

Public
Rights
Project

2025 Impact report

Helping local leaders use
government power for good

Letters from the CEO and board chair



This year was one of the most consequential years in recent memory — for our country, for local governments, and for Public Rights Project.

The second Trump administration hit the ground running with its authoritarian playbook, forcing local leaders to respond in full force to protect people and uphold civil rights. Our local government partners faced an extraordinary convergence of pressures: managing the day-to-day complexity of running diverse, dynamic cities while confronting unprecedented federal actions that upended the boundaries of law, precedent, and the Constitution itself.

Today, there's one thing I'm more confident of than ever: **Our cities are stronger when we stand together.**

Together, we have risen to challenges with clarity and courage. We have preserved

critical funding for housing, transportation, and disaster preparedness. We have stood firm in protecting people's safety and civil rights in the face of federal overreach around military use and immigration enforcement. And we have raised our voices — collectively and loudly — when the executive branch has sought to unilaterally eliminate constitutional protections.

At PRP, we have matched that energy with action. That means more cases and briefs filed, and a growing team that can fortify local leaders with the tools and support they need right now.

Looking at the work ahead, our national network has never been more ready to advance local power in service of the democracy we all deserve.

Jill Habig

Founder and CEO



The heroes in our state and local governments need backup more than ever. Public Rights Project is fighting on the front lines with them,

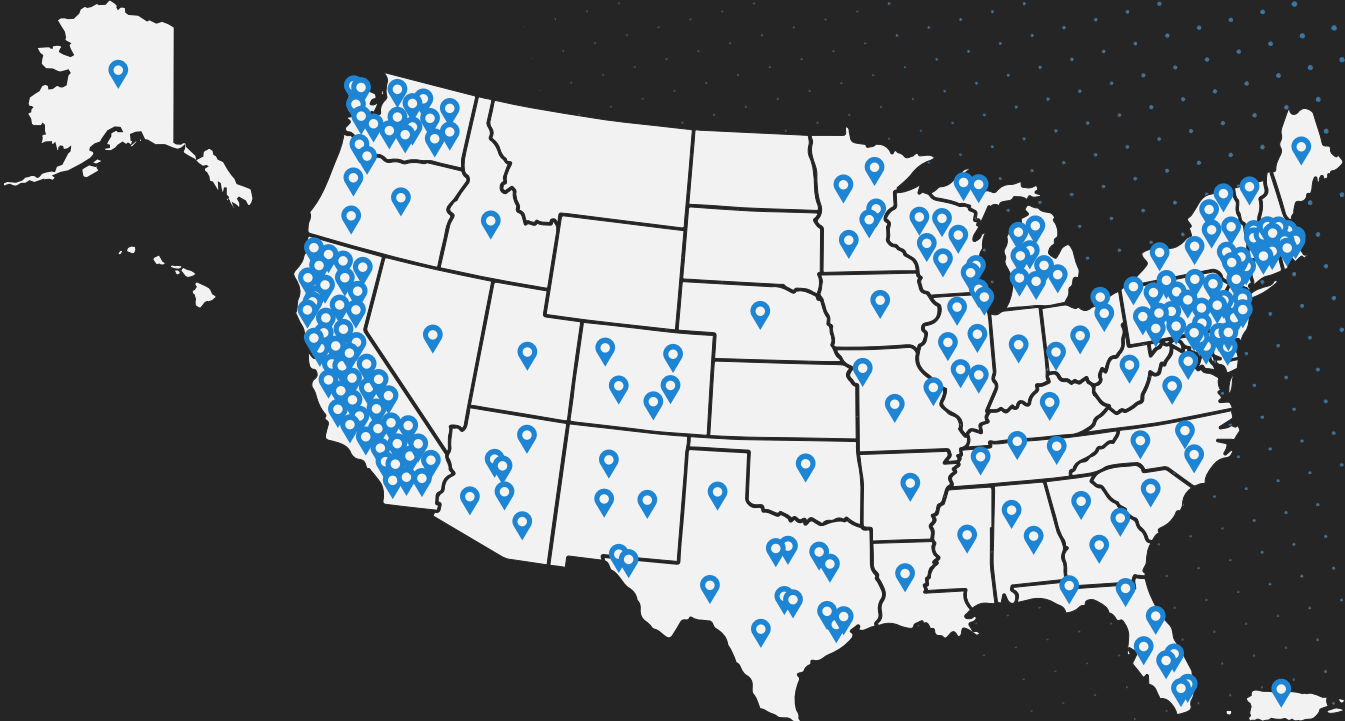
with the shared goal of using government power for good. That couldn't be more important, especially when the administration has thrown all of its efforts behind punishing leaders who fail to fall in line with its harmful ideological agenda.

