

DEMOCRATIC CLUB OF WILLOW VALLEY

NEWSLETTER

February 2026

Paid for by Democratic Club of Willow Valley

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Addressing the Issues

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The Opposition

Thursday, January 29

THE OPPOSITION

Tracking the legal fight against Trump



PREMIUM

Demcracy
Docket

It's been another bad week for America. Over the weekend, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents shot and killed a second Minnesotan. But rather than admit their mistake, the White House doubled down, spewing false narratives and framing the victim as a domestic terrorist.

It's tough to imagine something worse than the killing of Renee Good earlier this month, when the Trump administration deployed similar tactics. But this case was even more egregious and the response was further unmoored from reality. If that weren't enough, Attorney General Pam Bondi seized upon the tragedy to demand access to Minnesota's unredacted voter rolls, which hold citizens' most granular private information.

The FBI also raided the main election operations center in Fulton County, Georgia, part of a Trump-directed probe of the 2020 election, which he claims was rigged. Also this week, the DOJ made it clear that it will remain in violation of the law requiring it to disclose the entire Epstein files.

The one shadow of good news in all this? A veteran anti-voting lawyer is out at DOJ. But that just means less competent, more radical anti-voting officials are at the reins.

Thank you very much for reading. Please reach out to me at knutson@democracydocket.com if you have any thoughts or concerns.

Jacob Knutson, reporter

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The Opposition (cont'd)

Immigration agents kill another Minnesotan. DHS tries to cover it up

As I'm certain you already know, CBP agents shot and killed Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old ICU nurse, in Minneapolis over the weekend. Despite Pretti having been thrown to the ground and disarmed of his legal handgun, which he never brandished, agents fired at least 10 bullets at him. It's difficult to view his killing as anything short of an extrajudicial execution.

Since then, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) offensively outlandish initial account of the incident has been thoroughly refuted by multiple videos, witness testimony and a [preliminary review](#) it sent to Congress.

DHS Secretary Kristi Noem even faced widespread criticism for saying Pretti had planned to "massacre" immigration agents — a claim so obviously false it strains the very boundaries of plausibility. So it's hardly surprising that wording [was reportedly fed to her](#) by deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller, the Trump administration's xenophobe-in-chief.

What you don't know — what no one knows — is whether the Trump administration will actually scale back its aggressive tactics in response to the national outcry over Pretti's killing, as well as [Renee Good's killing](#) less than a month ago.

Despite some prominent [personnel changes](#) and a [noticeable shift](#) in tone from Trump officials, so far nothing on the ground clearly indicates that the federal government actually intends to turn down the temperature.

In the days following Pretti's killing, federal agents continued to harass Minnesota. They were seen making [obscene gestures](#) and [explicit threats](#) at protesters.

Residents [witnessed](#) them targeting elementary schools and [bus stops](#) during pick-up and drop-off times. Agents also almost ignited an international scandal by forcing their way into the [Ecuadorian consulate](#) in Minneapolis.

The White House also hasn't backed off its pressure campaign against the state either. Continuing to blame local and state leaders for the chaos, it [reiterated](#) a list of concessions it is demanding from the state. And Trump [accused](#) Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey of "PLAYING WITH FIRE" by refusing to enforce federal immigration law.

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The Opposition (cont'd)

Under the anti-commandeering doctrine rooted in the Tenth Amendment, cities and states are not required to enforce federal laws or act as agents of the federal government.

FBI raids Fulton County, Georgia election hub, probing 2020 vote

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents [searched an election operations center](#) in Fulton County, Georgia, on a warrant related to the 2020 presidential election. The search represents a serious escalation in the White House's attempts to revive Trump's claims that the 2020 vote was stolen.

Last month, the Department of Justice (DOJ) [sued](#) Fulton County, seeking ballots and other election records from the 2020 presidential vote. That lawsuit marked the first time that the DOJ had sued in an attempt to obtain actual ballots from state or local offices.

Trump has — falsely — called the 2020 vote a “rigged election.” Last week, he said people would “soon be prosecuted for what they did.”

Bondi's 'ransom' letter to Minnesota ignites nationwide concern

The same day as Pretti's killing, Bondi sent Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz (D) [a list of demands](#) that he must fulfill in order to “restore law and order” in the state.

Among the demands, Bondi said the state must hand over its voter registration records to the DOJ's Civil Rights Division. In including this request, Bondi for the first time directly tied the Trump administration's aggressive immigration raids to its quest for voters' unredacted personal data.

Naturally, the letter horrified state officials. In a [hearing Monday](#) over Minnesota's bid to halt the immigration operations in the Twin Cities region, state attorneys denounced it as “a ransom note” and an attempt at extortion.

