

# Protecting civil rights at the local level



As the federal government increasingly attacks long-standing civil rights protections, local governments are particularly well-positioned to protect their communities. The 10th Amendment preserves powers to the states and governments, but local jurisdictions have to take the necessary steps to implement and enforce policies.

## How can local government attorneys leverage their unique power to defend local interests

- **Promote policies that resist efforts to weaken civil rights:** Local government attorneys can lobby legislative bodies to implement policies in their jurisdictions. In some instances, local government officials can generate public support for an issue by using the media and making statements to oppose a harmful directive.
- **Fill the enforcement gap:** Core civil rights protections are at risk and unlikely to be enforced by the current federal government. Local (and state) governments can use their power to fill this enforcement gap, including by bringing lawsuits in more friendly states.
- **Defend existing federal regulations:** When federal rules come under attack in the federal courts, local government attorneys have the power to defend these policies rather than allow them to be easily defeated.
- **Extend the scope of court-ordered relief:** Local governments, particularly in red states, that join multi-state litigation have an opportunity to extend the scope of relief available through federal courts, protecting more people.

## 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](#)

## How to prepare for challenges or retaliation

- **Training:** Local government attorneys should strengthen their knowledge about the federal court system, the Administrative Procedure Act, and other technical issues to support challenges to federal policies.
- **Collaboration:** Local government attorneys can maximize their impact by coordinating with other government officials and national advocates on federal policy matters. Partnerships can yield deeper expertise and strategic legal responses, including litigation approaches.

## How Public Rights Project can help

From rapid response to complex litigation approaches, Public Rights Project offers a range of services specifically designed for local government attorneys, including:



**Litigation support:** We provide legal representation, organize amicus brief coalitions, and submit comments on behalf of local officials to challenge harmful regulations.



**Network building:** We convene jurisdictions to discuss policy developments, litigation updates, legal developments, and more.



**Training, technical assistance, and legal research:** We help local governments strengthen local policies, challenge federal actions, and uphold rights when federal protections are lacking.

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