

# Local government authority overview



[As public trust in federal systems diminishes](#), people are looking to their local governments to solve challenges that originate at the national level and impact their communities.

## What local government attorneys can do

Whether it's repairing relationships between a community and its police, seeking protections against racial discrimination and wage theft in the workplace, or protecting voters seeking access to the ballot, governments at the state, local, and tribal levels can ensure its community's rights are protected. Here are a few ways local government attorneys protect the rule of law:

- **Advocacy:** From making public statements to proposing legislation, local government attorneys have the unique power to advocate for community interests.
- **Provide counsel:** Local government attorneys play a critical role in advising other government officials, whether elected or appointed. This ensures community interests are a priority and government offices are working effectively.
- **Enforcement:** Local government attorneys enforce laws in ways that support the interests of the communities who elected them, and can uphold or advance equity in doing so.
- **Recovering funds:** Local government attorneys can use the court system to recover money for groups that were harmed by corporations, landlords, or other entities. They also have the unique power to collect penalties for violations that can then be reinvested into public rights enforcement.
- **What local government attorneys can't do:** While local government attorneys can work for the greater good of a community, they are typically not permitted to represent an individual in the community.

## Key issue areas

- Environmental justice
- Financial services
- Housing
- Immigration
- Public health
- Workers' protections
- Voting rights

## How to advocate for local interests

Local government attorneys have a number of pathways to protect their communities, including:

**Affirmative litigation:** Take a proactive approach to enforcing laws already on the books or file suits against entities, like large corporations, that are abusing their power.

**Community outreach:** It's essential to understand challenges and harm through the lens of the people impacted by an issue. Collaborate with community-based organizations, local leaders, and individuals to gain deeper insight into impacts and causes.

**Legal advocacy partnerships:** By partnering with a legal advocacy nonprofit like Public Rights Project, government attorneys can tap into additional expertise and resources.

## Resources

- [Measuring and Amplifying the Social and Financial Impact of Affirmative Litigation](#)
- [Local Action, National Impact](#)
- [Public Rights Project Affirmative Leaders Fellowship](#)
- [PRP's Civil Rights Hub](#)
- [PRP Blog](#)

[Learn more at Public Rights Project.](#)