State election officials across the country condemned the letter as well, with Arizona Secretary of State Adrian Fontes (D) calling it “blackmail” and likening it and the Trump administration's raids “to the way organized crime works.”

Even the judiciary appeared alarmed by Bondi's letter. In a hearing over the DOJ's lawsuit to obtain Oregon's voter data, [a federal judge](#) said it exacerbated concerns about the DOJ's claimed purpose for demanding the records.

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The Opposition (cont'd)

Democracy Docket is tracking the 74 most important Trump accountability lawsuits fighting the administration's power grabs. [Click here](#) to find out which ones have succeeded so far.

In filing, DOJ admits it will remain in violation of Epstein Transparency Act

We're now over 40 days past the statutory deadline for the full release of the Epstein files. Don't expect them anytime soon: In a court filing this week, the [DOJ acknowledged](#) that it's going to continue violating the law.

The DOJ said the rest of the files would be published "in the near term" but gave no clear release date. Amongst other things, it attributed the delay to "manual review" of the files, including "name-related searches" of victims and potential victims to ensure redactions are made when requested.

Earlier this month, the DOJ [said](#) it had released just 1% of Epstein files — or 12,285 out of over 2 million documents.

Dive Deeper: In blow to Trump DOJ, experienced anti-voting lawyer is out

Maureen Riordan, the veteran election lawyer whose appointment as Acting Chief of the DOJ's voting section symbolized the department's sharp anti-voting shift, is [no longer at the DOJ](#), the department said in a court filing Tuesday.

Riordan [came to the DOJ](#) from the Public Interest Legal Foundation (PILF), a right-wing anti-voting legal group that has [pushed aggressive voter purges and promoted false claims](#) about widespread illegal voting.

While the exact reason for her departure remains unknown, her exit leaves the voting section in the hands of less experienced new hires often tied to even more radical anti-voting figures.

Before her exit from the DOJ, Riordan was [replaced as acting chief of the voting section](#) by Eric Neff, a Republican attorney whose infatuation with election conspiracy theories [previously cost California taxpayers \\$5 million](#) in settlement money.

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The Opposition (cont'd)

To do list

A nationwide "ICE Out" shutdown has been scheduled for tomorrow to protest the killings of Good, Pretti, [Keith Porter Jr.](#) and others by federal agents. Organizers are calling for a nationwide day of no school, no work and no shopping followed by [protests across the country](#) Saturday. You can find out more [here](#).

The No Kings Coalition announced its next national day of protest for March 28. Like its previous mass mobilizations last year, the upcoming event will feature thousands of demonstrations across the country as well as a flagship event in the Twin Cities. You can sign up for updates [here](#).

The No Kings Coalition is also hosting ongoing training sessions for those who want to exercise their constitutional right to document and record the actions of federal agents. The next session will be on Thursday, Feb. 5 at 8 p.m. ET. You can RSVP [here](#).

The ACLU has also created this template for you to ask your members of Congress to oppose additional funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and CBP. You can fill that out [here](#).

Odds and ends

Is Trump cognitively there? People are wondering: If you trust Trump and his team, the president might be the healthiest man on earth: his energy levels are [astounding](#), his testosterone is [through the roof](#), and he's acing [cognitive tests](#) left and right ("person, woman, man, camera, TV"). But even some of Trump's friends are starting to worry. Right-wing Slovak prime minister Robert Fico emerged from a meeting with Trump earlier this month alarmed at the U.S. president's "psychological state" and told other EU leaders that he came across as "dangerous," [Politico reported](#).

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The Opposition (cont'd)

Noem and Miller play the blame game: As she faces widespread, [bipartisan backlash](#) over her false statements about Pretti, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem is blaming White House deputy chief of staff and top Trump adviser Stephen Miller for the incendiary misinformation, according to [Axios](#). Internally, White House officials — potentially Miller allies — are blaming CBP, which is under Noem's supervision. In reality, they are both responsible, and to quote [Sen. Mark Kelly](#) (D-Ariz.), "both of them should be out of jobs."

ICE goes international: Italians angered by the Trump administration's actions in Minneapolis are [demanding](#) that ICE agents stay out of Italy during the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan-Cortina next month. The Trump administration confirmed this week that it intends to send ICE agents to assist U.S. security operations during the games.

Quote of the week

Moments after a man sprayed her with an unknown substance during a Minneapolis town hall event this week, Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) took to the podium again and said something many of us can draw strength from:

*"We will continue. These f***** a**holes are not going to get away with this. It is important for me to continue. Here is the reality that people like this ugly man don't understand. We are Minnesota strong. And we will stay resilient in the face of whatever they might throw at us."*

Calling all Democrats:

Candidate Petition Signing Event @ Willow Valley

Thursday, Feb. 26th @ 9-11am at the four main apartment complexes
We need signatures of registered Democrats to enable our candidates to get on the 2026 primary ballot.

