

## Substack

# **It's Time for Americans to Start Talking About "Soft Secession"** **Blue states are finally learning what red states have known all along:** **you don't need federal permission to govern.**

**By Chris Armitage**

**August 18, 2025**

Behind closed doors, blue state leaders are planning. They're war-gaming scenarios where federal agents show up and continue to transgress further and further past what is "legal." Daily the courts are showing that that something is legal when Trump wants it to happen, and illegal when he doesn't. How does a government function under these circumstances?

For many state Attorney Generals and Governors, the legal briefs are already drafted. The strategy sessions have been running since December. "We saw this coming, even though we hoped it wouldn't," former Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum told The 19th days after Trump's inauguration.

This is what American federalism looks like in 2025: Democratic governors holding emergency sessions on encrypted apps, attorneys general filing lawsuits within hours of executive orders, and state legislatures quietly passing laws that amount to nullification of federal mandates. Oregon is stockpiling abortion medication in secret warehouses. Illinois is exploring digital sovereignty. California has \$76 billion in reserves and is deciding how to deploy it. Three sources on those daily Zoom calls between Democratic AGs say the same phrase keeps coming up, though nobody wants to say it publicly: soft secession.

Not the violent rupture of 1861, but something else entirely. Blue states building parallel systems, withholding cooperation, and creating facts on the ground that render federal authority meaningless within their borders.

The infrastructure for this resistance already exists. Twenty-three Democratic attorneys general now gather on near-daily Zoom calls at 8 AM Pacific, which means the East Coast officials are already on their third coffee. They divide responsibilities and share templates for lawsuits they've been drafting since last spring.

California Governor Gavin Newsom called state lawmakers into a special session later this year to protect the state's progressive policies, while Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker launched Governors Safeguarding Democracy, seeking to unify state-based opposition to Trump's agenda. Rob Bonta, California's attorney general, describes preparations so

thorough that challenging Trump's birthright citizenship order required only to "cross the T's, dot the I's, press print, and file."

Currently, Massachusetts sends \$4,846 more per capita to the federal government than it gets back. New Jersey and Washington are in the same position, bleeding thousands per person annually. Over five years, New York alone contributed \$142.6 billion more than it received. Meanwhile, red states pocket \$1.24 for every dollar they send to Washington. Blue states are essentially paying red states to undermine democracy.

This economic reality gives blue states leverage they've only begun to explore. California has accumulated \$76 billion in reserves. The Bank of North Dakota, profitable every year since 1919, offers a model for state banking that could reduce federal dependence. When Trump threatened to cut funding from Maine over transgender sports policies, Governor Janet Mills had 22 other Democratic governors ready to stand with her, collectively representing the majority of America's economic output.

Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey told MSNBC her state police would "absolutely not" help Trump's deportation efforts. She's not bluffing. In *Printz v. United States* (1997), Justice Scalia wrote that the federal government "cannot require states and localities to carry out its immigration policy." The anti-commandeering doctrine, reinforced in *Murphy v. NCAA* (2018), means states can't be forced to implement federal programs.

The legal foundation for soft secession was written by conservative justices who never imagined blue states would use it. Yale Law Professor Heather Gerken calls it "uncooperative federalism." States don't have to actively resist. They can simply refuse to help. And without state cooperation, much of the federal government's agenda becomes unenforceable.

We've seen this playbook work before. Northern states' personal liberty laws made the Fugitive Slave Act virtually unenforceable between 1780 and 1859, with only 330 slaves returned despite federal law. More recently, cannabis legalization has spread to 41 states despite federal prohibition, forcing Washington to essentially give up. When 25 states refused to implement REAL ID requirements starting in 2007, they delayed enforcement by nearly two decades.

A case in Washington state shows just how far this has gone. The state Attorney General is now seeking an injunction against Adams County Sheriff for cooperating with federal immigration enforcement, arguing he's violating state law. The sheriff faces a choice: follow federal directives or state law. Increasingly, state officials are choosing their states.

Eight states have already enacted State Voting Rights Acts that exceed federal protections. Twenty-two states have implemented automatic voter registration. Colorado has created what election security experts call the gold standard: risk-limiting audits with paper ballot requirements.

New York Attorney General Letitia James, who successfully sued Trump during his first term, promised she's "ready to fight back again." During Trump's first term, Democratic attorneys general led more than 130 multistate lawsuits against the administration and won 83 percent of them.

Texas has been running this exact playbook for years. Operation Lone Star achieved an 87% reduction in border crossings through state action alone, regardless of federal immigration policy. Nearly 46% of U.S. counties have declared themselves Second Amendment sanctuaries.

Blue states are finally learning what red states have known all along: you don't need federal permission to govern.

Pritzker has his staff exploring how to force Apple and Google to disable location tracking for anyone crossing into Illinois for medical procedures, preventing any digital trail that could be subpoenaed. Multiple governors are studying whether they can legally deny federal agents access to state databases, airports, and even highways for immigration enforcement. The discussions, according to sources, have gone as far as evaluating state authority to close airspace to federal deportation flights. States are creating pharmaceutical stockpiles, climate agreements, immigration policies. The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact has secured 209 electoral votes. The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative's 11 states have reduced emissions by 50% while the federal government rolled back climate regulations. The U.S. Climate Alliance's 24 governors represent 60% of the American economy.

California doesn't wait for Washington anymore. Neither does New York. Or Illinois. They're building functioning governmental systems that operate independently of federal authority.

"Really, we have no idea what's coming down the pike," Kansas Governor Laura Kelly, chair of the Democratic Governors Association, admitted to CNN. That uncertainty is why states are preparing for everything. Multiple governors have been running tabletop exercises behind closed doors for months, with state attorneys general and other relevant officials. One participant described a December session where they walked through scenarios of federal troops being deployed to blue states.

The preparations are specific and practical. Draft lawsuits sit ready in what officials call

“brief banks.” States are identifying which federal funds they can afford to lose. They’re studying their executive powers and state constitutions. They’re building coalitions that transcend traditional partisan lines. Pritzker claims some Republican governors have quietly expressed interest in collaboration, though he won’t say which ones, leaving observers to wonder if he’s protecting sources or bluffing.

“Democrats in Congress, even if they really want to do things, what you can do in the minority is quite limited,” strategist Arkadi Gerney observed. “But these governors have the opportunity to actually run their states very differently from how the president is running the country.”

The paradox of American federalism in 2025: the same constitutional structure that allows red states to ban abortion permits blue states to stockpile abortion pills. The same Tenth Amendment that lets Texas deploy its National Guard to the border prevents Trump from commandeering state police for deportations.

We’re not heading toward another Fort Sumter. We’re watching something else: states quietly walking away from each other. Blue states will protect abortion rights, support organized labor, and protect individual rights. Red states will allow Christian theocracy, suppress wages, and criminalize free speech, and destroy healthcare. The federal government becomes a hollow structure that states have a moral imperative to ignore. Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear, who won reelection in a state Trump carried by 31 points, insists “the concept of common ground and common sense is what this country is looking for.” But common ground requires both sides to show up. And increasingly, they’re not.

The phrase “soft secession” makes Democrats nervous. They prefer “resistance” or “federalism” or any other euphemism that doesn’t acknowledge what’s happening. But when democracy fails, when fair elections become impossible in certain states, when federal funds are withheld as political punishment, states don’t have many options left. The infrastructure is built. The legal precedents are established. The money is there. Blue states have spent two years sharpening these tools. Next week, the governors meet again. The agenda, according to three sources, includes a discussion of whether to coordinate state tax policy to offset federal cuts.

