increased permissible sodium levels for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, which feed 30 million children. We won a major victory for those kids with our lawsuit on behalf of the **Center for Science in the Public Interest** and **Healthy School Food Maryland** that challenged the unlawful rollback.

9. The Trump administration's Labor Department **rolled back** a visa certification policy aimed at protecting immigrant victims of workplace abuse and crimes. We teamed up with the **New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice** and **sued to protect** the ability of immigrant victims to obtain visas to remain in the U.S. lawfully when they assist in the investigation and prosecution of criminal offenders.

In response to our lawsuit, the Biden-Harris administration **withdrew** the unlawful policy.

The Trump-era change **jeopardized the safety of vulnerable workers** — including



victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, and labor exploitation — while protecting abusive employers. Among other things, the rollback made it more difficult for the Labor Department to certify visa applications by mandating that the Department first refer applications to criminal law enforcement for concurrence prior to certification. It also removed a requirement that visa certification decisions be made in a timely manner. Our lawsuit challenged the unlawful policy, and the Biden-Harris administration withdrew the policy in its first few weeks in power.

- 10. President Trump failed to release the War Powers Transparency Report as required by law. Faced with a [lawsuit](#) we brought on behalf of national security experts, the Trump White House [reversed course](#) and made the report available to Congress and the American people.**

The public should know when presidents believe they are authorized to unleash military power overseas. The Trump White House kept Capitol Hill and the public in the dark for over eight months. We sued on behalf of [Protect Democracy](#) and [Benjamin Wittes](#) and [Scott R. Anderson](#) of Lawfare — and [forced the release](#) of the report.

- 11. The Trump administration’s Department of Homeland Security quietly leaked private and protected information about individuals’ immigration status to right-wing media outlets like [Breitbart and Fox News](#). We [demanded](#) an investigation.**

Under President Biden, the Department’s Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties took a look and [concluded](#) the issues we raised “are concerning and indicate [possible privacy and civil rights violations](#)” and that new training was needed.

The Trump administration took its anti-immigrant agenda to new heights by using DHS’s Office of Public Information to help drive a [false and racist narrative that immigrants are criminals](#). Emails we uncovered via a public records lawsuit show that DHS’s press team chided a reporter for not highlighting an alleged criminal’s refugee status and routinely volunteered the immigration status of individuals that were the subject of negative news stories. DHS’s Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties told us that these facts “indicate possible privacy and civil rights violations” and that it will develop new training protocols as a result. As the saying goes, what’s done in the dark will come to light. Or perhaps: what’s done on government email will be made public.

- 12. Trump’s Department of Health and Human Services [unlawfully approved](#) the State of Georgia’s plan to waive essential Affordable Care Act**



requirements and block Georgia residents' access to HealthCare.gov.

We sued over the unlawful waiver on behalf of Planned Parenthood Southeast and Feminist Women's Health Center.

In its final months in power, the Trump administration approved Georgia's waiver request under Section 1332 of the Affordable Care Act, which turns back the clock for Georgians trying to enroll in quality health care to a time when consumers were forced to navigate through private insurers, brokers, and junk plans just to get covered. Up to 100,000 Georgians stand to lose their insurance as a result of the Trump administration's decision, which remains on the books.

13. The Trump administration unlawfully erased LGBTQ+ and Native American foster youth from vital statistics. We brought suit with a dynamic coalition of Tribal governments, LGBTQ+ advocates, and foster youth organizations to bring these marginalized communities out of the shadows.

Trump's Department of Health and Human Services unlawfully rescinded requirements that child welfare agencies report essential data about marginalized foster youth and parents. American Indian/Alaska Native and LGBTQ+ youth and parents all too often suffer negative treatment in the foster care system. Collecting data on their representation and outcomes in the foster care system is critical to making things better. We filed suit with Lambda Legal and the Michigan State University College of Law's Indian Law Clinic on behalf of the California Tribal Family Coalition, the Cherokee Nation, Yurok Tribe, Ark of Freedom Alliance, Facing Foster Care in Alaska, the Ruth Ellis Center, and True Colors, Inc.