Look for more details in the Weekly Insider.

How we mobilize leading up to the next No Kings Day



No Kings Activists,

We are watching something historic in Minnesota. First-time protesters are taking to the streets, neighbors are forming human chains to keep each other safe, and, last Friday, Minneapolis held the first general strike in the US in nearly a century. Minnesotans are showing us how to stand in solidarity in the face of governmental abuse -- because the Trump administration isn't slowing down.

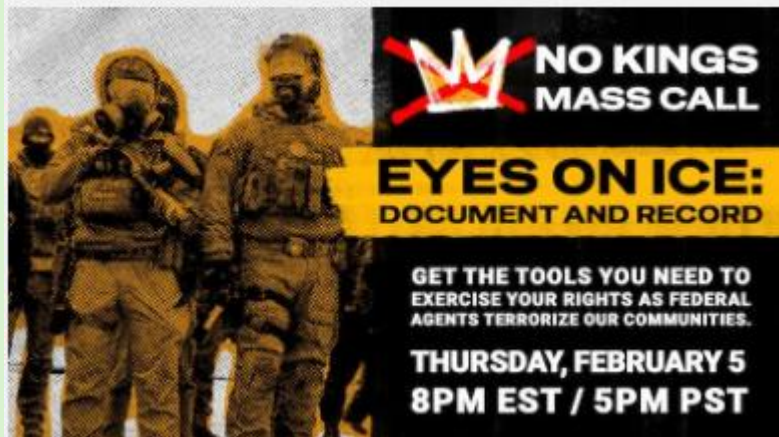
Families continue to be terrorized in their own homes and neighborhoods, with masked ICE agents kicking down doors, ripping families apart, and killing people, including Keith Porter Jr., Renee Good, Alex Pretti, and [at least six people in their custody so far in 2026](#). Another [32 people died](#) in ICE custody last year, ICE's deadliest year in over 20 years.

These tragedies are not isolated incidents. They are a compounding pattern of abuse that we must organize to fight back against. On Monday, we offered an Eyes on ICE training that more than 200,000 people tuned in for on a day's notice. We know that some folks weren't able to rearrange their schedules to attend, so we're offering it again.

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How we mobilize (cont'd)

[Join the Eyes on ICE: Document and Record virtual training next Thursday, February 5, at 8pm ET/5pm PT](#) to learn about your rights when documenting and recording law enforcement encounters. If you came to Monday's training, commit to finding two friends to go to this one -- the more people who are trained, the safer our communities will be.



After holding the largest single-day, nonviolent protest in US history in October, we reminded you that No Kings Day is not an end or a beginning. No Kings Day is one piece of a continuing legacy of struggle in this country that began when the first colonists stepped foot on this land. We will continue to fight on the side of morality, freedom, equality, and kindness until we cannot anymore.

It is with that spirit of ongoing resistance that we announce the next No Kings Day on March 28.

