

# “Don’t Bend the Knee”: A Toolkit for Big Law Organizing

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

This toolkit was created by a People’s Parity Project working group in the spring of 2025. This group of law students, recent law school graduates, private-sector attorneys, and public-interest attorneys volunteered their time to research, learn from students and lawyers who have been organizing around Big Law both publicly and quietly, and ultimately compile the information contained in this toolkit. While the circumstances will continue to change, our intention was for the information contained in this toolkit to be broadly applicable, and useful for anybody thinking about Big Law accountability for months and years to come. If you have any questions about the information contained here, are interested in starting to organize and want support, or want to get involved in this or other PPP working groups, please contact our team at [hello@peoplesparity.org](mailto:hello@peoplesparity.org).

## INTRODUCTION:

In March, President Trump issued illegal, anti-constitutional, and undemocratic executive orders that were designed to punish specific law firms (or lawyers) that dared to stand up to his agenda or represent his political opponents. Some law firms chose to fight those EOs and won swift victories in the federal courts. Others bent the knee to Trump, preemptively offering hundreds of millions of dollars in “pro bono” services in support of the President’s goals and agreeing to remove their diversity, equity, and inclusion programming, in a handshake deal to get Trump to leave them alone (which, of course, he did not). Thankfully, the public saw these agreements

for what they were—cowardly attempts to save partners’ own profits, while throwing the rest of us under the bus. Although the attack on law firms may not be the Administration’s main focus at this moment, it is important to stay vigilant, stay focused, and use our power to fight back if the Administration targets law firms again.

Like so many others across the country, this moment has prompted us to ask ourselves: What can I do to safeguard the rule of law? What should I do? How will I know when to do it? This guide exists to help lawyers, law students, and legal professionals think through those

questions and (hopefully) provide, if not the answers to those questions, at least a roadmap of the concrete steps that we can all take to help us live and work in accordance with our values.

It is important to remember that no act of resistance is too small, and your bravery will inspire others to be brave. For those who want to work in Big Law or already do, this guide is designed to help you think through these issues, to identify both your line in the sand for when you need to leave your firm and how to use the power and leverage that you do have to make an impact within Big Law. That might look like quitting your job or, if you’re

a law student, skipping OCI. Going public on LinkedIn is great (and we applaud those who did so), but there are other actions that you can take without putting yourself at risk. Part of the purpose of this guide is outlining those actions specifically be-

cause they are not public, and so you might not have seen others taking them because they are doing so privately. Hopefully, this guide will be a resource to help you make decisions about your career in the law at whatever stage you are in—from law

student to associate to in-house counsel. We hope that this guide can be an enduring resource for legal professionals at whatever stage, even if this issue fades from the front pages.

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## I'M A LAW STUDENT...

This moment demands moral clarity, and you have every right—and responsibility—to make decisions about entering the profession with a clear understanding and eyes wide open. This means asking firms about their response to political pressure, especially in light of attacks on DEI, noncitizens and newcomers, and democratic institutions.

This section is designed to help law students get clarity on Big Law. That clarity doesn't come from interview conversations and firms' bland websites alone. It also comes from staying up to date with what firms are doing—and what they're quietly not doing.

The following are resources to help you gather the information that you deserve and help you make your decision—whether or how/where to enter Big Law—thoughtfully and courageously.

## How can I keep up with what firms are doing?

It's always been hard to know exactly what's going on inside of law firms—and the recent capitulations (and ensuing scrutiny) makes it likely that it will become even harder to really understand what firms are doing. If you are going through the recruitment process, it's important to resist the pull toward isolation and individualization. By talking with your classmates and peers at other schools, sharing information that you've gathered from interviews, and comparing notes on how firms appear to be responding to the Trump Administration's attacks, you can start to gather a more complete picture about which firms are and are not standing strong in their defense of the rule of law, regardless of what they're saying publicly. These honest conversations are also a tool to organize your classmates, ensuring that people are cognizant of the political and moral considerations that can be involved in choosing between firms.