14. One of Trump's top officials at the Department of Justice unlawfully banned the use of a critical enforcement tool allowing polluters to pay for projects that benefit the communities they've harmed with illegal pollution. On behalf of two environmental conservation groups, we filed suit. Our case spurred the Biden-Harris administration to withdraw the unlawful Trump policy.

In March 2020, Trump's Assistant Attorney General for the Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division Jeffrey Bossert Clark abruptly and unlawfully banned the inclusion of Supplemental Environmental Projects (SEPs) in environmental enforcement settlements. SEPs allow violators of environmental statutes to address the effects of their pollution, or to forestall future pollution,



through projects that benefit affected communities. On behalf of the [Conservation Law Foundation](#) and the [Surfrider Foundation](#), we sued the Department of Justice for unlawfully ending the use of SEPs. The Biden-Harris administration [retracted](#) the unlawful policy in February 2021.

- 15. The Trump administration unlawfully blocked access to the Potomac River to accommodate President Trump's frequent trips to golf at his private Virginia club. We sued and successfully forced the US Coast Guard to reopen access to the river.**

The Coast Guard's unlawful restrictions blocked the public's right to access and enjoy the Potomac River while the president golfed. We sued on behalf of the [Canoe Cruisers Association](#) and prompted the Coast Guard to lift the restrictions. To celebrate, the Canoe Cruisers Association took our team out for a victory paddle on the newly reopened public waterway.

- 16. Trump's FDA shelved e-cigarette and cigar regulations, allowing tobacco products attractive to kids to avoid FDA review. We sued and won, ending FDA's unlawful delay in regulating the products.**

In 2017, Trump's FDA delayed a requirement that vape and cigar manufacturers provide critical information to the FDA about their products and undergo review of the products' impact on public health. The delay left a large gap in regulation. Vape products with names like Unicorn Milk and Juice Box were being marketed to kids. We sued on behalf of the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), [American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network](#), [American Heart Association](#), [American Lung Association](#), [Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids](#), [Truth Initiative](#), and five individual pediatricians. A federal judge ruled that the FDA unlawfully delayed review of the widely used products, leading the FDA to finally require tobacco companies to submit their products for review or leave the market. The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network [presented](#) its annual Judicial Advocacy Initiative award to our Jeffrey Dubner for his work in leading the groups' successful litigation.

- 17. In its final weeks, the Trump administration severely restricted immigrants' access to justice in immigration court. We filed suit with five immigrant justice groups and sought a stay of the unlawful rule, which remains in effect. Our request for a stay is pending.**

The unlawful Trump-era rule deprives immigrants of access to a full and fair hearing, limits their right to present evidence and to select legal counsel of their choosing, and



eliminates essential means of securing immigration relief. So we filed suit alongside [CLINIC](#), [Brooklyn Defender Services](#), [Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project](#), [HIAS](#), and the [National Immigrant Justice Center](#).

- 18.** The Trump administration decided to take a “drill, baby, drill” mindset to unlawful lengths by creating a **secret advisory group** stacked with **fossil fuel lobbyists** to write policy that benefits the industry.

We rolled up our sleeves with [WORC](#) — the landowners, ranchers, and conservationists not invited to the party — and brought a successful [lawsuit](#) that [forced](#) the Trump administration to **dismantle** the unlawful group and abandon its recommendations.

Federal law requires that advisory commissions empowered to provide recommendations to federal agencies be transparent with the public and not one-sided. The Trump administration disregarded the law to secretly allow its Royalty Policy Committee stacked with industry insiders and campaign donors to advise the Bureau of Land Management on the royalties generated from federal leasing of public mineral deposits. Our lawsuit with WORC forced the Royalty Policy Committee to shutter and led a court to bar the Trump administration from relying on the group’s advice. The court also [granted discovery](#) to make sure the Trump administration followed the law.

- 19.** The day after the November election, the Trump administration proposed a sweeping rule that would automatically scrap **~18,000** HHS regulations affecting everything from healthcare and vaccination programs to baby formula and drug safety. The day before President Biden took office, Trump’s HHS finalized the plan and set off a **ticking time bomb**.

We [sued](#) on behalf of the County of Santa Clara and a coalition of tribes, healthcare professionals, and health and food safety organizations to **stave off the regulatory chaos that would result**.