Through PRP, cities and counties across the country have found new ways to take a stand. In its ninth year, this organization offers what mayors and other local leaders need in this moment: practical legal tools, trusted partners, and ways to act together. As you read on, I'm sure you will understand why I have never been prouder to be PRP's board chair.

Bachul Koul

Board chair

Our network



594

government and
community partners

\$22B

of federal funding
defended

PRP's strategic plan: how we're using government power for good

Public Rights Project's 2025-2027 strategic plan will help to ensure our democratic institutions remain strong, responsive, and accountable to all people.

As we confront new challenges, our organization is building and growing. Here are our strategic priorities:



Protecting voting rights

[Our Election Protection Hub](#)



Expanding and amplifying our impact

[Our Civil Rights Hub](#)



Establishing a strong litigation function to meet the needs of the field

[Our legal cases](#)



Scaling our operating model to elevate our talent, culture, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB)

[Our commitment to DEIB](#)

[Read our strategic plan](#)

Public
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2025 – 2027 Strategic Plan

How we're using
government power
for good

Fighting federal abuses of power

In the first year of the Trump administration, the federal government attacked its enemies, undermined electoral integrity, and rolled back hard-won freedoms.

Leaders across the country rose to meet the moment.

Increasing our litigation work

In 2025, Public Rights Project represented 89 local jurisdictions in 15 lawsuits, including cases in which \$22 billion in federal funding was at stake in total. These cases shielded communities from harmful federal policies through several preliminary victories.

[Read about our cases here.](#)

PRESS RELEASE

[15 local governments seek to join lawsuit to stop Trump administration's illegal attack on housing, transit and health funding](#)

PRESS RELEASE

[Federal court halts Trump administration's attack on disaster preparedness funding](#)

Our Civil Rights Hub marks one year

The [Civil Rights Hub](#) gives local governments the tools, resources, and legal expertise they need to stand up for their communities and deliver results that improve lives. Through our Multi-City Group, local leaders have stayed ahead of fast-moving federal actions — from attacks on DEI programs and threats to federal funding to National Guard deployments and violent immigration crackdowns.



Impact metrics

210

local election officials supported to date across **25 states** and in Washington, D.C.

15

litigation cases

51

amicus briefs and comments filed, collecting a total of **434 signatures** from more than **388 partners** representing **309 government offices**

Fighting for affordability: 75 local governments sue the administration for essential funding

Local governments are facing an unprecedented challenge: lose billions in federal funding or accept grant conditions requiring them to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement, abandon DEI and trans-inclusive policies, limit abortion access, and more.

This administration has weaponized the federal purse, attaching unlawful strings to crucial housing, transportation, and health care grants already authorized by Congress. These funds are necessary to maintain public transit systems, keep shelters open, repair highways, mount health campaigns, and more.

But there's a proven path to push back — and it's working. Our [King County v. Turner](#) case is the largest of its kind — defending more than \$14 billion in funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preliminary injunctions issued in this case have provided real relief, ensuring that critical funding and services remain in place while litigation continues.

[To keep communities running, local governments are suing Trump — and winning](#)

Op-ed by former King County Executive **Shannon Braddock** and PRP CEO **Jill Habig**



Protecting sanctuary policies: stopping federal overreach into American cities

Our work to safeguard local or state guidelines that limit cooperation with federal immigration authorities is about both protecting immigrants and ensuring that local governments can enact policies that truly serve the communities they represent.

In [San Francisco v. Trump](#) — our lawsuit on behalf of 50 cities and counties — we are fighting to stop the federal government from cutting off funding to coerce sanctuary cities into compliance with its immigration policies and enforcement activities. The cities secured an injunction to protect funding while litigation proceeds, and sent a clear message: local governments will not be bullied into abandoning their communities.

This work laid the foundation for what's ahead. In 2026, we'll build on these wins to defend local power and push back against ICE incursions in cities across the country.

Read about our work in TIME

[What Are Sanctuary Cities and Why Is Trump Targeting Them?](#)



Protecting social safety nets: from homeless shelters to disaster and anti-terrorism funding

Imagine cities without shelters for victims of abuse, properly-equipped SWAT teams, or up-to-date evacuation plans in the event of a natural disaster. Federal policies that we're fighting in court would remove funding for these crucial services.