A number of trackers and guides exist to make accessible all of the information that we do have as to what firms are doing when it comes to client representation, internal practices, and responding to the Trump Administration. These include:

- [Law Firm Transparency Project](#): a student-created guide to some of the clients represented by top law firms.
- [Law Students for Climate Accountability \(LS4CA\) Scorecard](#): an annual assessment of corporate defense firms' representation of fossil fuel companies.
- [Biglaw Spine Index](#): a frequently updated tracker from Above the Law monitoring what we know how about firms' responses to the Trump Administration.
- [Legal industry Responses to. Fascist Attacks Tracker \(Public\)](#): a tracker created by Georgetown Law students to monitor law firm actions (or inactions) in response to attacks from the Trump Administration.

**▲ Gaps to watch:**

- Pro bono inaction. The public is (for now) paying attention to new pro bono work that firms are taking on at the urging of the Trump Administration, but it's also important to look for what pro bono work is missing. Many firms are quietly quitting "politically sensitive" work (e.g., legal representation focused on immigration, abortion access, trans rights, and voting rights, among other things). It's important to use the recruitment process to understand the full range of changes at the firm in recent months, and that includes attempting to get answers about what they might no longer be doing.
- Financial support. Big Law has traditionally given significant amounts of money to support the work of legal nonprofits and public-interest organizations, but there is reason to believe they might be ending this support, particularly for the organizations most threatened by the Trump Administration. Understanding the entirety of how the firms you're considering are—or are not—supporting marginalized groups is essential.

**...Feeling uncertain about going into Big Law.****What are my options?**

- Talk to your law school's career office about a range of career paths, not just those tied to Big Law. They can help you explore public interest roles, government positions, and alternatives in the private sector.
  - One less-discussed sector is the "private public interest sector." It can be overwhelming to start your research on private, non-Big Law jobs, especially compared to the robust and more easily accessible information about Big Law.
    - Start with [Harvard's resource on private public interest law firms](#) (PPILFs).
    - Look at the firms that signed [the amicus brief supporting Perkins Coie](#).
  - It is also worth noting that it may be scary to commit to a role in a sector you are less familiar with or may not have a direct connection to.
    - Many PPILFs offer one- or two-year fellowships, which provide a great opportunity to see inside the organization without committing full-time. For example, [Ali & Lockwood](#) and [Cohen Milstein](#) are just two examples.
- Seek out alumni mentors—especially those whose work you admire—and ask how they navigated their careers. Don't be afraid to ask about their decision-making, challenges, or how they made nontraditional paths work.
- Understanding that law schools vary in their connections with non-Big Law alumni, leverage pre-existing external networks to broaden your reach as you learn.
  - Check out the Public Interest Law Association ([PILA](#))—a national network connecting undergraduates, law students, and legal professionals committed to justice-driven careers through mentorship, community, and support.
  - Similarly, check out the National Plaintiffs' Law Association ([NPLA](#)) for a network that connects law students with opportunities on the plaintiffs'-side that allow them to represent the interests of victims of misconduct or negligence, advocate for justice, and hold

powerful interests accountable for their actions.

- They have their own [Job Board](#) and [map of plaintiffs-side firms](#).

## Worried about loans? Big Law isn't the only way to pay them off.

If you're drawn to work that advances justice but feel pressure to do a few years in Big Law just to manage debt, know that you're not alone—and it's not your only avenue to financial security.

- Consider alternatives like plaintiffs' firms, private public interest firms (PPILFs), union-side labor law, or impact litigation nonprofits. Many of these offer meaningful work and competitive salaries. Note that your loan repayment options may vary depending on the practice setting - see PSLF eligibility, below.
  - For example, many PPILFs offer 6-figure salaries, even for their fellowship programs; per [Harvard's resource](#), starting salaries in such firms range from \$65K-\$175K, with many falling in the \$80-\$120K range.
  - In this vein, NPLA (mentioned above) is administering a first-of-its-kind [Pay Transparency Survey](#) for the plaintiffs' bar, as compensation is both (1) less transparent and (2) more variable. The results of this survey will provide broader insight into the financial side of the private-public interest world.
- Make sure you understand any public interest loan repayment plans your school offers, as well as the federal [Public Service Loan Forgiveness](#) (PSLF) program.

