



February 14, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Calling on Congress to Act

Dear Leader Thune, Leader Schumer, Speaker Johnson, and Leader Jeffries:

The League of Women Voters of the United States (“the League”), along with our state affiliates in 50 states and the District of Columbia, write to express our strong concern about Congress’s abdication of its duty and authority under Article I of the US Constitution. We urge you to exercise your authority to protect the rule of law, defend the Constitution, and end the overreach by the executive branch of government, which is surely leading to harm for millions of Americans. We demand that you honor your oaths and protect your constituents.

Less than a month into his second term, President Trump has issued a series of executive orders (EOs) and directed actions that violate the law and encroach upon the authority of Congress as representatives of the American people. Of note, the Trump administration has, through wide-ranging executive actions, attempted to:

1. End birthright citizenship for all persons born in the United States;
2. Pause the distribution of federal funds already allocated to programs by Congress;
3. Dismantle federal agencies such as the US Agency for International Development (“USAID”) and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (“CFPB”), which require notice to and the input of Congress before such actions can be taken;
4. Allow private citizens, who have neither been elected or complied with the advice and consent requirement of the Senate, to access sensitive government systems; and
5. Attempt to reduce the federal workforce through unorthodox means that deny them due process.

These actions negatively affect American families and communities across the country.

The League is a 105-year-old nonpartisan, nonprofit membership organization whose mission is to ensure that everyone is represented in our democracy. We are a grassroots organization comprised of over one million members and supporters in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the US Virgin Islands, with more than 700 local and state Leagues. The League uses advocacy, education, litigation, and organizing to achieve our mission to empower voters and defend democracy. We base our work on our policy positions



developed out of multi-year studies and derived through consensus by League membership to ensure our advocacy reflects best practices and a nationwide perspective.

So far, the League has seen limited action or response from members of Congress to assert its constitutional authority under Article I to protect our system of checks and balances, the rights of Americans, or democracy itself. Congress must do its part to ensure that our great democracy is preserved and safeguarded. The outcry by Americans who are speaking out against the impact of the Executive Orders, including those who voted for President Trump, should be all that is needed for Congress to stand in its authority, legislate on behalf of the American people, and restore stability to the country.

Executive Overreach through Executive Actions

Presidents commonly use executive orders, but they must be issued lawfully within constitutional checks and balances. EOs direct executive branch agencies and staff to take or stop specific actions.¹ To be lawful and enforceable, an executive order *must* be rooted in either the president’s powers granted in the Constitution or a law passed by Congress.² Further, the authority of an EO is not final; federal courts can review an order to determine whether it is a valid exercise of the president’s power or violates the Constitution, federal law, or the fundamental rights of Americans.³

Without question, Article I of the US Constitution vests all legislative powers in Congress.⁴ Specifically, Article I, Section 9 grants Congress the power of the purse to approve spending in the federal budget in the Appropriations Clause, which reads in relevant part, “[n]o Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law.”⁵ The Constitution delegates the task of spending funds approved by Congress to the president, which requires the chief executive to “take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed.”⁶ Congress may allow the president discretion regarding *how* to implement the programs for which it appropriates money, but a president cannot decide *whether* to implement them. In other words, once Congress decides to spend money, the president cannot unilaterally substitute his judgment for that of Congress.⁷

President Trump has issued numerous EOs that are not rooted in any presidential power granted by Congress and violate both the US Constitution and federal law. These EOs directly threaten our democracy. They include, but are by no means limited to:

“Protecting the Meaning & Value of American Citizenship”⁸

This Executive Order attempts to end birthright citizenship for certain groups of children born in the United States. It would prohibit federal agencies from issuing documents recognizing the US citizenship of children who fall within certain categories. Yet birthright citizenship is a fundamental guarantee of the

¹ Eric Kashdan & Maha Quadri, Campaign Legal Center, *What are executive orders and how do they work?* (Jan. 31, 2025), <https://campaignlegal.org/update/what-are-executive-orders-and-how-do-they-work>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ U.S. Const. art. I, § 1.

⁵ U.S. Const. art. I, § 9.

⁶ U.S. Const. art. II, § 3.

