

UCLA School of Law

A huge group of UCLA Law professors sent a letter to our students yesterday expressing our collective condemnation of the Trump Administration's attacks on the rule of law. In doing so we join colleagues from other institutions and law deans in voicing our concerns.

Here is an important excerpt from the letter:

> Lawyers have special obligations to protect and uphold the rule of law. As the Model Rules of Professional Conduct provide: "A lawyer is … an officer of the legal system and a public citizen having special responsibility for the quality of justice."
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> The rule of law is threatened when the government, for example:
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> - Punishes or threatens lawyers or law firms based on their lawful and ethical representation of clients disfavored by the government;
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> - Threatens law firms and legal clinics for their lawyers' pro bono work;

- Threatens law firms, lawyers, or legal clinics on the basis of their prior, legal governmental service;

- Uses threats to bargain for public acts of submission and aid for causes favored by the government;

- Punishes or threatens to punish people for lawful speech on matters of public concern; or,

- Ignores court orders and evades appropriate judicial oversight.

> These threats contravene the commitments of the First, Fifth, and Sixth Amendments. They are exacerbated when government penalties are administered without due process.
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> Reasonable people may disagree about how to characterize particular incidents in the news, but we are all gravely worried that the rule of law is under severe threat. We strongly condemn efforts to undermine these basic legal norms.

The letter also expresses worry over attacks on international students. It concludes by saying that:

> we are committed to the rule of law, to our roles in teaching and upholding the precepts of a fair and impartial legal system, and to supporting and defending [students] if you are targeted by threats or punishment for exercising your right to free expression or for your legal work.

It's hard to know exactly how to respond to the unrelenting assault but Cara Horowitz said it well in the Emmett Institute's March newsletter:

Speak out where you can. Work in community with others. That’s how many of us are taking action in Spring 2025.