The Trump administration’s “Sunset Rule” adds automatic expiration dates to 18,000 regulations issued by HHS and its sub-agencies, like the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). If kept on the books, the unlawful rule will automatically eliminate more than 17,000 regulations in 2026. We sued alongside the [County of Santa Clara](#), the [California Tribal Families Coalition](#) (CTFC), the [National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners](#) (NAPNAP), the [American Lung Association](#), the [Center for](#)



[Science in the Public Interest](#) (CSPI), and [NRDC](#) (Natural Resources Defense Council) to make sure that doesn't happen.

20. The Trump administration refused to collect data on how financial institutions lend to women-owned, minority-owned, and small businesses as federal law requires. We teamed up with female small business owners in Iowa and Oregon, the [California Reinvestment Coalition](#), and the [National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders](#), who refused to stay in the dark.

Our [lawsuit forced](#) the Trump administration into a [court-ordered agreement](#) to take action.

Trump's Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) unlawfully refused to collect data on lending to small businesses. But the law prevailed. Because of our lawsuit, the CFPB is required to regularly update the court on its progress in beginning the data collection, which is designed to protect small businesses and businesses owned by women and people of color from lending discrimination.

21. The Trump administration unlawfully refused to reopen Obamacare enrollment to allow millions of uninsured Americans affected by the pandemic to enroll in high-quality, affordable health insurance. We [filed suit](#) on behalf of the City of Chicago with the support of [fourteen states](#) and the [U.S. House of Representatives](#).

The issue was so important that in its first weeks in office the Biden-Harris administration promptly [opened a special enrollment period](#), which has already allowed more than [200,000 Americans](#) to get covered.

The Trump administration refused to open a special enrollment period in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for the 38 state health insurance exchanges operated on HealthCare.gov. According to reports, President Trump did not want to open a special enrollment period solely because of his opposition to the ACA. In the course of litigation, the Trump administration [told](#) the court that "a COVID-19 [special enrollment period] is unwarranted." By contrast, when the Biden-Harris administration announced it would open a special enrollment period, it [explained](#) that the COVID-19 pandemic "has left millions of Americans facing uncertainty and exceptional circumstances."



22. At the eleventh hour, the Trump administration illegally and dramatically expanded the ability of federal contractors and subcontractors to cite **religious objections** to justify employment decisions that **discriminate** against women and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

So we **sued** on behalf of the **Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc., Pride at Work, and the American Federation of Teachers**. The Biden-Harris administration has since **told** the court that it intends to propose **rescinding the rule**.

The Trump administration’s “Religious Exemption Rule” — issued by the very office charged with preventing discrimination by federal contractors — expressly allows contractors to make employment decisions for discriminatory reasons, so long as they can tie the decision to religious belief.

23. We’ve exposed Trump appointees across agencies, including **EPA, Treasury, Education, and DHS** for their **cozy ties** with Fox News and other conservative outlets.

Our Freedom of Information Act **investigation** has revealed communications that may **violate anti-propaganda laws** prohibiting “covert propaganda,” which is created when government officials create content for publication or broadcast on private platforms without publicly disclosing their role.

Coordination between the Trump administration and Fox News comes as no surprise. But it may actually violate anti-propaganda laws designed to make sure that the American public knows when the government is speaking to them.

24. The Trump administration created an unlawful, secret policy to prevent **DACA recipients** from obtaining **federal home loans**. After our **investigation** showed that senior Trump officials at HUD gave misleading responses to Congress on the matter, we **took** the issue up with the HUD Inspector General. Secretary Carson was questioned about it at a congressional hearing with the documents our investigation revealed — he ultimately **saw the light** on his final day in office and **reversed the policy**.

Reporters asked for answers and were given the cold shoulder. Members of Congress asked for answers and got dodges instead. But records don’t lie. Our investigation revealed that Trump’s Department of Housing and Urban Development incorrectly determined that DACA recipients did not meet the “lawful residency” requirement for



Federal Housing Administration loans. We called for an investigation and submitted over 150 pages of HUD records to HUD's Inspector General showing how the agency's haphazard, secret implementation of its policy violated federal law, hurt HUD's credibility, and created uncertainty in the home mortgage market.