⁷ As noted by Citizens for Responsibility & Ethics in Washington, Executive orders directing pausing or withholding funds already appropriated by Congress may violate the Impoundment Control Act, Pub. L. No. 93-344, 88 Stat. 297 (1974). Letter from CREW to the Honorable John Thune, et al. (Jan. 27, 2025), [https://www.citizensforethics.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Letter-to-Congress -Potential-Impoundment-Control-Act-Violations.pdf](https://www.citizensforethics.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Letter-to-Congress-Potential-Impoundment-Control-Act-Violations.pdf).

⁸ Presidential Actions, “Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship,” whitehouse.gov (Jan. 20, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-the-meaning-and-value-of-american-citizenship/>.



Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution, which ensures that anyone born in the United States is a citizen of this country and is guaranteed equal rights and protection of the law.

“Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity”⁹

This EO withdraws the longstanding Executive Order 11246 issued after the passage of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, which prohibited employment discrimination by federal contractors and subcontractors. This revocation has been interpreted as undermining the protections of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*.¹⁰ It is essential that all members of Congress use their bully pulpit to inform the public that the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* – and its protections against discrimination – remain in full effect.

1. “Reevaluating & Realigning United States Foreign Aid”¹¹
2. “Unleashing American Energy”¹²
3. “Protecting the American People Against Invasion”¹³
4. “Withdrawing The United States from The World Health Organization”¹⁴
5. “Putting America First in International Environmental Agreements”¹⁵

As outlined above, our system of constitutional checks and balances gives Congress the power of the purse, not the executive. The president has no authority to withhold funds through EOs without following the lawful process of communicating with Congress. Congress serves as a required check on the president’s overreach. The above EOs all pause, freeze, block, or restrict federal funds in some way, blatantly disregarding both congressional authority and constitutional requirements.

Challenge Actions of “Department of Government Efficiency”

In addition to unlawful, unsupported EOs, the Trump Administration has also deployed employees of the Department of Government Efficiency (“DOGE”), an unofficial government department, to several federal agencies in an attempt to access secure systems and data, including Treasury Department data.¹⁶ Unvetted DOGE employees who lack the proper security clearances can now enter the Treasury payment systems, which contain sensitive citizen and business data, prevent federal workers from entering their offices, and

⁹ Presidential Actions, “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity,” whitehouse.gov (Jan. 21, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-illegal-discrimination-and-restoring-merit-based-opportunity/>.

¹⁰ Russell Contreras & Emily Peck, *Trump rolls back bedrock civil rights measure in sweeping anti-DEI push*, Axios, Jan. 22, 2025, [Trump rolls back bedrock LBJ civil rights measure, orders anti-DEI probes](https://www.axios.com/2025/01/22/trump-rolls-back-bedrock-civil-rights-measure-orders-anti-dei-probes/).

¹¹ Presidential Actions, “Reevaluating & Realigning United States Foreign Aid,” whitehouse.gov (Jan. 20, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/reevaluating-and-realigning-united-states-foreign-aid/>.

¹² Presidential Actions, “Unleashing American Energy,” whitehouse.gov (Jan. 20, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/unleashing-american-energy/>.

¹³ Presidential Actions, “Protecting the American People Against Invasion,” whitehouse.gov (Jan. 20, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-the-american-people-against-invasion/>.

¹⁴ Presidential Actions, “Withdrawing The United States from The World Health Organization,” whitehouse.gov (Jan. 20, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/withdrawing-the-united-states-from-the-worldhealth-organization/>.

¹⁵ Presidential Actions, “Putting America First in International Environmental Agreements,” whitehouse.gov (Jan. 20, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/putting-america-first-in-international-environmental-agreements/>.

¹⁶ Fatima Hussein, *DOGE was tasked with stopping Treasury payments to USAID*, AP sources say, AP News, Feb. 6, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/treasury-doge-musk-read-only-access-489231c6db1a9f07fc68f9f08803f815>.



manipulate and stop payments to federal agencies like USAID, the CFPB, the US Department of Education, and others.¹⁷

Improper Removal of Independent Inspectors General

Further, on January 25, the Trump administration summarily fired 17 inspectors general at government agencies without giving Congress the 30-day notice required by federal law.¹⁸ The role of the inspectors general is to be an independent check against mismanagement and abuse of power while ensuring that programs and agencies are operating efficiently and effectively. With no inspectors general, there are no internal checks regarding the actions of DOGE in federal agencies or other attempts to institute abuses to the current systems.