Funding for permanent supportive housing: [National Alliance to End Homelessness v. HUD](#)

Nearly \$4 billion in federal homelessness funding is being hijacked for politics instead of housing — including more than \$266 million that the six local governments in this case rely on to keep people housed. This lawsuit challenges the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's attempt to drastically cut funding for permanent supportive housing. Local governments are represented by PRP, which filed the case in partnership with Democracy Forward and the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

[The White House's reversal on Housing First will worsen homelessness — but local governments are fighting back](#)

Blog by **Wally Dietz**, law director for the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County



Emergency management funding: [Chicago v. Noem](#) and [Santa Clara County v. Noem](#)

The Trump administration is attempting to require local governments to abandon DEI policies to receive emergency and disaster preparedness funds from DHS and FEMA. In *Chicago v. Noem*, over \$100 million in federal grants is at stake; in *Santa Clara County v. Noem*, plaintiffs are fighting to protect \$350 million. This funding supports fire staffing, port security, counterterrorism, and flood prevention — its withdrawal puts millions at risk.

Standing against the unlawful deployment of the National Guard

Local governments shouldn't have to govern under threat. But in 2025, the federal government deployed the U.S. military against American communities.

Public Rights Project united hundreds of local governments that are fighting back and challenging these actions in court — with a successful outcome in every district court case and an ultimate win at the U.S. Supreme Court that applies to all of these cases.



Los Angeles, California

In [Newsom v. Trump](#), we joined the city and county of San Francisco and Keeker, Van Nest & Peters LLP in filing an [amicus brief](#) on behalf of 53 local governments opposing the unlawful deployment of the California National Guard against protesters in Los Angeles.



Portland, Oregon

In [State of Oregon v. Trump](#), we supported 100 local governments — representing tens of millions of Americans — in filing an amicus brief to defend Portland and the state of Oregon against the administration's illegal attempt to deploy the National Guard there.



Chicago, Illinois

And in [State of Illinois v. Trump](#), we rallied 104 local governments and leaders nationwide to [urge](#) first the Seventh Circuit, and then the U.S. Supreme Court, to oppose the administration's National Guard deployment in Chicago. The Supreme Court's decision in our favor not only struck down the Trump administration's justification for the deployments in Chicago but also in Portland and Los Angeles.

Over a hundred jurisdictions representing tens of millions of people, and one clear message: federal coercion that spreads fear, diverts local resources, and undermines public safety will not go unanswered.

Together, these actions represent a united front — one that continues as cities are now standing up to ICE.

Protecting election integrity through the Election Protection Hub and legal efforts

Election officials are democracy’s unsung heroes — working tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure every eligible voter can cast their ballot safely. The Election Protection Hub was built so that they would have somewhere to turn for support.

Election deniers, local instigators, and now direct federal interference have made an already demanding job even harder. Our team provides real-time legal guidance so officials can navigate these threats with confidence and keep elections running smoothly.

In California, the hub supported election officials ahead of the Proposition 50 vote — a ballot measure to redraw congressional district maps — providing guidance to counties on U.S. Department of Justice observers and live updates on immigration enforcement activity on Election Day.

When officials are supported, voters are protected. That’s our playbook.

Public Rights Project also tracked litigation on executive orders and absentee ballot rules, helping election officials identify opportunities to share their expertise through briefs to the court.

Lisa Deeley

Philadelphia City Commissioner

“I have to believe in the America I grew up in and that I love. To be able to rely on attorneys who believe in democracy and the fundamental right for people to vote is really important to us.”

Our amicus briefs on election protection

- [Watson v. Republican National Committee](#) | Preserving absentee ballot grace periods
- [Public comment](#) | Opposing proof-of-citizenship documents for the federal voter registration form
- [Louisiana v. Callais](#) | Defending the Voting Rights Act ban on racial discrimination
- [State of Washington v. Trump](#) and [State of California v. Trump](#) | Opposing federal overreach into election administration
- [Democratic National Committee v. Boehm](#) | Protecting state courts’ ability to extend voting hours
- [Baxter v. Philadelphia Board of Elections](#) | Supporting mail-in ballots in Pennsylvania

Affirmative Leaders Fellowship

Training government attorneys to be leaders in affirmative litigation shores up the ability of government offices to use all the tools at their disposal to improve lives in their communities.