Whether you're leaning toward Big Law or exploring alternatives, interviews are a chance for you to evaluate whether the workplace aligns with your values.

- Ask direct, thoughtful questions—especially about how firms are responding to today's political and social climate. (See sample questions below in the "If I'm uncertain about Big Law, what can I do during the recruitment process to identify if the firm is a good fit for me" Section.)
- Though they can all seem the same on the outside, these firms' responses to the EOs have shown us that they are not all the same on the inside.
- And remember: many small/mid-size firms and public interest employers hire on a later timeline, so it's okay to wait before making a decision.

## If I'm uncertain about Big Law, what can I do during the recruiting process to identify if the firm is a good fit for me?

- If you are on the fence, it is completely understandable to nonetheless go through the Big Law recruiting process to keep your options open and/or identify if a firm might be a good fit for you in light of your concerns.
  - Setting the money aside, it would be silly to not acknowledge the potential safety and security that a Big Law offer provides in terms of how early/far in advance Big Law recruiting occurs, even if you are morally uncertain.

- Remember that this is an individual decision. Every individual brings their own concerns/wants/needs to the job search, and for some, having a Big Law offer “in their pocket” early on alleviates the stress of the later and more ad-hoc recruiting processes of other industries.
- Also, remember that you can rescind your offer of acceptance if your situation and/or feelings change at a later point in the process. Operate respectfully and as timely as you can, but you should take any “bridge burning” warnings with a grain of salt. You are not getting married to a law firm; you are building your career. Many public interest lawyers began their careers at law firms—going into Big Law (or even considering Big Law) does not mean you cannot abandon Big Law.
- Every question you ask helps raise awareness, foster solidarity, and shift the culture. Authenticity is a strength—it can help you connect with the associate you are speaking to, who is likely on your side. Your questions may even empower them to raise concerns internally. Recruitment is a load-bearing pillar of the Big Law model. If a firm is unwilling to engage with serious concerns—or is offended by honest questions about ethics and courage—it may not be worth your labor. The following are some questions students are asking in interviews, networking events, or informal conversations during their search process:
  - “One area I’m thinking a lot about is how firms respond to shifting political climates. As someone who cares about [cause/rule of law/access to justice], how do you see your firm navigating these kinds of pressures?”
  - “There’s definitely some nervousness among students—myself included—about how law firms handle quiet shifts in compliance or pro bono, especially under new federal directives. Can you speak to how your firm approaches those internal conversations?”
  - “As someone early in my legal career, I wonder: do you feel like associates can safely raise concerns about firm direction, especially when it intersects with public interest or social impact work?”
  - “If I wanted to pursue pro bono work, especially in an area with some political sensitivity, how much room would I have to choose those projects? Is that something junior associates can realistically do?”
  - “Could you share what pro bono areas the firm is most focused on right now? Have any initiatives shifted recently, and what drove those changes?”
  - “From the outside, it’s hard to tell how mentorship and affinity spaces are holding up. Have you noticed any shifts in those programs over the past few months?”
  - “Are there formal or informal expectations around public expression—like social media or public writing—when it touches on controversial topics?”
  - “If attorneys are working on politically charged pro bono cases, are there any institutional protections in place for them?”

## ...Definitely planning to go into Big Law.

### What should I ask during interviews?

#### For firms that have capitulated publicly.

Check out this resource  [“Questions for Law Firm Hiring and Post-Offer Conversations”](#).

It is important to press for accountability, transparency, and clarity about future direction. Here are some suggested questions that are being asked in interviews.