As blue states prepare to deny federal agents access to their databases, their highways, maybe even their airspace, the soft secession isn’t coming. It’s here.

*Chris Armitage is the author of the Substack blog [The Existential Republic](#).*

# **Deport Republicans: A Practical Guide**

**By Chris Armitage**

**August 23, 2025**

They want mass deportations? Give them economic deportation. Blue states subsidize red states to the tune of hundreds of billions annually. Time to end it.

Massachusetts sends \$4,846 more per capita to the federal government than it receives. Kentucky takes \$2.61 for every dollar it sends. Blue states are funding their own oppression. The solution is simple: stop.

Start with federal tax resistance. Not individual but institutional. California's franchise tax board "accidentally" delays federal transfers. New York's banking system develops "technical difficulties" processing federal revenues. Illinois has "compatibility issues" with IRS systems. Make the federal government sue for every dollar.

The leverage here is extraordinary. California alone sends over \$500 billion annually to the federal government. New York adds another \$300 billion. These aren't just numbers on a spreadsheet. This is the federal government's operating cash. Delay it by a month? The Treasury starts bouncing checks. Delay it by a quarter? Federal agencies shut down. The government can sue, sure. But lawsuits take years. Meanwhile, every delayed payment triggers another crisis, every technical difficulty requires weeks of troubleshooting, every system incompatibility needs months of expert review. Problems cascade into catastrophes while lawyers argue about jurisdiction.

Meanwhile, states that are actually interested in running functioning governments, are free to do so.

The leverage isn't in transferring money, it's in the infrastructure. Every federal tax payment runs through banks, and most banks are state-chartered. Blue state banking regulators could require "enhanced security reviews" for all federal transactions. New York controls SWIFT and ACH systems that process federal payments. California's tech companies run the payment platforms. Illinois hosts the commodity exchanges.

Imagine if blue state systems developed simultaneous "compatibility issues" with federal payment processing. Or if state-chartered banks needed to "verify compliance" for every transaction involving federal agencies. The IRS can't function without state cooperation, they need state tax records for audits, state DMV data for collections, state banking systems for processing. Make that cooperation contingent. Make it slow. Make it repetitive. Make it hurt.

The beauty is plausible deniability. It's not refusal, it's incompetence. Sorry, our systems are from 1987. Sorry, we're upgrading our security protocols. Sorry, new compliance measures require manual review of every transaction. So sorry. Republicans weaponized bureaucratic obstruction for decades. They turned administrative delay into an art form. Use their masterpiece against them.

We can go so much further than finances.

Texas criminalizes reproductive healthcare? Their medical licenses become void in California. Florida persecutes doctors for treating trans kids? They can't practice in New York. Red state medical schools lose accreditation partnerships. Their residency programs lose access to blue state hospitals.

Their doctors can't get specialty training at Johns Hopkins or Mayo Clinic. Make the medical brain drain official: if you practice in a state that criminalizes healthcare, you can't practice in states that protect it. Let red state governors explain why their best doctors are fleeing and their medical students can't match at top residencies. Meanwhile, blue states fast-track licensing for any doctor fleeing prosecution for providing actual medical care.

Conservatives have spent decades demonizing blue states while leeching off our functioning economies and infrastructure. This must end.

Republicans have been ignoring federal law for decades. Texas kept its abortion bounty system running while courts declared it unconstitutional. They tweaked a few words and reissued the same law. Alabama ignored Supreme Court orders on redistricting and drew new discriminatory maps anyway. Wisconsin Republicans stripped gubernatorial powers during lame duck despite court challenges. Florida keeps banning books despite clear First Amendment violations. Their response to losing in court? Do it again tomorrow with slightly different wording.

Here's how it actually works: A court strikes down Texas's six-week abortion ban. Texas passes a new one at seven weeks. That gets struck down? Make it heartbeat-based. Then fetal pain. Then genetic abnormality. Each law takes months to challenge, years to litigate. By the time one reaches the Supreme Court, five more are already in effect.

The courts literally cannot keep pace. SB 8 created the bounty system where citizens sue each other, making the state impossible to sue. When courts said that was unconstitutional, Texas tweaked the standing requirements and passed it again. Then again. Then Idaho, Oklahoma, Missouri, Tennessee, and Florida copied it. Now there are dozens of versions across multiple states, all slightly different, all requiring separate lawsuits.

Alabama perfected malicious compliance. Courts ordered them to create a second majority-Black district. They drew one that was 40% Black and called it "majority-minority." The courts said try again. They made it 42%. This went on for two years. Meanwhile, elections happened under illegal maps.

Even when finally forced to comply, the damage was done. The illegal maps had already been used. Representatives had already been elected. Power had already been seized.

The cheat code is this: enforcement requires cooperation. When states refuse to cooperate, the federal government has surprisingly few options. They can sue, but suits take years. They can withhold funding, but blue states give more than they take. They can send federal agents, but states control the infrastructure those agents need. Republicans discovered you can just say no. No, we won't follow that ruling. No, we won't change the law. No, we won't stop. What are you going to do, invade Texas?

The strategy isn't one big dramatic stand. It's flooding the zone. Pass ten unconstitutional laws while courts review one. Implement fifty illegal policies while they litigate five. By the time a judge rules, you've already moved on to the next violation. Texas has perfected this: abortion bans, bounty systems, border walls, book bans, trans persecution, all running simultaneously. The legal system can't keep up. That's the point.

Even when they lose, they don't comply. The Supreme Court ordered Alabama to draw fair districts. Alabama submitted racist maps again. The consequences? Nothing. Texas was told their abortion ban violated federal law. They made it more extreme. What happened? Zero accountability. The lesson is clear: just do what you want. Make MAGA-stan stop us. That's how you stand up to bullies.

This isn't a schoolyard, we don't have someone to run to about the bully. Nobody is going to save us from the absolute insanity. Except us.

Think blue states don't have the stomach to defy federal law? We already did. Every dispensary in California is proof that states can tell the federal government to fuck off. We just need to start doing it for democracy, not just drugs. Marijuana is Schedule I federally, in the same category as heroin. Yet 41 states legalized it anyway. They licensed dispensaries, collected billions in taxes, created entire regulatory frameworks while the DEA insisted it was illegal. The federal government could raid every dispensary tomorrow. They don't. They can't. State non-cooperation made federal drug law meaningless.

The Second Amendment sanctuary movement went further. Nearly half of U.S. counties have declared federal gun laws don't apply. Sheriffs openly refuse ATF cooperation.

Wyoming made it a state crime to enforce federal gun restrictions. Missouri sued federal agents who tried. The federal government backs down every time.

The playbook exists. Flood the zone. Pass everything at once. Because we are fighting for actual freedom. Freedom of speech, religion, and due process, bodily autonomy, collective bargaining, and truly so many other things people take for granted.

We can pass laws to protect all the freedoms Republicans hate, all simultaneously. Make them sue to stop each one. While they're in court over healthcare, pass consumer protections. While they challenge that, start the wealth tax. Never stop. Never comply. Just keep governing.

They wanted mass deportation.

We can deport them from the functioning economy.

*Chris Armitage is the author of the Substack blog [The Existential Republic](#).*



# **Blue States Have 90 Days to Kill American Fascism. Here's How.**

**By Christopher Armitage**

**September 2, 2025**

\*Note: This article advocates for legal actions including state prosecution of federal crimes, constitutional enforcement, and lawful withholding of federal funds by states exercising their sovereign rights.\*

Donald Trump hasn't been seen in public for a week. He is 79 years old, obese, and suffering from chronic health conditions. The actuarial reality is straightforward. When he dies, JD Vance will inherit the machinery of American authoritarianism through the 25th Amendment. This is not speculation. This is the constitutional mechanism, and it works equally well for legitimate and illegitimate transfers of power.