One proof of impact? Several alumni played major roles in high-profile affirmative litigation cases, including a lawsuit to [protect more than \\$100 million in emergency management funding](#) and another to [defend sanctuary policies from federal interference](#).

[Fighting for federal disaster funding in Chicago](#)

Blog about *Chicago v. Noem* by Affirmative Leaders Fellow **Chelsey Metcalf**, Assistant Corporation Counsel III at the City of Chicago's Affirmative Litigation Department

Our Affirmative Leaders Fellows included 26 government attorneys from 12 states. Through the fellowship, these attorneys gained a stronger understanding of how to take on systemic injustices, sharpen their courtroom impact, and use new approaches to drive real change in their communities.

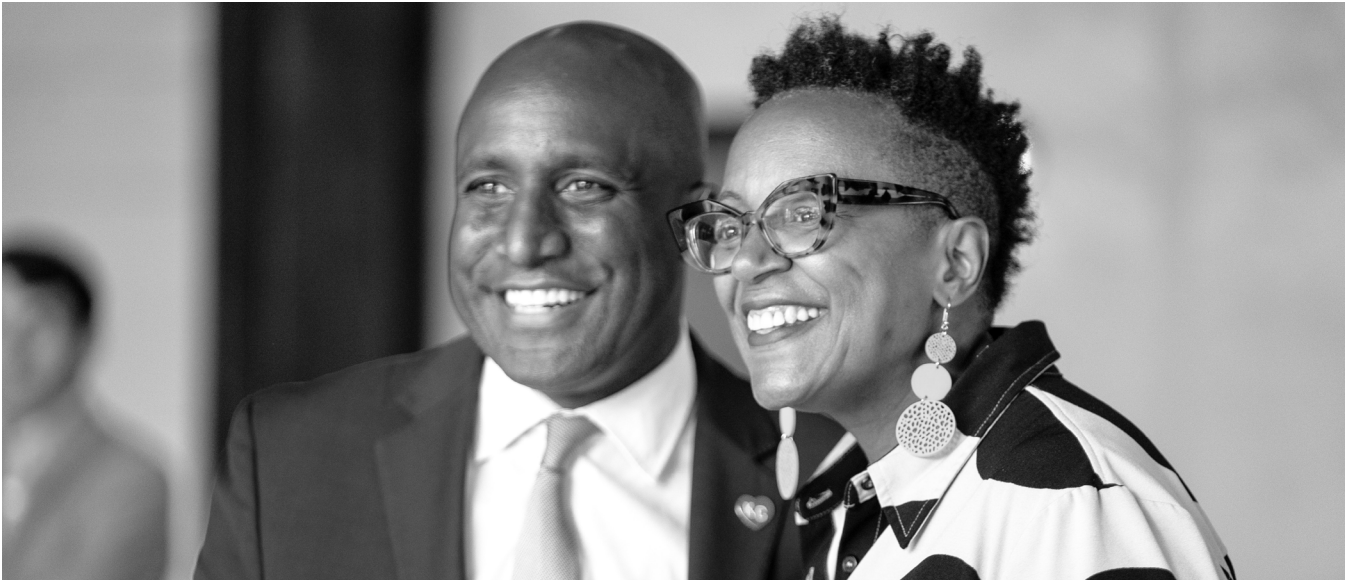


Zenia Wilson Laws

Affirmative Leaders Fellow

Special Counsel for Nuisance Abatement at the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia

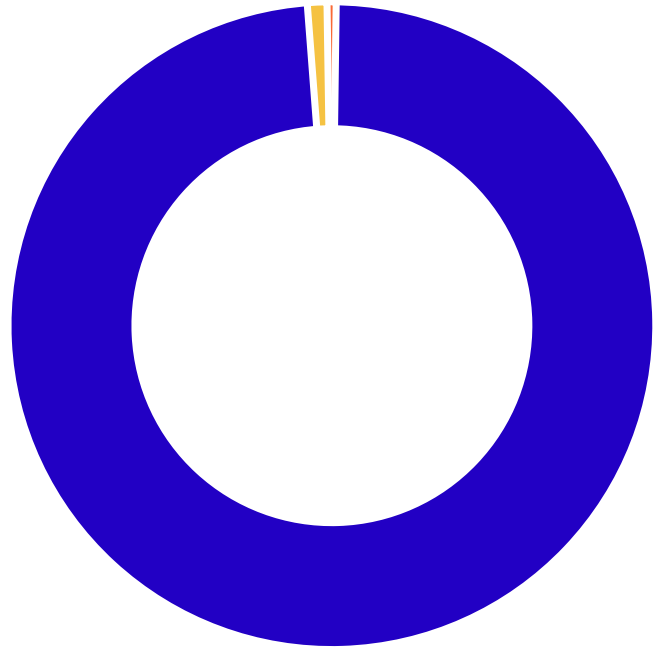
“The project management skills that I got out of the Affirmative Leaders Fellowship — such as learning to break initiatives into workstreams and better manage my time — were truly invaluable. It has not only transformed my work as an attorney, but also gave me tools to accomplish passion projects like launching a new Caribbean bar association in D.C.”