25. Trump's CFPB unlawfully created (and then operated) a Taskforce on Federal Consumer Financial Law, which produced a 900-page final report recommending industry-friendly changes to consumer financial laws and regulations. We filed suit over the unlawful Taskforce on behalf of consumer advocates. A federal court has already rejected an attempt by the Trump administration to avoid accountability for the Taskforce.

Trump's CFPB violated federal transparency law at every turn with its Taskforce on Federal Consumer Financial Law. Under Director Kathy Kraninger, the CFPB stacked the Taskforce with champions of financial deregulation, excluded consumer advocates, and allowed the group to conduct its work behind closed doors. For example, the CFPB selected someone who called the CFPB a "tragic" failure and a "menace" to chair the Taskforce. We sued on behalf of the National Association of Consumer Advocates (NACA), U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG), and consumer law expert Professor Kathleen Engel. A federal court rejected the Trump administration's attempt to dismiss the lawsuit and ruled that the lawsuit is not moot.

26. Trump political appointees at NOAA may have unlawfully interfered with protections for the highly endangered North Atlantic right whale in order to facilitate seismic blasting for offshore drilling. We asked NOAA's Scientific Integrity Committee to open an investigative inquiry, and it has. The inquiry is ongoing.

A March 2020 report indicated that Trump political appointees at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) were warned of the threats that seismic airgun blasting posed to North Atlantic right whales, but allegedly proceeded to modify career scientists' proposed protections to appease oil and gas industry demands anyway. That allegation raises troubling questions about whether political appointees at NOAA violated federal law and NOAA's own Administrative Order on Scientific Integrity, which makes clear that under "no circumstance may any NOAA official ask or direct Federal scientists or other NOAA employees to suppress or alter scientific findings." So, we requested an immediate investigation. NOAA's Scientific Integrity Committee opened a still-ongoing inquiry.



27. Trump’s Department of Education axed protections for survivors of campus sexual assault. We exposed the Trump administration’s collaboration with mens’ rights groups and surfaced former Attorney General Bill Barr’s inflammatory assertion that: “Male students are sacrificed to the mob.”

Perhaps it’s unsurprising that a president accused by 26 women of sexual assault would help usher in the rollback of Title IX protections for survivors of campus sexual violence and harassment. Alongside the [National Center for Youth Law](#), the [National Women’s Law Center](#), and [Equal Rights Advocates](#), we filed suit over the rollback — on behalf of [SurvJustice](#), [Equal Rights Advocates](#), and the [Victim Rights Law Center](#).

Along the way, we discovered that Bill Barr expressed that “Male students are sacrificed to the mob.” And we unearthed that Trump’s Department of Education ordered staff to read materials that promoted sexist stereotypes and coordinated op-eds and letter-writing campaigns with a men’s rights group and authors who falsely assert that about half of reported rapes are false accusations (which is, of course, categorically not true).

28. The Trump administration gave service providers funded by taxpayer grant money a free pass to discriminate against LGBTQ+ individuals seeking their services. The administration first announced it wouldn’t enforce critical nondiscrimination protections, then rescinded the protections altogether in its final days in power. We filed suit against both policies on behalf of organizations that represent the vulnerable populations directly harmed by the Trump-authorized discrimination.

In 2019, President Trump’s Department of Health and Human Services announced an unlawful policy that essentially invited service providers to use \$500 billion in taxpayer-funded federal grant funds to discriminate against the LGBTQ+ community and others. In early 2021, it axed the remaining nondiscrimination protections altogether.

What does this mean? As one example, the Trump administration’s change sanctions federally-funded foster care agencies refusing to place children with families because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. So we teamed up with [Lambda Legal](#) and sued over the nonenforcement policy on behalf of [Family Equality](#), [True Colors United](#), and [SAGE](#). Then we sued on the scrapping of protections with the same coalition — plus [Facing Foster Care in Alaska](#). That lawsuit led the



Biden-Harris administration to agree to a court order that immediately postponed the discriminatory rule's effective date while the new administration reviews it.

29. The Trump administration's Consumer Financial Protection Bureau failed to protect millions of student borrowers by illegally allowing large corporations that service federal student loans to operate without CFPB supervision as Dodd-Frank requires. We sued to force Trump's CFPB to meet its obligations as a federal watchdog.