There is, however, something the Republican regime does not want you to understand. Trump's death, or even its approach, creates an increasingly intense period of constitutional uncertainty that states can exploit. Not after he dies. Now. While succession remains unclear and the regime remains unstable.

Article VI of the Constitution requires all officials to swear an oath to the Constitution itself, not to any president. Violating this oath constitutes a crime under state law. New York Penal Law § 195.00 criminalizes official misconduct. California Penal Code § 182 covers conspiracy. Illinois Criminal Code 720 ILCS 5/33-3 addresses the same violations. These are state crimes. Presidential pardons do not apply.

Every Fortune 500 company depends on state corporate charters. Delaware charters 68% of them. New York charters most major banks. California charters the technology companies. State attorneys general can revoke these charters for corporations that enable authoritarianism. They can freeze business licenses. They can prosecute executives who live in their states for corporate crimes committed anywhere.

The federal government's ability to function depends entirely on state cooperation. The IRS employs only 78,000 people to cover 330 million Americans. Without state tax agencies sharing information and coordinating collection, federal taxation becomes impossible.

History shows us exactly how this works. In 1832, South Carolina nullified federal tariffs. Jackson threatened military force. South Carolina prepared its militia. Jackson blinked. The tariffs were reduced. In the 1850s, Northern states nullified the Fugitive Slave Act through non-cooperation. Wisconsin's legislature declared it void. Vermont passed laws making federal enforcement impossible within its borders. Federal marshals could not operate without local support. The law became unenforceable. In 2013, states nullified

federal marijuana laws. The DEA lacked resources to raid every dispensary. Federal law became meaningless where states refused cooperation.

This is how American tyranny dies. Not through violence but through legal friction at every level of government. Not through waiting for federal institutions to self-correct but through states refusing to cooperate with unconstitutional authority.

Consider what blue states actually control right now. California Controller Malia Cohen oversees \$320 billion in annual cash flow. New York Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli controls \$250 billion. Illinois Comptroller Susana Mendoza manages \$90 billion. Together, these three officials alone control over \$650 billion in leverage.

Blue states possess another form of leverage that terrifies the federal government. California sends \$83 billion more to Washington than it receives back. New York sends \$22 billion more. Illinois sends \$14 billion more. This money flows through state treasurers who can redirect it.

These officials can suspend information sharing with the IRS. They can redirect federal tax withholdings to escrow accounts pending constitutional compliance reviews. They can delay federal fund transfers while conducting legitimacy audits. State treasurers can shift pension investments away from federal bonds. They can refuse participation in federal programs requiring matching funds. They can establish state banks that bypass the Federal Reserve system.

We must act now and we must act together.

Your state legislature has the power to declare specific federal actions null and void within state borders. They can prohibit state and local officials from enforcing federal directives they deem unconstitutional. This is not secession. This is exercising our rights.

Republican governors have already shown how this works. In 2021, when Texas and Florida enacted their own immigration enforcement policies and dared the Biden administration to stop them, they forced the feds into reactive mode. Abbott and DeSantis essentially said "fucking sue us" and won. Every state that acted first and made Democrats play defense controlled the narrative. The ones who asked for federal permission first got nowhere.

Act first. Make them sue. That's how you win.

State legislatures can pass resolutions declaring unconstitutional federal actions void. They can prohibit cooperation with federal agencies operating outside constitutional bounds. They can direct state attorneys general to prosecute federal officials for oath

violations. They can order state treasurers to prepare for financial autonomy.

When Trump's death is announced, and actuarial tables suggest this will be soon, every blue state governor will still control their National Guard. Every blue state attorney general will still have prosecutorial power. Every blue state treasurer will still control billions in leverage. They will either use these powers immediately or roll over and show their bellies to the technocrats and oligarchs.

The succession crisis creates maximum leverage. Before Republicans fully consolidate power. Before the new regime stabilizes. While federal authority remains uncertain. This is when states must move.

We do not need millions in the streets. We need 50 state officials doing their constitutional duty. We need 100 prosecutors filing charges. We need 1,000 legislators passing nullification laws. We need 10,000 citizens making phone calls to demand this happen.

The prosecutors, comptrollers, treasurers, and attorneys general who can execute these strategies have names and phone numbers. They are not used to receiving thousands of calls from the public. When they do, it will absolutely get their attention. You have that power in your hand at this very second.

Manhattan DA Alvin Bragg can prosecute federal officials for state crimes at (212) 335-9000. Los Angeles DA Nathan Hochman has the same power at (213) 257-2000. Cook County State's Attorney Eileen O'Neal Burke can do it at (312) 603-1880.

California Controller Malia Cohen, who controls that \$320 billion in annual cash flow, can be reached at (916) 445-2636. New York Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, with his \$250 billion in leverage, is at (518) 474-4044. Illinois Comptroller Susana Mendoza and her \$90 billion are at (217) 782-6000.

California Treasurer Fiona Ma can redirect federal funds at (916) 653-2995. Illinois Treasurer Michael Frerichs has the same power at (217) 782-2211.

Delaware Attorney General Kathy Jennings can revoke corporate charters at (302) 577-8500. New York Attorney General Letitia James can freeze business licenses at (800) 771-7755. California Attorney General Rob Bonta can prosecute executives at (916) 445-9555.

Your state legislators can be found at [congress.gov/state-legislature-websites](https://congress.gov/state-legislature-websites). They need to hear these specific demands: prosecution of federal officials for oath violations, suspension of federal tax cooperation, introduction of nullification resolutions,

preparation for financial autonomy, and investigation of corporations enabling authoritarianism.

These are not suggestions. These are constitutional duties that state officials are currently failing to perform. They will continue to fail unless citizens demand action.

Trump is a dying 79-year-old grifter whose regime depends entirely on state cooperation. But states will only act if citizens force them to act. The Constitution provides the tools. The phone numbers are listed above. The legal authorities are specified.

Stop waiting for permission. Stop expecting self-correction. Start demanding that state officials use their existing constitutional powers. Before the succession is complete. While the window remains open.

The moment is now. We act or accept permanent authoritarian rule. The tools exist. Let's use them.

*Chris Armitage is the author of the Substack blog [The Existential Republic](#).*

## **5 Phone Calls Can Stop American Fascism. Here Are the Numbers.**

**By Christopher Armitage**

**September 2, 2025**

Politicians have a secret math they don't want you to know. Something that is an open secret in politics was shared with the public by former congressional staffers who wrote the Indivisible Guide, here's how they actually count your complaints:

One phone call = 100-1,000 angry voters

One personal email = 10-50 voters

One form letter = maybe 1 voter, if they even count it

This is the economy of political pressure. The Congressional Management Foundation found that individualized contact influenced 94% of congressional offices on undecided issues. Mass email campaigns? 18%. Petitions? Worthless.

But here's the secret that changes everything: state officials are sitting ducks.

State Comptrollers generally receive 5-10 constituent calls per month. State Treasurers? Many have never experienced a coordinated campaign. District Attorneys? Only hear from victims and lawyers, not voters. State Legislators? They average 20-30 contacts per week

The magic happens at these thresholds:

10 calls in an hour = staff notices. 50 calls in a day = emergency meeting. 100 calls in a day = office shuts down to handle it. 500 calls in a week = policy change consideration. 1,000 calls = historical precedent shows this forces action

Academic research from Michigan State University found constituent contact increases legislator support probability by 12-20%. The Net Neutrality campaign's 1.3 million calls changed federal policy. The ACA defense campaign's 6,000 calls prevented repeal. At the state level, you need 100x fewer calls for the same impact.