Congress has the power and obligation to provide oversight of federal government actions, particularly when those actions ignore the due process required for federal workers and give unelected, unvetted third parties with significant conflicts of interest access to citizens' sensitive, private information. Congress's constitutional duty is to provide a check on the administration's weaponization of government against its own citizens. *All* of Congress, regardless of political affiliation, needs to stand in its authority.

Advocates and individuals who are directly harmed by the Trump administration's actions will and are already stepping forward to file lawsuits and seek redress from the judiciary branch.¹⁹ Indeed, more than 68 cases have been filed in the administration's first 26 days. But Congress *must* exercise its duty to check the executive's serious overreach. This appropriate exercise of congressional authority will reinforce the separation of powers doctrine and set the tone for the necessary executive and legislative negotiation that is required in a democratic nation.

While federal courts have enjoined the EOs on birthright citizenship, the firing of federal workers without due process, the freezing of federal funds, and DOGE's access to critical and sensitive Treasury Department data, action from Congress is critically missing. In its order against the Administration's granting of access to DOGE, the court noted that granting DOGE access to Treasury payment systems exceeds the statutory authority of the Treasury Department and violates both the Take Care Clause of the US Constitution and the separation of powers doctrine.²⁰ Yet shortly after this ruling, representatives of the Trump Administration are signaling that they may refuse to comply with court orders.²¹ Congress has the power of oversight but has yet to utilize its powers of checks and balances given to it by the US Constitution. This is unacceptable. Congress *must* step in.

As the representatives of every League affiliate in every US state and the District of Columbia and the League of Women Voters of the United States, the undersigned presidents of the League of Women Voters ask you to stand up for the American people. One of the founding principles of the League of Women

¹⁷ David Ingram, *Elon Musk and DOGE are hacking the government*, NBC News, Feb. 4, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/elon-musk-doge-usaid-treasury-government-rcna190450>.

¹⁸ Zeke Miller, et al., *Trump uses mass firing to remove independent inspectors general at a series of agencies*, AP News, Jan. 25, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-inspectors-general-fired-congress-unlawful-4e8bc57e132c3f9a7f1c2a3754359993>.

¹⁹ Just Security, *Litigation Tracker: Legal Challenges to Trump Administration Action* (last updated Feb. 5, 2025) (collecting cases filed), <https://www.justsecurity.org/107087/tracker-legal-challenges-trump-administration-actions/>.

²⁰ *New York v. Trump*, Order, Case 1:25-cv-01144-JAV, at 1-2 (Feb. 8, 2025), https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/attachments/press-docs/25cv1144%20Order%20on%20TRO%20%208%2025_0.pdf.

²¹ Jonathan Chait, *Trump signals he might ignore the courts*, The Atlantic, Feb. 10, 2025, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/02/trump-vance-courts/681632/>.



Voters is the belief that all powers of the US government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial. We strongly urge you to use your authority to uphold the rule of law, defend the Constitution, and put an end to the executive branch's overreach, which is undoubtedly causing harm to millions of Americans. The time to act in defense of your constituents is now.

We are happy to meet or talk to further discuss our position. Please do not hesitate to contact our staff via Jessica Jones Capparell, Director of Government Affairs, at JJones@lww.org, or Kristen Kern, Federal Policy and Advocacy Manager, at KKern@lww.org.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dianna Wynn".

Dianna Wynn, President
League of Women Voters of the United States

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Celina Stewart".

Celina Stewart, CEO
League of Women Voters of the United States

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Jones".

Kathy Jones, President
League of Women Voters of Alabama

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Sherif".

Sue Sherif, President Designee
League of Women Voters of Alaska

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pinny Sheoran".

Pinny Sheoran, President
League of Women Voters of Arizona

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bonnie Miller".

Bonnie Miller, President
League of Women Voters of Arkansas

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Carson".