The CFPB is tasked with examining federal student loan servicers, but under Trump appointee Mick Mulvaney, the CFPB declared it had no supervisory authority over federal student loan servicers. The Bureau then ceased its supervision through an unannounced rule, which was arbitrary, capricious, and contrary to Dodd-Frank. So we sued on behalf of [Student Debt Crisis. The lawsuit led to a Memorandum of Understanding between the CFPB and the Department of Education aimed at improving the flow of loan servicer information between the two agencies. Also, Director Kathleen Kraninger, Mulvaney's successor, pivoted](#) away from Mulvaney's position by testifying to Congress that the CFPB does in fact have supervisory authority over federal student loan servicers under Dodd-Frank and CFPB regulations. Our lawsuit continues to ensure that the CFPB is actually supervising these large corporations as required by law.

30. Ken Cuccinelli — Trump's unlawfully appointed acting USCIS Director — illegally blocked the path for immigrants with Temporary Protected Status to obtain permanent U.S. residency. On behalf of seven TPS beneficiaries and an immigrant justice group, we took the Trump administration and Cuccinelli to court (again).

After we [successfully invalidated](#) several of Ken Cuccinelli's earlier unlawful and harmful immigration policies, we took the Trump administration to court again over his effort to block TPS beneficiaries' path to permanent residence in the U.S. We brought suit on behalf of the [Central American Resource Center](#) and seven TPS beneficiaries, in partnership with [CLINIC](#), [Montagut & Sobral, PC](#), and [Debevoise & Plimpton, LLP](#).

31. Trump's Interior Department secretly and unlawfully weakened critical safety requirements designed to prevent another oil spill like the Deepwater Horizon catastrophe. We filed a lawsuit on behalf of Healthy Gulf to seal off the oil industry's ability to evade important safety protections.



In the wake of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster, which killed 11 people and ravaged the Gulf Coast, the Department of the Interior established new standards for blowout preventer systems, the safety mechanisms used to prevent uncontrolled releases of oil or gas from offshore wells. But the Trump administration rolled back the standards when it implemented a secret policy that systematically exempts the industry from the safety requirements. Between January 20, 2017, and March 22, 2018, the Trump administration granted **more than 960 waivers** to offshore drillers!

32. Secretary of State **Mike Pompeo unlawfully formed the Commission on Unalienable Rights, a group that provided recommendations to the State Department and was stacked with members who hold positions **hostile** to LGBTQ+ and reproductive rights. The Commission sought to favor religious freedom over all other human rights.**

So we stood up for the rights of all and joined renowned international human rights orgs in a lawsuit to stop the recommendations from Pompeo’s unlawful Commission on Unalienable Rights from infecting American foreign policy.

There was no reason for the unlawful advisory committee, which was designed to gut international human rights protections for many communities, including women and the LGBTQ+ community. We filed suit on behalf of four international human rights organizations – Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, the Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE), the Council for Global Equality, and Global Justice Center. Our litigation shook free records the Commission had obscured from the public’s view, forced a public comment period on the Commission’s harmful report, and put a spotlight on the Commission’s unlawful efforts to privilege religious freedom over all other human rights in American foreign policy. Secretary of State Antony Blinken then pledged to disavow the Commission’s work at his confirmation hearing.

33. Trump’s State Department made an unlawful, **under-the-radar change to the agency’s definition of “**public charge**,” a provision in immigration law that limits who may come to the U.S. The Trump administration’s new definition deters immigrants and their families from using programs for which they’re legally eligible. We partnered with the City of Baltimore to file a lawsuit **defending** immigrants against the Trump administration’s xenophobic attacks.**

We notched an early victory in the case when a federal court in Maryland rejected the Trump administration’s motion to dismiss and concluded that President Trump’s



many offensive comments about immigrants “plausibly constitute prejudice” which may have motivated the drastic upending of longstanding U.S. immigration policy. President Biden has since **directed** his administration to conduct a “top-to-bottom review” of his predecessor’s public charge rule. Our lawsuit is on hold while the new administration reviews the policy.