Critical: Form letters, petitions, and automated messages go straight in the trash. Personalized calls are exponentially more powerful, with some studies estimating the impact could be as much as 70x more effective. One real phone call outweighs hundreds of form messages.

### **Script for your District Attorney**

If you're in Manhattan: Call Alvin Bragg at (212) 335-9000. If you're in LA: Call Nathan

Hochman at (213) 257-2000. If you're in Cook County: Call Eileen O'Neal Burke at (312) 603-1880. Everyone else: Google "[Your County] District Attorney phone"

Say this: "Hello, I'm [name] from [zip code]. When federal agents arrest people at churches, schools, or hospitals, that's a state crime. When they force doctors to report pregnancies or miscarriages, that's a state crime. When they build religious registries, that's a state crime. Presidential pardons don't work on state crimes. I demand our DA prosecute any federal agent who violates our citizens' constitutional rights. Will you protect us or collaborate with people destroying American values?"

### **Script for your State Comptroller/Controller**

If you're in California: Call Malia Cohen at (916) 445-2636. If you're in New York: Call Thomas DiNapoli at (518) 474-4044. If you're in Illinois: Call Susana Mendoza at (217) 782-6000. Everyone else: Google "[Your State] Comptroller" or "Controller" or "Auditor"

Say this: "Hi, I'm [name] from [zip code]. You control our state's money. You have the power to suspend information sharing with the IRS. You can redirect federal tax withholdings to escrow accounts. You can delay federal fund transfers pending constitutional review. When Trump cuts our disaster relief or defunds our schools for teaching real history, you have the power to respond. Use that leverage today or admit you're too weak to fight authoritarianism."

### **Script for your State Treasurer**

If you're in California: Call Fiona Ma at (916) 653-2995. If you're in Illinois: Call Michael Frerichs at (217) 782-2211. Everyone else: Google "[Your State] Treasurer phone"

Say this: "I'm [name] from [zip code]. Trump is using our tax dollars to fund mass kidnapping operations, private militias rounding up families, and his personal Gestapo. He's already started raiding Social Security to pay for concentration camps. You control billions in our state pension funds that are currently in federal bonds. You're literally funding fascism. Every day you don't pull that money out, you're financing raids on churches, hospitals, and schools. You're paying for the vans that disappear people. You're funding his brownshirts. Pull every penny out now or explain to retirees why you used their retirement savings to build America's concentration camps. Move our money today or admit you're being complicit in America's destruction."

### **Script for your Attorney General**

If you're in California: Call Rob Bonta at (916) 445-9555. If you're in New York: Call Letitia James at (800) 771-7755. If you're in Delaware: Call Kathy Jennings at (302) 577-8500.

Everyone else: Google "[Your State] Attorney General phone"

Say this: "I'm [name] from [zip code]. Every corporation operating in our state needs your permission to exist. Tech companies are selling location data to bounty hunters and ICE. Pharmacies are sharing medical records with law enforcement in abortion investigations. CVS and Walgreens have already complied with warrants. Amazon Web Services is hosting Palantir's ICE targeting systems. Data brokers are selling location information of anyone who visits abortion clinics. This is documented. These aren't hypotheticals. This is happening now. These companies are choosing profits over our citizens' safety. You can revoke their business licenses. You can ban state contracts with any company that shares data for political prosecutions. So tell me: Will you strip their right to operate in our state for collaborating with fascism, or are you owned by the same corporations enabling these atrocities? Use your power now."

Impact: Democratic AGs have already filed 20+ coordinated lawsuits against federal overreach. When multiple states get similar calls, they coordinate responses.

### **Script for your State Legislators**

Find yours at: [openstates.org](https://openstates.org)

Say this: "I'm [name] from [district]. Federal agents are raiding schools and churches right now. They are tracking who visits abortion clinics through data brokers. They are prosecuting political enemies while pardoning violent criminals. They are using emergency powers to steal funds Congress allocated for disaster relief. They are building detention camps. They are surveilling journalists and protesters. This is happening today.

Pass nullification legislation this week. Declare federal raids at schools and churches void in our state. Make it a felony to enforce federal surveillance programs here. When they steal our disaster funds, have trigger laws already in place to automatically withhold our federal taxes. When they demand our pregnancy data, make compliance a crime. When they prosecute our citizens for peaceably assembling or exercising their freedom of speech, declare those prosecutions void and even better arrest those who are unlawfully arresting our residents.

Wisconsin's legislature declared the Fugitive Slave Act void. They didn't ask permission. Northern states made it a crime to enforce federal slave law. South Carolina nullified federal tariffs and forced Jackson to back down. States are successfully nullifying federal marijuana laws right now.

The Tenth Amendment gives you this power. The federal government is committing crimes against our citizens today. Pass trigger and nullification laws now."

The idea that this can actually make change isn't a fantasy. States have successfully defied federal authority throughout American history:

1832: South Carolina nullified federal tariffs. Jackson threatened military force. South Carolina prepared its militia. Jackson blinked. The tariffs were reduced.

1850s: Northern states nullified the Fugitive Slave Act. Wisconsin's legislature declared it void. Vermont passed laws making federal enforcement impossible. Federal marshals couldn't operate without local support. The law became unenforceable.

2013-Present: States nullified federal marijuana laws. The DEA lacks resources to enforce without state cooperation. Federal law became meaningless in legal states.

2017-2021: California passed sanctuary state laws limiting cooperation with ICE. Courts upheld these laws. Federal immigration enforcement became significantly harder.

2021-Present: Texas and Florida defied federal immigration policies, created their own border enforcement, bused migrants to blue cities, and sued the federal government repeatedly. They acted first and forced the federal government to react.

States that act first and dare the federal government to stop them usually win. States that ask permission first get nowhere.

Another important note, don't say "federal overreach." Say exactly what they're planning:

"Rounding up families at churches" "Tracking women's pregnancies" "Building Muslim registries" "Cutting off disaster relief over political affiliation" "Warrantless and illegal government agents kidnapping residents" "Forcing teachers and public servants to sign loyalty oaths to the President" "Kidnapping children and sending them unaccompanied by family to other nations" "Creating concentration camps" "Stealing our Social Security"

If You're in a Red State

Progressive policies win 67% of the time when separated from party branding. Add this to any script:

"The Tenth Amendment reserves powers to the states. Even conservative states have defied federal mandates they disagreed with. This isn't about party. It's about protecting our state's sovereignty against federal tyranny."



## **The 30-Second Nuclear Option**

If you're nervous or short on time, use this for any official:

"I'm [name] from [zip]. Trump's building concentration camps, tracking pregnancies, and dismantling free and fair elections. You have the power to stop this in our state. Will you use your constitutional authority to protect us? Yes or no?"

## **How to Maximize Your Impact**

Best times to call:

Tuesday-Thursday (avoid Mondays and Fridays). 10am-noon or 2pm-4pm local time. Avoid lunch hour (12-1pm). Morning crisis effect: 50 calls between 9-10am forces emergency meeting by 11am.

Triple your impact: After calling, immediately:

Email the same message (shows you're tracking). Post on social media that you called (triggers others). Call back in 3 days if no response (shows persistence).