Chris Carson, President
League of Women Voters of California



Irene R. Tynes, President
League of Women Voters of Colorado

Patricia A. Rossi, Co-President
League of Women Voters of Connecticut

Peggy Lampkin, MD; Co-President
League of Women Voters of Connecticut

Tiffany Lydon, President
League of Women Voters of Delaware

Barbara Zia, President
League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia

Cecile M. Scoon, Esq.; Co-President
League of Women Voters of Florida

Debbie Chandler, Esq.; Co-President
League of Women Voters of Florida

Nichola Hines, President
League of Women Voters of Georgia

Judith Mills Wong, Vice President
League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Betsy McBride, Co-President
League of Women Voters of Idaho

Jean Henscheid, Co-President
League of Women Voters of Idaho



Becky Simon, President
League of Women Voters of Illinois

Linda Hanson, President
League of Women Voters of Indiana

Holly Oppelt, Co-President
League of Women Voters of Iowa

Terese Grant, Co-President
League of Women Voters of Iowa

Martha Pint, President
League of Women Voters of Kansas

Jennifer A. Jackson, MD; President
League of Women Voters of Kentucky

M. Christian Green, President
League of Women Voters of Louisiana

Anna Kellar, Executive Director
League of Women Voters of Maine

Linda Kohn, President
League of Women Voters of Maryland



Courtney Rau Rogers, Co-President
League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

Marie Gauthier, Co-President
League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

Denise Hartsough, Co-President
League of Women Voters of Michigan

Paula Bowman, Co-President
League of Women Voters of Michigan

Laura Helmer, President
League of Women Voters of Minnesota

Peg Ciraldo, Co-President
League of Women Voters of Mississippi

Ruth O'Dell, Co-President
League of Women Voters of Mississippi

Marilyn McLeod, President
League of Women Voters of Missouri

Nancy Leifer, President
League of Women Voters of Montana

Claudia Stevenson, Co-President
League of Women Voters of Nebraska

Janelle Stevenson, Co-President
League of Women Voters of Nebraska

Barbara M. Wells, President
League of Women Voters of Nevada



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz Tentarelli".

Liz Tentarelli, President
League of Women Voters of New Hampshire

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer M. Howard".

Jennifer M. Howard, MD, MPH; President
League of Women Voters of New Jersey

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hannah Burling".

Hannah Burling, Co-President
League of Women Voters of New Mexico

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathleen Brook".

Kathleen Brook, Co-President
League of Women Voters of New Mexico

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy Rosenthal".

Nancy Rosenthal, President
League of Women Voters of New York

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer McMillan Rubin".

Jennifer McMillan Rubin, President
League of Women Voters of North Carolina

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Headrick".

Barbara Headrick, President
League of Women Voters of North Dakota

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jen Miller".

Jen Miller, Executive Director
League of Women Voters of Ohio



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynn Staggs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Lynn Staggs, President
League of Women Voters of Oklahoma

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Bentson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping loop at the end of the last name.

Lisa Bentson, President
League of Women Voters of Oregon

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amy Widestrom". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping loop at the end of the last name.

Amy Widestrom, Executive Director
League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nina P. Rossomando". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping loop at the end of the last name.

Nina P. Rossomando, Co-President
League of Women Voters of Rhode Island

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy L. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping loop at the end of the last name.

Nancy L. Williams, President
League of Women Voters of South Carolina

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Scott-Stoltz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping loop at the end of the last name.

Amy Scott-Stoltz, President
League of Women Voters of South Dakota

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debby Gould". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping loop at the end of the last name.

Debby Gould, President
League of Women Voters of Tennessee



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joyce LeBombard".

Joyce LeBombard, President
League of Women Voters of Texas

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katharine Biele".

Katharine Biele, President
League of Women Voters of Utah

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Racanelli".

Sue Racanelli, President
League of Women Voters of Vermont

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan E. Porte".

Joan Porte, President
League of Women Voters of Virginia

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Coltrane".

Mary Coltrane, President
League of Women Voters of Washington

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie Archer".

Julie Archer, President
League of Women Voters of West Virginia

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra Cronmiller".

Debra Cronmiller, Executive Director
League of Women Voters of Wisconsin

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Lockwood".

Nancy Lockwood, President
League of Women Voters of Wyoming