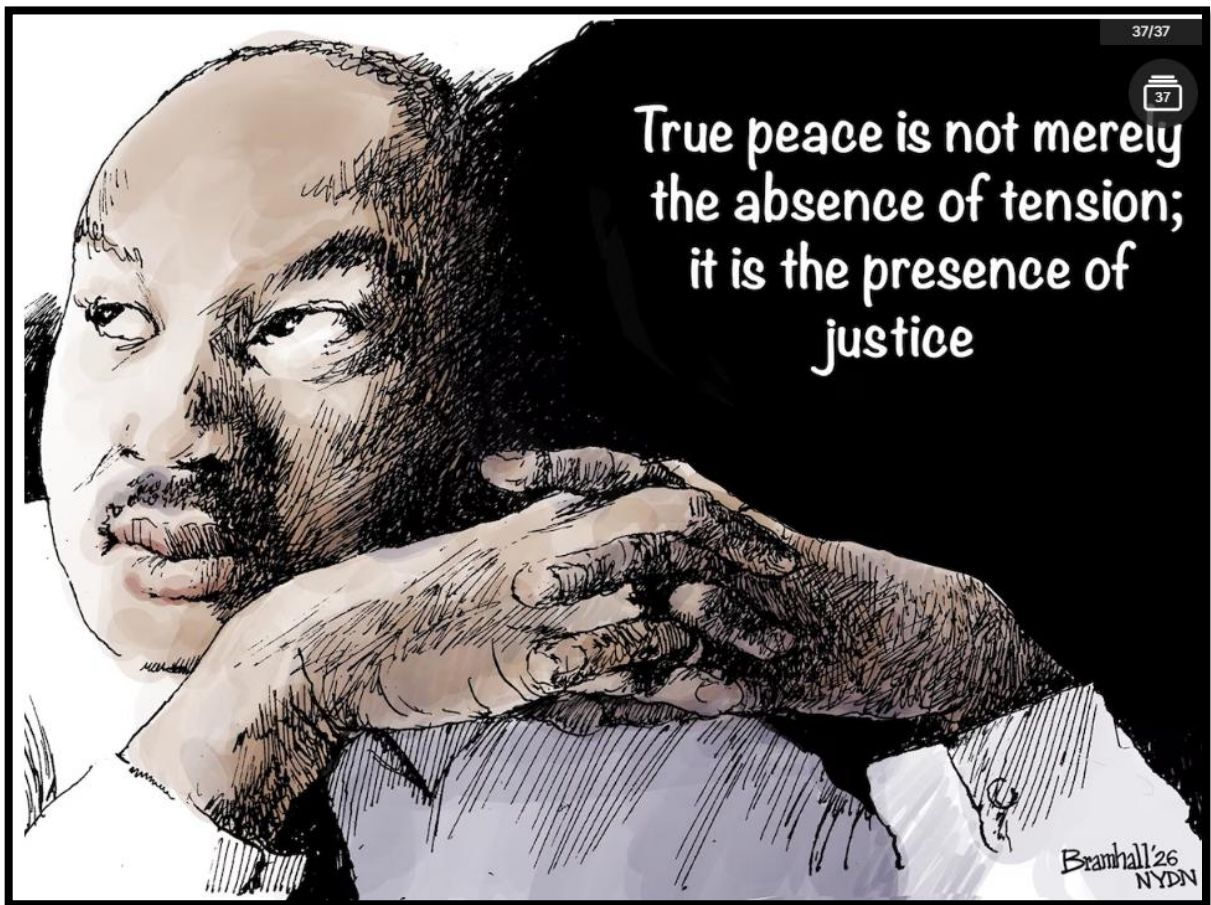


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How we mobilize (cont'd)

Registration isn't live yet, but we wanted to make sure to get you the date early this time around so that you can plan. In the meantime, the nonviolent resistance continues.

[Join the Eyes on ICE training on February 5,](#) invite your friends to join you, protect your neighbors, support cities occupied by the Trump administration, and find a way to ease the burden of someone less privileged than you. No Kings Day is a massive symbol of resistance, but don't wait for March 28 to make your voices heard. No Kings today. No Kings tomorrow. No Kings on our watch.



Bearing Witness

BEARING WITNESS

The civic action of a handful of Minnesotans is holding Trump accountable

DAN RATHER AND TEAM STEADY

JAN 26



Credit: Getty Images

It was a weekend filled with heartbreaking images. Americans trapped inside by winter weather found themselves transfixed by the traumatic footage of a fellow citizen surrounded, pepper-sprayed, shoved to the ground, and then shot ten times by ICE agents.

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Bearing Witness (cont'd)

My colleague Ryan Goodman, Professor of Law at NYU School of Law and the founding co-editor-in-chief of [Just Security](#), an online forum focused on U.S. national security law and policy, will join us Sunday morning at 10:00 a.m. EST for an in-depth Substack live discussion of the issues raised here. Mark your calendars now and make sure you have the Substack App downloaded so you can join us for cutting edge legal analysis on this most important of issues. Ryan has been [tracking](#) these strikes and their legal implications since they first began. After the story broke in the Washington Post, he [tweeted](#), “Textbook war crime/extrajudicial killing.”

Earlier this month, The Guardian [reported](#) that Britain had stopped sharing intelligence on Caribbean drug running with the United States “amid concerns information supplied may be used to engage in lethal military strikes by American forces.” They specified that the cooperation was “paused shortly after the US began a campaign of lethal strikes in September,” but there was no explicit mention of the order Hegseth issued as the cause.

Friday evening at 5:42 p.m., Hegseth [tweeted](#):

“As usual, the fake news is delivering more fabricated, inflammatory, and derogatory reporting to discredit our incredible warriors fighting to protect the homeland.

As we’ve said from the beginning, and in every statement, these highly effective strikes are specifically intended to be ‘lethal, kinetic strikes.’ The declared intent is to stop lethal drugs, destroy narco-boats, and kill the narco-terrorists who are poisoning the American people. Every trafficker we kill is affiliated with a Designated Terrorist Organization.