The multiplier effect is real:

1 person posting they called = 5-10 others call. 10 people posting = 100+ calls. 100 people posting = thousands of calls.

## **Social Media Scripts to Share**

Twitter/X: "Just called [Official Name] at [Number]. They control [\$X billion/prosecutorial power/corporate charters] that could stop Trump today. They weren't expecting constituent calls. If 100 of us call, we force action. Here's what I said: [paste script]. Your turn. #StateResistance"

Facebook/Instagram: "Just called my state [comptroller/AG/treasurer]. They had no idea citizens knew about their constitutional powers. The staffer was shocked by the calls coming in. This is working. Call yours now: [paste relevant script and number]"

## **If They Deflect**

They say: "We need to review the legal options..." You say: "Other states have already used these powers. When will you?"

They say: "It's complicated..." You say: "It's not complicated. You have constitutional authority. Use it or admit you won't."

They say: "We're monitoring the situation..." You say: "I'm not asking you to monitor. I'm demanding you act in the interest of the people of (your location). Yes or no?"

If they hem and haw further, just say "noted, have a nice day" and hang up!

## **Document Everything**

Create a simple note outlining who you called. Date and time. Staffer name, asking for this always makes them nervous that if they don't take it seriously and it ends up getting their boss in trouble, they'll be the one who is blamed. Also document their response and when you'll call back.

Post it publicly: "Called [Official] at [time]. They said [response]. Calling back [date] if no action."

## **Why This Strategy Can Work**

The Constitutional Powers Are Real:

State officials can prosecute federal officials for state crimes (presidential pardons don't apply). State comptrollers can suspend cooperation with federal tax collection. State AGs can revoke corporate charters. State legislatures can nullify federal laws within their borders.

California, New York, and Illinois send \$119 billion more to DC than they receive back. These three states' comptrollers control \$650 billion in cash flow. Every Fortune 500 company depends on state charters to exist. The federal government cannot function without state cooperation.

The precedent is real. States have successfully nullified federal laws throughout history. Courts have upheld state sovereignty in numerous cases. The anti-commandeering doctrine prevents the federal government from forcing states to enforce federal law.

What is really incredible about this strategy, is that you're not calling Congress where 10,000 calls might not matter. You're calling state officials who never get this pressure. 100 calls will shut down their offices. 1,000 calls can force policy changes.

These officials have massive constitutional powers they've never been pressured to use.

History shows that states that resist first and forcefully usually win.

Trump is 79, obese, and in rapidly declining health. When he dies, Vance inherits everything. You have a narrow window to force your state to build the legal walls that protect democracy.

Make the calls. Today. This is how you force people to do their damn jobs and defend our rights.

*Chris Armitage is the author of the Substack blog [The Existential Republic](#).*

# **Republicans Broke Democracy. Here's How to Fix It Without Them.**

**Christopher Armitage**

**September 3, 2025**

In November 2023, Ohio Republicans watched in horror as 57% of their voters enshrined abortion rights in the state constitution. They'd gerrymandered themselves into bulletproof districts. They'd passed six-week bans and mandatory funerals for fetal remains. None of it mattered. The voters went around them.

In 2022, the Michigan legislature had killed voting rights bills for a decade. So 67% of voters passed them anyway. Missouri Republicans spent years blocking minimum wage increases. In 2018, voters gave themselves a raise without asking permission: 62% approved it. In South Dakota, the people legalized marijuana in 2020. The Republican governor sued her own constituents to stop it.

There's a pattern here that nobody's talking about: Republican legislatures across America have stopped representing their voters. The polling doesn't lie. Seventy percent support legal marijuana, 65% support higher minimum wages, 66% support expanded Medicaid. The legislatures kill it all anyway.

Without culture wars, Republicans have nothing. If the Democrats don't have a chance in your state, wildly popular policies still can.

Here's the overlooked mechanism: in half of America, you don't need your legislature's permission to pass laws.

Twenty-six states have initiative or referendum powers. Over 1,000 counties can pass ordinances that override state law until someone notices. In Jackson, Mississippi, residents just won municipal voting rights through ballot initiative after the Republican legislature tried to strip them.

Republicans spent forty years capturing state legislatures. Voters are making them irrelevant in a single election cycle.

This is how democracy actually works.

Look at what just happened in Ohio. The pharmaceutical lobby spent \$4.8 million convincing 150 state legislators to protect opioid distributors from lawsuits. It worked. The bill passed 91-6.

Then Dayton put the same question directly to voters: Should we be able to sue drug companies for the overdose crisis? The pharma lobby spent \$12 million trying to stop it.

They lost 74% to 26%.

It costs about \$50,000 to buy a state representative's vote through campaign donations, junkets, maybe a job for their kid. To buy 50,000 actual voters, you need \$5 million minimum. And even then, you usually lose.

With direct votes, these mega-corporations and oligarchs have to bribe all of us, rather than just the politicians.

In Phoenix, the state legislature banned plastic bag regulations. Tempe passed one anyway through citizen initiative. The state sued. While the lawyers fought, 200,000 tons of plastic stayed out of landfills. In Birmingham, when the Alabama legislature blocked minimum wage increases, the city passed one through referendum. Workers got eighteen months of \$15/hour before the courts stopped it. That's \$12,000 extra per worker that wouldn't exist if they'd waited for permission.

Every one of these victories started the same way: someone read their city charter. If your city or county doesn't allow it then start fighting for it.

Here's how Michigan did it. In 2018, Republicans controlled every branch of state government. They'd gerrymandered themselves into 64% of legislative seats with 47% of the vote. The democracy groups stopped playing their game.

They formed Voters Not Politicians. Collected 425,000 signatures in 110 days. Put redistricting directly on the ballot. The Republican legislature couldn't touch it. The governor couldn't veto it. It passed 61-39.

Then they did it again with voting rights in 2022. And again with abortion. Three cycles, three constitutional amendments, three massive victories. The Republican legislature is still in power. They're just irrelevant now.

It's a simple template, just check if your state has initiative powers. Twenty-six do. If not, check your city charter. Pick something that polls above 60%. Write it as a constitutional amendment, not a statute. Gather signatures. When you have 60% public support, you just need to get them to the polls.

The participatory budgeting experiment in Burnsville proves what happens when citizens take control. Since 2015, residents directly decide where \$1.2 million goes every year. The city council predicted disaster, that people would vote themselves tax breaks and defund everything.

Instead, they funded mental health crisis response teams. They created youth job

programs. They fixed sidewalks in poor neighborhoods that had been broken for twenty years. Turnout tripled. When surveyed, 89% of participants said they trusted their local government more as a result.

In Burnsville, they started with twelve people in a church basement. In Michigan, it was thirty people on a Zoom call. In Missouri, one retired teacher started the minimum wage petition from her kitchen table.

The myth is that changing laws requires lobbyists and PACs and political machines. We shouldn't have gatekeepers to how our communities are led. All you need is clipboards and Google Docs and people who are pissed enough to knock on doors.

When South Dakota voters legalized marijuana in 2020, Governor Kristi Noem sued her own constituents. She argued voters didn't have the constitutional right to pass constitutional amendments. The South Dakota Supreme Court, all Republican appointees, agreed. They voided the will of 54% of voters.

The Republican response to direct democracy is always the same: If they can't win, they change the rules.

In 2023, Ohio Republicans tried to raise the threshold for constitutional amendments from 50% to 60%, but only after abortion was polling at 57%. Voters killed that too, 57-43. In Missouri, the legislature tried to require initiatives to pass in five of eight congressional districts, districts they drew. It failed. In Arkansas, they quadrupled the signature requirements. In Florida, they banned paying signature gatherers.