34. The Trump administration **eviscerated vital anti-redlining rules put in place to ensure banks lend and invest in low- and moderate-income communities and communities of color. We partnered with the [National Community Reinvestment Coalition](#) and the [California Reinvestment Coalition](#) and [filed suit](#) to **reverse** Trump’s short-sighted shredding of the rules. In February, a federal court [rejected](#) the Trump administration’s parting attempt to dismiss the case.**

In his last days in office, Trump’s Comptroller of the Currency Joseph Otting unlawfully rushed through measures to weaken the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) and its anti-redlining protections. The rollback was so flawed and disjointed that, among other things, the Federal Reserve and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation — the two other agencies charged with administering the CRA — declined to join the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency in issuing the rule. The U.S. House of Representatives proceeded to pass a Congressional Review Act resolution of disapproval to overturn the unlawful rollback of the anti-redlining rules, and a federal court rejected the Trump administration’s effort to dismiss our lawsuit.

35. Trump’s Transportation Secretary **Elaine Chao refused to collect information on how often airlines **lose and damage** wheelchairs used by veterans and travelers with disabilities. On behalf of the [Paralyzed Veterans of America](#), we [sued](#) to protect these travelers’ rights.**

In the face of our lawsuit and subsequent congressional action, the Trump administration [relented](#) and agreed to **stop delaying a rule intended to make air travel safer and easier for passengers with disabilities.**

Wheelchairs are indispensable for the mobility impaired, so it’s a big deal if one is lost or destroyed while traveling. In March 2017, at the behest of the airline lobby, Trump’s Department of Transportation abruptly delayed a critical rule designed to protect air travelers with disabilities. So we filed suit and helped force implementation of the rule. Now, travelers can see which airlines handle wheelchairs with care and which are leaving their mobility-impaired passengers in the lurch. In a separate [lawsuit](#) with the Paralyzed Veterans of America, we also challenged the Trump administration’s unlawful delay in issuing rules ensuring restroom accessibility on airplanes.



36. Trump’s first Interior Secretary [Ryan Zinke](#) used nearly [\\$40,000](#) in wildfire preparedness funds to pay for private helicopter rides while wildfires raged across the West Coast. If not for our public records [investigation](#) and lawsuit on behalf of the [Western Values Project](#), the public wouldn’t have known about Zinke’s [misuse of funds](#), and Zinke would’ve gotten away with it.

Zinke wasn’t the first Trump cabinet member to fall under scrutiny for unscrupulous travel. (Remember Tom Price?) But when confronted with our records, Zinke’s team stated the use of the funds was “in error” due to “different accounts for different functions.”

37. At the start of the Trump administration, the EPA [unlawfully yanked](#) grant funding from the [Bay Journal](#), a regional newspaper that offered critical, factual coverage of the administration’s harmful environmental agenda. We stood up for local news with a [challenge](#) to the funding termination — and EPA [reversed course](#) and [restored the funding](#).

Trump EPA appointee John Konkus, a Trump campaign operative, terminated a six-year grant to the Bay Journal after the local news outlet had published articles on the Trump administration’s proposed budget cuts to Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts. In the face of our lawsuit and congressional attention, the Trump administration reinstated grant funding to the award-winning outlet.

38. Trump’s Energy Department illegally allowed an air conditioner manufacturer to [evade energy efficiency](#) rules. We [popped](#) that hot air balloon with a successful [lawsuit](#) that prompted a federal court to [overturn](#) the rollback. The court said the Trump administration was determined to roll back those energy efficiency testing rules “through any means available.”

In a familiar Trump storyline, the Department of Energy acted in favor of a single air-conditioning company to unlawfully let energy-inefficient home air conditioning units go on the market without proper testing. There was a wave of opposition to this move. We filed suit with the [Natural Resources Defense Council](#) and won.

39. The Trump administration [unlawfully tapped](#) three of President Trump’s Mar-a-Lago associates to provide advice and recommendations to the Department of Veterans Affairs on issues of critical importance to America’s veterans.



We filed suit on behalf of VoteVets and demanded accountability for the Trump administration’s unlawful reliance on the shady “Mar-a-Lago Council.”

Picture this: the government empowers a comic book executive, a Palm Beach doctor, and a financial consultant to influence veterans policy and federal contracts worth tens of billions of dollars. Unfortunately, that’s a real (and unlawful) thing that happened under President Trump. We partnered with VoteVets and sued to stop the Mar-a-Lago Council’s operation and bring to light all that this shadowy cabal worked on at VA. We are currently appealing a lower court ruling that found the group exercised too much influence over the VA to be subject to federal transparency law.