The Biden administration preferred the kid gloves approach, allowing millions of people — including dangerous cartels and unvetted Afghans — to flood our communities with drugs and violence. The Trump administration has sealed the border and gone on offense against narco-terrorists. Biden coddled terrorists, we kill them.

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Bearing Witness (cont'd)

The killing of Alex Pretti by federal agents and the many cellphone videos that captured it laid bare a presidential agenda built on intentional cruelty, hate, and lies.

Cellphones held by heroic Minnesotans recorded a reality in stark opposition to the “official” version of events in Minneapolis. Minutes after the killing, the White House blamed Pretti and stood by the outlaws masquerading as law enforcement.

They called the shooting “justified.” Gregory Bovino, Border Patrol Commander-at-Large, labeled the agents “victims.” Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said Pretti “arrived at the scene to inflict maximum damage on individuals and to kill law enforcement.”

She provided zero evidence, before an investigation of any kind (if, in fact, there is one), and before the cellphone videos went viral. Once they did, it didn’t take long for many viewers to deliver an overwhelming verdict: the Trump administration was lying about what happened. Again.

We must commend the courage of those who braved numbing cold, clouds of tear gas, and the threat of thuggery to bring us the truth. As difficult as this may be, please continue doing what you do. Our nation desperately needs you, all of you, to witness and record these perilous moments in our history.

The internet and social media are often maligned for spreading disinformation, negatively impacting mental health, and perpetuating screen addiction and cyberbullying. Amid all the issues with pervasive distraction, in the time of Trump, the technology that lives in our pockets has become one of the most useful tools to combat the administration’s stranglehold on the “truth.”

The modern media ecosystem is constantly and rapidly evolving. The administration has been astute in recognizing that speed is the name of the control-the-narrative game, trying “to define reality before reality could be independently established,” according to Steven Rosenbaum on MediaInsider.

To that end, the public relations office of ICE has morphed into a full-blown propaganda machine, pushing out slickly produced, social media influencer-style videos of agents confronting, chasing, terrorizing, and arresting people, all set to music. The ICE media machine is doing the White House’s bidding of “flooding the airwaves” on the taxpayers’ tab.

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Bearing Witness (cont'd)

But they aren't the only ones who understand this new-media reality. Thousands of Americans use their camera phones and social media to lead a resistance.

Illinois Governor JB Pritzker instructed everyone to "video everything." Fellow governor Tim Walz of Minnesota echoed this advice.

"Carry your phone with you at all times. And if you see ICE in your neighborhood, take out that phone and hit record. Help us create a database of the atrocities against Minnesotans — not just to establish a record for posterity, but to bank evidence for future prosecution," he said last week.

Taking cellphone videos is the latest form of civil disobedience. New Instagram accounts and YouTube channels have recently popped up to disseminate videos as quickly as possible.

It is not the only example of resistance in Minneapolis. Citizens are helping other citizens who need protection from federal authorities. Community solidarity is the order of the day.

According to a local labor organizer, 65,000 Minnesotans received training in civil protesting. They are patrolling streets, donating food, delivering groceries, and providing legal assistance. What started as a preventative measure has turned into a much-needed service.

And if you ever thought any of this — the occupation of an American city 1,500 miles from the southern border — was about mass deportation or border safety, Attorney General Pam Bondi tipped her hand on Sunday. A leaked memo she wrote to Governor Walz gave him an ultimatum: release Minnesota's voter information and we will remove ICE from the state. No doubt, another lie.

These videos are the start. They show what happened but not why. We still need context, analysis, and investigation to understand the whole story. And that is the last thing Trump and his enforcers want. They know people will recognize:

- a) that they lied about what happened,
- b) b) what happened was illegal, and
- c) c) those responsible will likely not be held accountable.

At this point, let's remind ourselves that most police and other law enforcement are decent, law-abiding professionals. Many, if not most, are as appalled as the broader public by ICE's inhumane and unlawful tactics.

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Bearing Witness (cont'd)