Here's what they understand that Democrats don't: Direct democracy is an existential threat to minority rule.

Not every initiative wins. California's rent control lost. Ohio's marijuana legalization failed in 2015 before passing in 2023. But that's not the point. Republicans took fifty years to overturn Roe. They lost hundreds of cases, thousands of bills, and still kept coming. This is asymmetric warfare. Every initiative they have to fight costs them millions. Every city ordinance requires lawyers. Every ballot measure forces them to defend the indefensible in public. You don't have to win every battle. You have to make them fight on more fronts than they can handle.

Whoever wants it more gets to win the fight. We need freedom and justice more than they want tyranny and hate.

Look at what's already in motion. In Nebraska, organizers just submitted signatures for paid sick leave. It polls at 74%. In Arkansas, they're gathering signatures for a \$15

minimum wage. 68% support. In North Dakota, North fucking Dakota, they're pushing a marijuana initiative that polls at 64%.

If these pass, the dam breaks. Every red state with initiative powers will see organizers copy the template. Every purple suburb will realize they can override their gerrymandered legislature. Every blue city in a red state will start reading their charter.

The Republicans' forty-year project depends on controlling legislatures that don't represent their voters. Across the twenty-six states with initiative powers, voters can bypass those legislatures entirely.

As of August 2025, Republicans hold 55.5% of state legislative seats. If ten percent of the initiatives that poll above 60% actually make it to ballots, Republican state control becomes ceremonial.

They know it. That's why Idaho banned signature gathering at farmers markets. That's why Arizona requires signatures from all thirty counties. That's why Mississippi killed their entire initiative process after voters expanded Medicaid.

They're terrified you'll figure out what Michigan figured out: You don't need to win the legislature if you can ignore it.

If you live in one of Texas's 352 home rule cities like Austin, Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, or El Paso, your city charter allows citizen initiatives. You need signatures from 5% of voters or 20,000, whichever is smaller.

Texas state law aggressively preempts local control. They killed Denton's fracking ban in 2015 with HB 40. They'll kill your minimum wage increase too. But forcing them to publicly overturn popular policies has value. Make them sue their own cities. Make them explain why 70% of voters don't matter. Every override costs them political capital they can't afford to keep spending.

Cities and counties are where you have the most power and face the least resistance.

To pass a statewide initiative, you need hundreds of thousands of signatures. For a city referendum? Maybe 5,000. The oil lobby will spend \$50 million fighting statewide marijuana legalization. They might not even notice your city decriminalizing it until you've already won.

There are 19,000 cities and 3,000 counties in America. Republicans can't control them all. They can't sue them all. Pass your \$20 minimum wage. Implement it immediately. Make them come to court and explain why your voters can't have the raise they voted

for. Make them be the assholes ripping benefits from people's hands.

Make them play defense in a thousand places at once. Every lawsuit they file burns money and political capital. Death by a thousand cuts, and every cut has 70% support.

If you live in Phoenix, Tucson, Flagstaff, or Tempe, you have full initiative powers. The Arizona legislature keeps banning what cities can regulate: plastic bags, minimum wage, sick leave. Pass them all anyway. The lawsuits take years. The benefits start immediately.

If you live anywhere in Michigan, Ohio, Missouri, Arkansas, Nebraska, or Oklahoma, you can amend your state constitution. Your legislature is irrelevant. Pick your issue.

Here are some of the most impactful policies you could pass in the interest of preserving American freedom and justice:

Automatic voter registration passed through initiative in Oregon in 2015. Added 272,000 voters in year one. Michigan copied it. Then Nevada.

Extended early voting: Michigan's Proposal 2 in 2022 guaranteed nine days. Working-class turnout jumped 15%.

Restoration of voting rights: Florida voters restored rights to 1.4 million people with felony convictions in 2018. Passed 64-36.

Minimum wage to \$15 has never lost when put to voters. Not once. Even in deep red states, it pulls 55-65%. Missouri just passed another increase in 2024 with 58% support.

Paid sick leave passed in every city that's voted on it. Keeps restaurant workers from serving you while contagious.

Medicaid expansion passed in Missouri (53%), Oklahoma (51%), and would have passed in Mississippi if the state Supreme Court hadn't killed the entire initiative process to stop it.

Mental health crisis response: Denver's STAR program sends mental health professionals instead of cops to certain 911 calls. Crime down 34% in target areas.

Marijuana legalization passes at 60%+ in every state that's tried it. The template exists. The petition language is public.

Participatory budgeting is the sleeper. Thirty cities already do it. Your city council can't stop it if citizens petition for it. Start with 50% of the budget. Watch what happens.



The infrastructure already exists. The Participatory Budgeting Project has free toolkits. The Fairness Project will fund your minimum wage campaign. The Marijuana Policy Project has petition templates for every state. Ballotpedia tracks every local charter.

You don't need permission. You don't need a nonprofit. You need a clipboard and whatever makes you angriest about your legislature.

In Jackson, Mississippi, the Blackest city in America, in the reddest state in America, residents just used ballot initiatives to restore the voting rights their Republican legislature tried to strip. They won 73-27.

If Jackson can tell Mississippi Republicans to fuck themselves, what's your excuse?

Picture what happens when ten cities do this simultaneously.

The headlines write themselves: "Arizona Cities Defy Republican Legislature." "Medicaid Expansion Wins Where Democrats Couldn't." "Voters Override Gerrymandered Majority."

Now every organizer in every red state sees the proof. The template spreads to Texas, where Austin organizers are already gathering signatures. To Tennessee, where Nashville wants its city council back. To Florida, where Miami groups are reading their charter for the first time.

Republicans understand this. It's why they're desperately trying to kill initiative processes state by state. They know their entire model depends on gerrymandering districts, ignoring voters, passing unpopular laws, and blaming Democrats for not stopping them. The model collapses the second voters realize they can bypass the middleman.

But you don't need your representatives to do all of this. You need your neighbors, a clipboard, and the municipal charter.

They broke democracy by buying the referees. So we're changing the game.

Check your state at Ballotpedia. Find out what powers you have. The next election in most states is November 2025. Signature deadlines are typically 90-120 days before.

Let's get after it.

*Chris Armitage is the author of the Substack blog [The Existential Republic](#).*

**Upgrade Your Activism:  
The Evidence-Based Path from Protest to Power  
Christopher Armitage  
September 9, 2025**

I know activists who have protested every American military action since the Korean War. They've spent decades hitting the streets to try and end needless death and destruction. Their moral determination is powerful, and they've kept resistance alive when others surrendered to apathy.

And yet, if we're honest with each other, America has still fought every war the public opposed. We marched. We chanted. And the wars continued.

This isn't about wasted time or questioning anyone's commitment. These protests mattered, they built community, preserved moral witness, and showed that not everyone consented to violence. But it is a statement of statistical fact: disorganized street protests, the default mode of American resistance, demonstrably do not topple regimes or force systemic change. The forces we're fighting, defense contractors with billion-dollar budgets, lobbyists who write the laws, and politicians who profit from perpetual war, don't lose sleep over our marches. The data is unambiguous that isolated demonstrations, regardless of size, rarely achieve their stated political goals when confronting entrenched power backed by unlimited money.

The research I'm citing focuses primarily on regime change and major policy shifts. Protests can serve other vital functions like building community, shifting discourse, and demonstrating solidarity. But if your goal is systemic change, then read on.

Thankfully, we know what does work.

Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan compiled rigorous data from 323 major resistance campaigns between 1900 and 2006. Their research revealed the specific mechanisms that transform moral outrage into political victory. They documented which tactics succeed, which fail, and most importantly, why.

The difference between movements that change history and those that become footnotes isn't passion or righteousness. It's strategic competence. And strategy can be learned.

Let's establish our premises clearly. Political power rests on pillars of support including military, economic elites, civil servants, media, and other institutions that enable governance. Governments change behavior when the cost of maintaining the status quo exceeds the cost of reform. Street protests alone rarely impose sufficient costs or

remove pillars of support.

This isn't speculation. Omar Wasow's 2020 study used rainfall as a natural experiment, since bad weather randomly reduced protest attendance, allowing researchers to establish causation. His finding was that nonviolent civil rights protests were far more effective when they weren't just marches. The successful protests were part of sustained campaigns involving economic boycotts, sit-ins, and systematic civil disobedience.

Consider Occupy Wall Street. At its peak, it had encampments in 951 cities across 82 countries. It dominated media coverage for months. It shifted public discourse on inequality. Yet it achieved zero concrete policy changes. Why? Because it refused to move beyond occupation to the tactics that actually threaten power. That means sustained economic disruption, systematic non-cooperation, and parallel institution building.

Contrast this with the Montgomery Bus Boycott. For 381 days, Black residents who comprised 75% of bus riders refused to use public transportation. The city lost money daily. Bus drivers faced layoffs. Downtown businesses saw revenue collapse. Broad strategic and legally damaging tactics ultimately led to powerful system wide desegregation.

The mechanism is straightforward, that protests express dissent, but power concedes only when its fundamental interests are threatened. The fact is, corporations and organizations know when their actions will be unpopular and result in marches. They anticipate it and are entirely prepared for it. They know the strategies and are unconcerned when they know where we will be and how to manage it.

The 3.5% action number from Chenoweth and Stephan's research has been quoted often. However, that 3.5% doesn't mean getting 3.5% to show up for a single action. It means 3.5% of the population actively participates in a sustained campaign over approximately three years. Chenoweth is explicit: "The campaigns need to be able to have more than just protests; there needs to be a lot of variation in the methods they use."

The media widely misrepresented this research, in a sort of "congratulations, 3.5% of the country protested against Trump today. Research shows that you have now defeated fascism and can go home and stay there!"

Gene Sharp documented 198 methods of nonviolent action. Successful campaigns use dozens simultaneously. These include economic boycotts and strikes, tax resistance, alternative institutions, civil disobedience, social non-cooperation, and parallel governance structures.

The Serbian Otpor movement that toppled Milošević understood this. They began with low-risk tactics like graffiti, street theater, and pranks that many could join. They gradually escalated to strikes, boycotts, and parallel institutions. When they finally called for mass demonstrations, they had already eroded the regime's pillars of support.

The 3.5% threshold works because it triggers what social scientists call a "coordination cascade." When people see enough others resisting, the perceived risk drops below the perceived benefit.

But reaching 3.5% sustained participation requires infrastructure most American movements lack.

Politicians can ignore protests. They cannot ignore economic hemorrhaging. The United Farm Workers' grape boycott reduced grape sales by 20% nationally. Grocery chains dropped contracts. Growers negotiated because they had no choice.

The key insight is that economic disruption must be sustained and targeted. One-day strikes are symbolic. Indefinite strikes that halt production force negotiation. This requires strike funds to support participants, alternative food distribution networks, community mutual aid systems, and clear demands tied to specific concessions.

The South African anti-apartheid movement understood this. Black workers continued earning paychecks from white businesses but boycotted white products. After months of devastating losses, business elites forced the government to negotiate.

Isolated movements fail where connected movements succeed. The civil rights movement won because it united Black churches, labor unions, student organizations, and white liberal groups. Churches provided meeting spaces and moral authority. Unions brought economic leverage and organizing experience while students supplied energy and risk tolerance. Liberal allies offered legal expertise and media connections.

Building coalitions requires what veteran organizer Jane McAlevey, who has successfully unionized thousands of workers, calls "whole worker organizing." This means engaging people through their multiple identities and interests, not just their political beliefs. A person might not join as an activist but will join as a parent concerned about schools, a worker seeking dignity, or a congregation member following their faith.

Horizontal, leaderless movements generate initial energy but cannot sustain pressure or negotiate victories. Occupy refused to designate representatives or articulate demands. When politicians asked, "What do you want?" no one could answer authoritatively.

Successful movements require clear command structures for tactical decisions,

designated negotiators with defined authority, formal processes for ratifying agreements, leadership development pipelines, and institutional memory preservation.

The Montgomery Improvement Association, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee provided this infrastructure for the civil rights movement. Without them, Birmingham and Selma would have been isolated incidents rather than catalysts for federal legislation.

Repeating the same tactic breeds habituation. Authorities adapt, the media loses interest, and participants burn out.

Successful campaigns follow an escalation ladder:

- Consciousness raising through education and small meetings

- Coalition building to connect organizations

- Demonstrations of resolve through initial protests

- Economic pressure via boycotts and strikes

- Civil disobedience by breaking unjust laws en masse

These tactics ultimately lead to security forces and elites recognizing the power dynamic shifting and joining the side that seems most likely to win. That should be us.

Each stage builds on the previous. Skipping steps usually fails. Jumping to civil disobedience without economic pressure lacks leverage. Mass protests without prior organizing become one-day events.

Several American organizations understand and implement these principles:

Momentum Community trains organizers in combining structure-based organizing with mass mobilization. They've trained leaders from Black Lives Matter, Sunrise Movement, and #MeToo.

Beautiful Trouble provides tactical resources, training, and strategy consultation. Their toolbox includes detailed guides for over 200 tactics with case studies of success and failure.

Training for Change offers intensive workshops on direct action, strategy, and campaign planning. Founded by Movement for a New Society veterans who helped topple multiple

authoritarian regimes.

Midwest Academy teaches comprehensive organizing skills: power mapping, campaign strategy, coalition building, and negotiation. They've trained organizers who've won hundreds of local and state campaigns.

The Ayni Institute specializes in mass protest techniques that trigger moments when political weather changes and previously impossible reforms become inevitable.

United Vision for Idaho demonstrates state-level implementation, combining electoral organizing, legislative advocacy, and direct action to block extremist legislation in a red state.

Your immediate actions this week should be to start connecting with these organizations. Assess your tactical diversity. If you're only using 3 to 5 tactics from Sharp's list of 198, you're under-equipped.

Over the next month, attend a training. Momentum offers monthly online sessions. Beautiful Trouble has free webinars. Build your bench. You need 10 committed organizers for every 100 participants. Start recruiting and training now. Establish strike funds and mutual aid networks, because economic tactics require economic support.

The evidence is unambiguous. Spontaneous, disconnected, tactically limited protests do not topple regimes or force systemic change. What does work is strategic, sustained, multi-tactical campaigns with disciplined nonviolence, economic leverage, and organizational infrastructure. This is verified by the largest dataset of resistance campaigns ever assembled.

The oligarchs and authoritarians you're fighting understand this. They've spent 50 years building infrastructure, taking local positions, and executing long-term strategy. They didn't achieve their goals through righteous anger. They achieved them through patient, strategic, coordinated action.

Your opponents are counting on you to remain disorganized, reactive, and tactically limited. They're counting on you to exhaust yourself with symbolic protests that threaten nothing.

But we have a choice because the tools exist, the knowledge is available, and the organizations are ready to train us.

It's time to start toppling some tyrants.