2025 financial summary

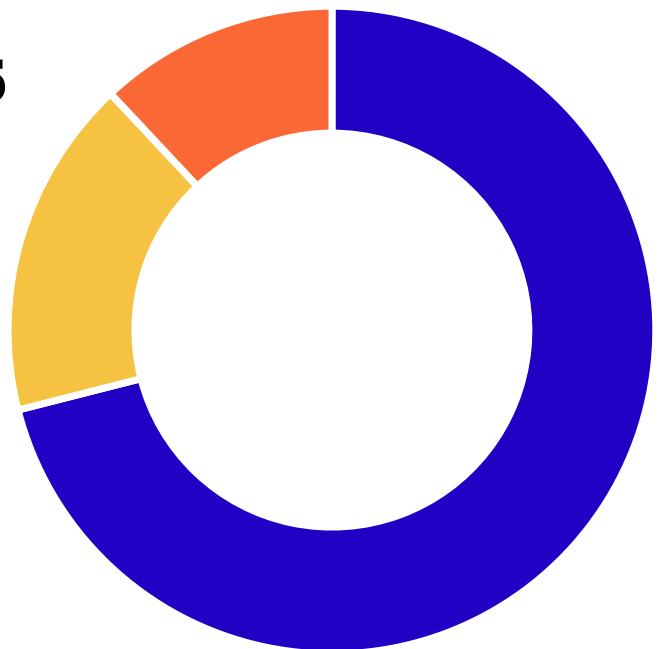
Total revenue: \$15,384,069

- 98.6% – Grants & contributions
- 1% – Investment income
- 0.4% – Program services



Total expenses: \$10,844,815

- 71% – Program services
- 17% – Management & general
- 12% – Fundraising



Our funders

Erinn and Chris
Andrews

Chiraag Bains and
Tara Ramchandani

Baker Family
Charitable Trust

Jeffrey Balaguras and
Jin Sun Park

Nina Beattie and
Michael Eberstadt

Beth Bovis

Margia Corner and
Ashu Dalvi

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Tricia Courtney

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Debevoise & Plimpton



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Brynne Craig

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Bloomberg
Philanthropies



Veena Dubal

Professor of Law,
University of California,
Irvine



Tiana Epps-Johnson

Joined February 2026

Founder and CEO, Center
for Tech and Civic Life



Jill Habig

Founder & CEO,
Public Rights Project



Louise P. King, MD, JD

Assistant Professor of
Obstetrics, Gynecology,
and Reproductive Biology,
Harvard Medical School



Mimi Marziani

Co-founder,
Marziani, Stevens &
Gonzalez PLLC

2025 executive leadership team



Jill Habig

Founder & CEO



Lauren Elfant

Chief of Staff



Tiana Franenberg

Chief
Operating Officer



Jocelyn Harmon

Chief Development
Officer



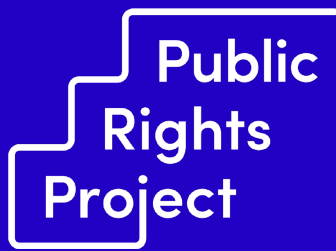
Jonathan Miller

Chief Program Officer



Dawn Raftery

Chief Communications
& Marketing Officer



About Public Rights Project

As a nonpartisan nonprofit organization, Public Rights Project helps local government officials fight for civil rights. We do this by building their capacity to protect and advance civil rights, convening and connecting them on issues of civil rights, and providing legal representation to governments to help them win in court on behalf of their residents. Since our founding, we've built a national network for hundreds of local elected officials, government offices, community partners, and local election officials, defending communities across all 50 states.

Public Rights Project

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