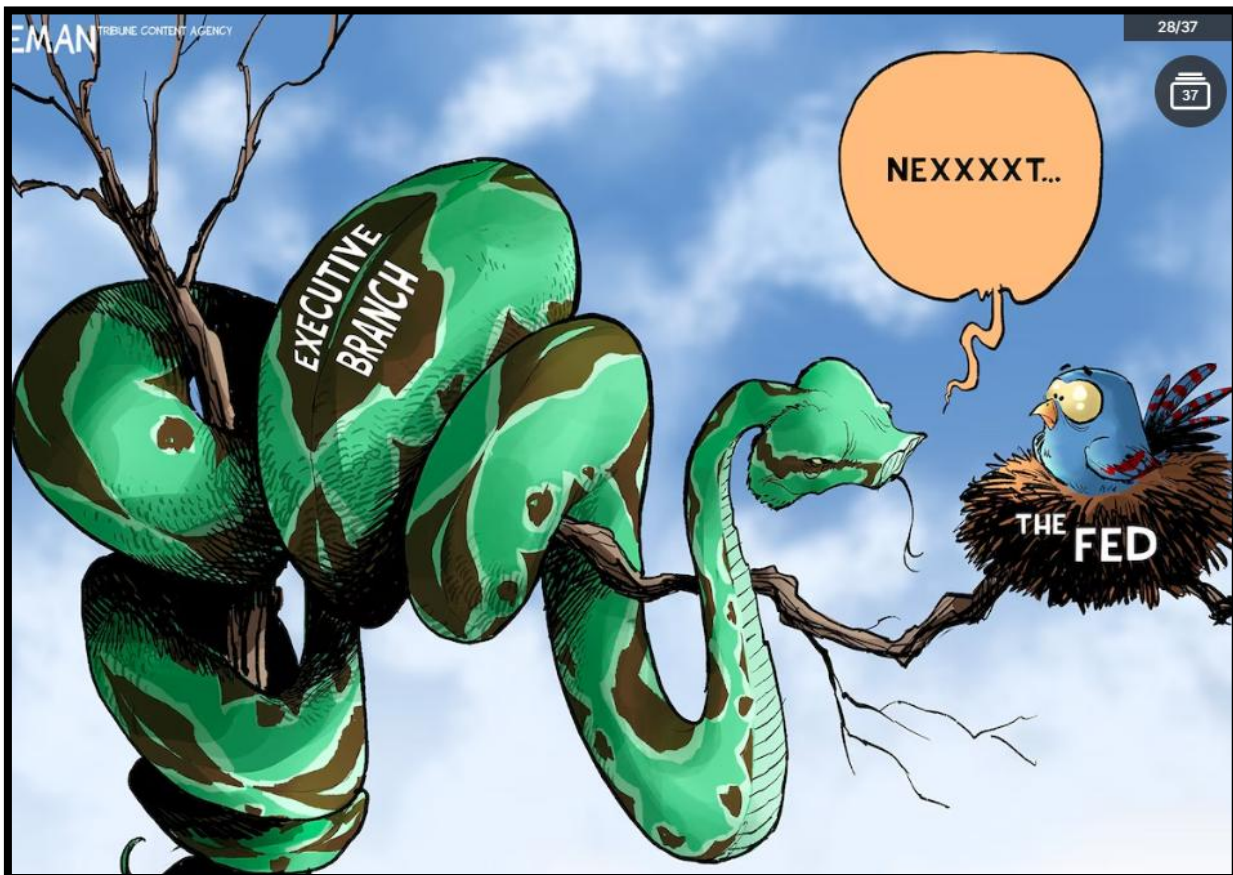
Thank you again to those who are keeping watch, despite the elements. Your fearlessness is applauded here and recognized by many across the nation.

Courage.

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Stay Steady,
Dan



Hiding in Plain Sight

Hiding in Plain Sight

Democrats push to unmask ICE

Dan Rather and Team Steady

Jan 29



Credit: Getty Images

When United States law enforcement officers cover their faces, they send a clear message: We're not accountable to anyone.

This tyrannical Donald Trump-Stephen Miller immigration tactic is working as planned. Terrifying Americans is the goal.

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Hiding in Plain Sight (cont'd)

It wasn't until March of last year that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents began covering their faces, claiming they were being "doxed," a practice of revealing personal information online. They claimed their families were endangered.

Somehow, local, state, and federal police have been able to perform their jobs, including arresting violent criminals, for decades without concealing their identities. Thanks to Trump, we now have a menacing secret police force in America. But the masks and the warrantless searches could soon end.

Democrats are demanding that those strategies be dropped if the administration wants the Department of Homeland Security, including ICE, to be funded past Friday. Otherwise, the government will shut down.

Suddenly, the president has been backed into a corner.

Trump is a bully. What do bullies do when they are cornered? They turn tail. But Trump's bullying is a unique sort, because he has the full force of a federal government he has fashioned into his own retribution machine at his disposal.

When things go south for him, as they have in Minneapolis, and even White House polling shows a significant further slide in support, he recalibrates and then retreats... sort of.

Trump's first efforts to supposedly lower the temperature in Minneapolis involve personnel changes.

DHS Secretary Kristi Noem, whom lawmakers from both sides of the aisle have called on to be fired, resign, or impeached, has been sidelined. She hasn't been heard from since her disastrous, lie-strewn press conference after the killing of Alex Pretti by ICE agents. She claimed Pretti "violently resisted" and "wanted to do maximum damage and massacre law enforcement."