40. Trump’s USDA refused to give small farmers a fair chance to fight back against abuse by Big Agriculture. We stood up for the little guy and sued on behalf of a coalition of farmers. Our lawsuit forced the USDA to publicly state that it would revisit the Farmer Fair Practices Rules.

The Trump administration turned its back on America’s food producers when it rolled back protections that helped level the playing field for small farmers. So we sued on behalf of the Organization for Competitive Markets, which advocates for independent and contract farmers across the country, and individual ranchers and farmers.

41. Trump’s Department of Labor’s actions made clear that it wouldn’t adequately represent the interests of all workers when defending against a lawsuit brought by Oracle — owned by Trump supporter Larry Ellison — that challenged the agency’s ability to enforce anti-discrimination laws against federal contractors.

Alongside the National Women’s Law Center, the Communications Workers of America, and United Steelworkers, we moved to intervene to uphold the agency’s authority to protect American workers from discriminatory employment practices.

Oracle’s lawsuit challenged the Department of Labor’s Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs’ (OFCCP) legal authority to enforce civil rights laws. Oracle sued after the agency alleged the tech company owed \$400 million to workers in back pay for race and sex discrimination. So we moved to intervene to defend workers from Oracle’s challenge to OFCCP’s authority. Ultimately, OFCCP lost the pay discrimination case — but it nonetheless retained its enforcement authority in the face of Oracle’s challenge.



42. Trump’s Departments of Justice and Homeland Security issued an error-ridden, biased report that falsely linked terrorism to immigration. So we teamed up with Muslim Advocates, filed suit, and got the Trump administration to admit its report failed to “promote the perception of objectivity.”

The Trump administration combined its predilection for lying and its xenophobic agenda in an official DHS/DOJ report that promoted the inaccurate claim that most terrorism-related offenses are committed by foreign-born persons. After we invoked a little-known data accuracy law called the Information Quality Act and secured the support of nearly a dozen counterterrorism experts (like former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper), the Trump administration conceded error.

43. The Interior Department’s Inspector General said there was “no doubt” a senior Trump official violated his ethics pledge. The report tracked an investigative request and supporting documents we submitted.

Trump’s Interior Department plucked Stephen Wackowski from a company with an interest in oil and gas exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and put him in charge of oil and gas policy in Alaska. In that role, Wackowski had contacts with his former employer that were not disclosed to agency ethics officers. We demanded an investigation, and the Inspector General investigated and concluded the senior official violated his ethics pledge.

44. Trump’s Department of Homeland Security deported hundreds of thousands of people under an unconstitutional policy permitting low-level, unappointed Customs and Border Protection employees to unilaterally deport noncitizens without a hearing or judicial review.

We filed suit on behalf of a noncitizen who was unlawfully deported after being detained at O’Hare International Airport despite having been issued a visa by the State Department.

The Trump administration implemented an unconstitutional deportation process by using unappointed Customs and Border Protection agents to issue expedited removal orders. But expedited removal power is a significant authority that, according to the Constitution’s Appointment Clause, must be exercised by appointed officials. Alongside the National Immigrant Justice Center and Latham & Watkins, we filed a first-of-its-kind lawsuit challenging this unconstitutional expedited removal practice.



45. President Trump told his NY real estate cronies to create a committee that would advise the federal government on infrastructure policy. So we sued on behalf of [Food & Water Watch](#).

While Trump ultimately disbanded the committee, our lawsuit forced the White House to answer questions under oath about the scope and nature of the Infrastructure Council's work.

During the Trump administration, it was always infrastructure week. Or not? Trump dissolved his infamous Infrastructure Council after business leaders abandoned him in the wake of his incendiary comments in the wake of the tragic events in Charlottesville in 2017. Our lawsuit forced the White House, under court order, to reveal approximately thirteen undisclosed meetings with allies of Trump who stood to gain from potential infrastructure initiatives.

With hundreds of Trump-era policies still on the books — and affecting millions of lives each and every day — we're still in court fighting back on behalf of those harmed.

*So, stay tuned. **[Stay in touch.](#)***