**Democratic Governors Can Arrest ICE Agents.  
What Are They Waiting For?  
Even failed prosecutions would force federal agents  
to think twice before breaking down doors.**

**Christopher Armitage  
September 28, 2025**

Here's what you can do today:

Call your governor or attorney general and say exactly this: "Federal agents are committing state felonies including burglary, kidnapping, and assault. File criminal charges now. If local law enforcement refuses to do their jobs then they can be fired or arrested. We elected you to protect us. Do it. If you don't take this seriously then expect us to begin contacting all of your donors to ask if they are aware of your compliance."

Author's Note: I released this previously and have since updated the article to include more details on the Supremacy Clause and methods for encouraging action to defend public safety, Constitutional rights, and human rights.

Republicans prosecute doctors for providing healthcare. They usually lose in court. But doctors stop providing care anyway. That's the point.

Democrats could use the same strategy against ICE agents who break into homes without real warrants, if they can muster the courage. The legal authority exists and the infrastructure is ready. Now it is our duty to demand it from the people who hold that power.

Here's what you need to know: Federal agents are committing state felonies every day. Breaking and entering. Kidnapping. Assault. When they kick down doors without judicial warrants, when they detain citizens without probable cause, when they point guns at children, these are crimes under state law. And Democratic governors have the power to prosecute those crimes.

They just need to understand an absolutely essential point.

Winning isn't the point. Fighting is.

This is asymmetric legal warfare: using the courts to fight back when you're outgunned. Republicans mastered it years ago. They prosecute doctors in Texas knowing federal courts will eventually overturn the convictions. Doesn't matter. The prosecutions achieve their goal: doctors stop performing abortions rather than risk arrest.

The same dynamic would work here. When ICE agents face potential state prosecution for breaking down doors, they'll start getting real warrants signed by real judges. When pointing guns at families could mean assault charges, they'll think twice. When detaining U.S. citizens could mean kidnapping prosecutions, they'll check IDs more carefully.

The goal is creating institutional friction, making every raid slower, more cautious, more legally careful. Every agent wondering "Could I get arrested for this?" is an agent who might not trample someone's rights. Federal agents will claim Supremacy Clause immunity, basically arguing that states can't touch them because they work for the federal government. They are wrong. That immunity only protects lawful acts. Nobody is above the law. The more states realize this, the more we can fight back against the Republican hostile takeover.

The Supreme Court made this clear in *In re Neagle* in 1890. Federal officers must be acting within their authority AND their actions must be "necessary and proper." When they exceed either boundary, they become common criminals under state law.

The critical fact is that ICE's administrative warrants, Forms I-200 and I-205, are signed by ICE officers, not judges. They're glorified paperwork. Federal courts have repeatedly ruled these don't authorize home entries. ICE's own training materials admit agents "must obtain voluntary consent" before entering homes with these papers.

So when ICE breaks down a door with only administrative paperwork, that's burglary under California Penal Code 459. When they haul away citizens without probable cause, that's kidnapping under Penal Code 207. When they point weapons at unarmed families, that's assault under Penal Code 245.

Factually, Trump can't pardon state crimes. The president's pardon power only covers federal offenses. State prosecutions are completely beyond MAGA reach.

Every prosecution, even one that ultimately fails, forces change. ICE agents would need personal lawyers. Federal defense attorneys won't automatically represent them on state charges. That's thousands of dollars from their own pockets, or the law enforcement union, win or lose. During prosecution, agents become cautious. Operations slow. Every agent wonders if they're next. Supervisors second-guess tactics. The entire machinery of deportation grinds slower.

Discovery proceedings, the part where ICE has to hand over internal emails and training documents, would expose their real policies. What are they telling agents behind closed doors? What corners are they instructing them to cut? Public scrutiny changes behavior even without convictions.



Media coverage shifts the narrative. Instead of “ICE enforces immigration law,” headlines read “ICE agents arrested for breaking and entering.” Public opinion matters, even to federal agencies.

This isn’t theoretical. When the Ninth Circuit initially allowed Idaho to prosecute an FBI sniper after the Ruby Ridge incident in 1992, the case dragged on for years. The agent was never convicted, but FBI rules of engagement changed dramatically. The threat of prosecution worked.

The precedent goes back even further. History proves that “failed” prosecutions can still achieve their goals. Before the Civil War, Northern states in the 1850s prosecuted federal marshals who captured escaped slaves. Wisconsin arrested marshals and charged them with assault and kidnapping. These prosecutions were eventually overturned by federal courts, but that wasn’t the point.

The prosecutions made federal slave-catching operations nearly impossible in some states. Marshals needed military escorts. Many refused to operate in hostile territory. The “failed” prosecutions raised the cost of enforcement so high that they helped precipitate the political crisis that ended slavery.

That’s the model here. Make immigration raids so legally fraught, so personally risky for agents, so politically expensive for the administration, that the entire apparatus of illegal public intimidation tactics becomes unsustainable.

The current situation demands this kind of action. Three American children, ages 2, 4, and 7, were deported to Honduras while their parents begged for help. The 4-year-old has Stage 4 cancer. ICE put a dying American child on a deportation flight rather than verify citizenship. Job Garcia, a U.S. citizen with a PhD, was arrested for filming an ICE raid at Home Depot. His crime? Exercising First Amendment rights. Federal agents threw him in a van for holding up a phone.

These aren’t isolated incidents. They’re patterns of lawlessness that demand state intervention. Job Garcia has a PhD and they threw him in a van for filming. George Retes served in Iraq and they detained him for three days. You think your citizenship protects you? It doesn’t. You think your veteran status matters? It doesn’t. When federal agents can break down doors without real warrants, none of us is safe.

This is how tyranny takes hold. Not all at once, but arrest by arrest, raid by raid, while we tell ourselves it’s happening to “them,” not us. Well, look around. The “them” already includes American veterans and American citizens exercising First Amendment rights. Who’s next? Anyone who protests? Anyone who votes wrong? Anyone reading this?

When federal agents operate without accountability, states must step in. That's federalism. That's the system working as designed. That's how we stop authoritarianism before it swallows all of us.

If Republicans will prosecute teachers for having books, if they'll arrest doctors for providing healthcare, if they'll charge parents for supporting their trans children, all while knowing they'll likely lose in court, why won't Democrats prosecute federal agents for actual crimes with actual victims?

The resources to begin this fight exist right now. California alone has everything needed to begin tomorrow: \$50 million allocated for immigration legal defense, 4,500 lawyers in the Attorney General's office, clear statutory authority to prosecute burglary, kidnapping, and assault, documented victims ready to testify, and video evidence of violations.

Thirteen Democratic attorneys general already declared federal agents must follow state law. Now enforce it.

States could even form an interstate compact for coordinated prosecution. Imagine California, New York, Illinois, and Massachusetts simultaneously filing charges against ICE agents who violate state law. Federal agents couldn't just avoid "hostile" states anymore. They'd face prosecution risks across half the country. The Constitution explicitly allows interstate compacts. Use them.

Every prosecutor knows this truth that sometimes you file charges not because you'll win, but because the defendant needs to know they can't act with impunity. Republican prosecutors understand this. They've weaponized it against the rest of America for decades. They turned "losing" prosecutions into winning strategies.

We don't have time to waste. Call every state and local official you can. Use the script. Contact them every day until they respond. Share this strategy. Document everything. Contact their top donors. Every politician can choose to fight for the people or become politically radioactive.

No more strongly worded letters.

Fighting at all is a victory, and we aren't interested in losing when the stakes are this damn high.