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Hiding in Plain Sight (cont'd)

Border czar Tom Homan is now stepping in for Noem on issues of immigration enforcement in Minnesota. The president told ABC News that he believes Homan's leadership will lead to a "maybe a little bit more relaxed" approach.

Gestapo cosplayer Gregory Bovino, the man initially in charge of the Minneapolis ICE deployment, has been reassigned to California and will be retiring. While the two agents who shot Pretti have been put on administrative leave. Initially, DHS said they had been reassigned to another city. We still don't know their names.

At Homan's first on-site news conference Thursday morning, he sounded, if not conciliatory, at least not as belligerent as his predecessor. "I come here looking for solutions. I do not want to hear that everything's been done here has been perfect. Nothing's ever perfect."

But if you are expecting an immediate withdrawal of the 3,000 ICE agents from the city, don't hold your breath. Homan said he is working on an eventual "drawdown plan," but only with the cooperation (and capitulation) of state and local officials.

Reuters is reporting that ICE agents in Minnesota have been directed to target only immigrants with criminal records or pending charges and not to interact with "agitators," which should be the bare minimum expected of any law enforcement agents.

Other than a personnel shuffle, nothing has substantively changed. Five days after a second American was gunned down in the street by agents of the federal government, heads should be rolling. People should be held to account and fired. Agents should have been marched out of the city. The Department of Justice and the FBI should have opened an investigation.

Instead, the president is still playing the bully. He labeled Senators Thom Tillis and Lisa Murkowski "losers" for calling for Noem's resignation. He threatened Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey on social media, admonishing him for "PLAYING WITH FIRE."

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Hiding in Plain Sight (cont'd)

Attorney General Pam Bondi posted photos of “16 Minnesota rioters for allegedly assaulting federal law enforcement—people who have been resisting and impeding our federal law enforcement agents. We expect more arrests to come. I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again: NOTHING will stop President Trump and this Department of Justice from enforcing the law.”

That doesn’t sound like a more “relaxed” approach.

It turns out Trump’s half-hearted de-escalation measures are simply an effort to placate congressional Democrats, according to Punchbowl News. Preserving the spending bills already passed in the House and avoiding another government shutdown is his actual motivation.

George Conway, the Republican-never-Trumper-turned-Democrat warned, “Don’t fall for it, Senate Democrats.”

Right now Democrats have a rare moment of leverage with public outrage at fever pitch. Last week, the House passed a handful of spending bills, including one that funds DHS.

The Senate must now pass them to keep the government open. Passage requires a supermajority (60 votes), which means seven Democrats would have to join Republicans. After the deadly events in Minnesota, Senate Democrats say they will not vote to fund DHS. A test vote failed late Thursday ahead of the Friday midnight deadline.

Unlike during the run-up to and through the last government shutdown, the White House and congressional Republicans are actually negotiating. Reportedly, Democrats have been offered executive action but no legislative options. Senator Chuck Schumer, the minority leader, signaled that won’t fly. He is rightly distrustful of any promises Trump might make.

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Hiding in Plain Sight (cont'd)

Democrats are demanding significant changes, changes that during any other administration would be unnecessary, because they are standard operating procedure. They are asking that agents wear body cameras, remove face masks, adhere to legal warrant procedures, and be limited by use-of-force standards.

Democrats are right to call for legislative action on these demands. But writing them into law would require the bill to return to the House. And House Republicans have warned that they don't have the votes to pass a new version of the bill.

The best way to fight a bully is to stay calm but confidently assertive. To that end, rock legend Bruce Springsteen is lending his conscientious voice to the battle raging in Minnesota with a new anthem for these troubled times.

He wrote, recorded, and released "[Streets of Minneapolis](#)" in just three days, in response to the state terror being visited on the city of Minneapolis," Springsteen said.

We leave you with one of his poignant stanzas.

*And there were bloody footprints
Where mercy should have stood
And two dead, left to die on snow-filled streets
Alex Pretti and Renee Good*

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A Poem Worth Sharing

A poem worth sharing from Joyce Vance:

IF THEY CALL ME A DOMESTIC TERRORIST

If they gun me down
in my own street someday
may my crime be compassion.

May the record show
from every angle
that I was helping a woman up
after they pushed her to the ground,
that not even their weapons
could stop me from extending
my hand to those in need,
that I was a walking example
of the best my elders taught me —
that everyone is equal
and worthy of defending.

If they tell the nation,
from the highest podium,
that I was a domestic terrorist,
let it be known that my radical act
was believing the best in people
when they wanted nothing more
than to divide us.

Michael A. Dubois
@michaelfdubois

Coming Events

Understanding Our Democracy

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

1:00 – 2:30 AM

Lancaster County League of Women Voters

Dr. Peggy Schooling will be returning for another Understanding Our Democracy forum. She will introduce us to the Lancaster Chapter of the League of Women Voters. In addition to her professional work, Dr. Schooling serves as Secretary of the League of Women Voters of Lancaster County, where she focuses on youth engagement and voter education. Dr. Schooling brings to this presentation a long-standing commitment to informed citizenship and a belief in the power of communities to strengthen democratic dialogue. Please join us ... everyone is welcome.

Understanding Our Democracy

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

1:00 – 2:30 AM

“Who Pays: State & Local Taxes”

State & local taxes can be a significant factor for many. What are the different kinds of state & local taxes? Which ones tend to be progressive (reducing income inequality), and which ones tend to be regressive (increasing inequality)? We will look at the 50 states, what gets taxed, and who pays these taxes in each state. In which states are the taxes focused more on the rich? And where do the taxes focus on the poor? We will finish with closer look at Pennsylvania’s state and local taxes and see how our tax structure compares to the national averages. Please join us ... all are welcome.

Dems Club General Meeting

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

1:00 – 2:00 PM

Introducing Jess Branas, candidate for PA 197th House District. Jess will be joining us to talk about the campaign and key issues.

Meeting Minutes

Democratic Club of Willow Valley General Meeting January 27, 2026

Education Chair Jerry Henige opened the meeting at 1 p.m. and introduced speaker Nancy Mannion who is running against U.S. House Representative Lloyd Smucker.

Dr. Nancy Mannion: Dr. Mannion described her background as a registered nurse and health care leader for 40 years. She believes the 2026 election for U.S. House Representative District 11 against incumbent Lloyd Smucker is “winnable” for several reasons:

a voter shift in Lancaster County toward Democrat as seen in the increased voter turnout in the county in the November elections

Rep. Smucker’s silence on recent events such as the ICE raids in Minneapolis and other cities that has sown wide concern among voters – Democratic, Republican and Independent
an affordability crisis in health care, food, housing and the cancelling of grants to Pennsylvania farmers that affects the public in general lack of education funding that affects schools and our future.

She stressed the need for a return of the three-level government structure that is currently being eroded by President Trump and his Cabinet. For these reasons, it is crucial that Democrats gain control of the U.S. House in the midterm elections this year.

Dr. Mannion then opened the floor for Q&A that touched on many issues:

Rep. Smucker’s lack of accountability and silence on important issues

health care and housing crisis

need to raise Social Security cap, currently at \$200,000.

cuts in SNAP benefits detrimental to those who rely on this program

dysfunction in Congress and need for common ground

Jerry Henige thanked Dr. Mannion for her insights and time with the Club.

Business Meeting

Treasury: current balance \$5,541.20. All monies will now be put into the General Fund with no separate categories for Scholarship and others.

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Meeting Minutes

Membership: current membership is 182. The 2026 Membership campaign begins February 1 – April 30. Cost of membership remains the same at \$25 for individual and \$45 for couples. Members are encouraged to sign up on the website www.demswvc.com. They may also fill out an application and pay by check.

Website: Members approved the payment of \$1,182.84 for 2026 GoDaddy contract.

Advocacy: Post card campaigns will begin closer to the primaries in May. One campaign will be in support of Governor Josh Shapiro for reelection. Advocacy chair Barbara Bonanno will be asking for volunteers.

Jerry encouraged attendees to contact their legislators by phone, email, or letter about several major issues:

ICE actions and lack of training

Secretary of Homeland Security's Krista Noem's lack of qualification to head the department
inhumane detention centers

overreach of Border Patrol into cities

need for advocacy actions opposing U.S. Representatives Lloyd Smucker and Scott Perry as well as PA State Representative Steve Mentzer.

Mr. Henige urged voters to contact U.S. Senators Dave McCormick and John Fetterman to oppose the 2026 funding bill for DHS currently under discussion.

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, February 3, *Understanding Our Democracy* with Peggy Schooling of the Lancaster County League of Women Voters, 1 p.m. CC Ballroom (Note change of room)

Tuesday, February 17, *Understanding Our Democracy*, topic is State and Local taxes, fairness in tax structure and different kinds of taxes.

Tuesday, February 24, General Meeting with Jess Branas, candidate for U.S. House of Representatives with focus on health care and social services.

Thursday, February 26, petition signing for candidates 9-11 a.m. at Lakes, Spring Run, Manor and North.

Lucy Painter, Secretary