- “I know I want to be in Big Law, but I’m also trying to be honest about values alignment. After the firm’s recent decisions around [DEI/pro bono/EO compliance], how are you thinking about your role in maintaining public commitments going forward?”
- “There’s been a lot of concern among students that firms are quietly rolling back social impact work under political pressure. After your firm’s response to the executive orders, how are those internal conversations playing out now?”
- “I care deeply about being able to raise internal concerns. Has there been space—formally or informally—for people to discuss how the firm has shifted direction recently? What has that looked like in practice?”
- “I’m hoping to do meaningful, values-driven pro bono. After the firm’s recent decisions, how much flexibility is left for associates to pursue projects that might still be considered politically sensitive? How much discretion is there in choosing what and which pro bono work to do?”
- “What areas of pro bono are still being actively supported by the firm? Have any partnerships or case types been de-prioritized or paused? What was the process behind those decisions?”
- “How has mentorship or affinity group programming changed since the executive orders? Were there pauses or adjustments, and is there any plan to reinvest in those efforts?”
- “Are there new or updated expectations about what attorneys can say publicly—especially on politically sensitive topics or in relation to their pro bono work? What’s the guidance right now?”
- “For those still doing work in sensitive areas, are there protections or guardrails in place? How has that changed since the firm made adjustments under federal guidance?”

#### For firms that may be quietly quitting.

Check for sincerity, vigilance, and internal support systems to hold the line. Here are some suggested questions to press on these issues.

- “I know I want to be in Big Law, but I’m also looking for a firm that’s holding steady on its public commitments during this political moment. How is your team continuing to uphold values like [access to justice/rule of law/DEI] despite external pressure?”
- “There’s increasing scrutiny on how firms are responding to the executive orders—especially around DEI and pro bono. Since your firm hasn’t publicly shifted course, how are you navigating that pressure internally?”



- “I want to work in a place where people can speak up without fear. Are associates encouraged to be part of the conversation about the firm’s direction and values, particularly now?”
- “How much space is there for associates to take on pro bono matters that might be seen as politically charged? Have there been any recent internal conversations about that kind of discretion?”
- “Which pro bono areas is the firm doubling down on right now? Has that come with any hard decisions about where not to focus? Who’s shaping those priorities?”
- “It seems like your firm has stayed committed to affinity and mentorship spaces—have there been any recent shifts, expansions, or signs of strain as external pressure has increased?”
- “How does the firm currently handle public speech by attorneys, especially when it touches on their pro bono work or personal beliefs in contested areas?”
- “What protections or institutional support exist for attorneys working in areas like immigration, reproductive justice, or voting rights? What’s the firm’s approach if that work draws political attention?”

## What are the risks of asking these questions? What are the upsides?

### Upsides

- Signals Leadership and Vision: You demonstrate thoughtfulness, civic awareness, and courage—traits that are sorely needed in the legal profession.
- Builds Authentic Connections: Associates and partners often appreciate honesty. You may earn trust, spark reflection, or even empower them to voice their own quiet concerns.
- Influences Culture by Showing Demand: Firms track what law students care about. Asking these questions forces them to realize that ethical accountability is part of talent recruitment.
- Protect Your Future: These conversations help you make a values-aligned choice about where to work, and whether that place is worthy of your labor and potential.

### Risks

- Perceived as “Controversial”: Some firms or interviewers may view these questions as political rather than professional, especially if they’re unprepared or uncomfortable discussing structural injustice or state complicity—not because your questions are wrong, but because they challenge the status quo.
- Exposing Culture Mismatch: If the interviewer lacks awareness or empathy, you might be met with deflection or vague answers that can feel disheartening.

But these risks are also data. A firm’s defensiveness or silence tells you everything about its culture, values, and whether it is safe for people like you.



## I'M A BIG LAW ASSOCIATE WHOSE FIRM HAS MADE AN "AGREEMENT" WITH THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION.

### What should my next steps be regardless of whether or not I want to stay at the firm?

- Organize with your colleagues to get answers from leadership—Other capitulating firms' associates have successfully forced leadership to answer questions at town halls by coming together and demanding one.
  - Know that your colleagues also feel the same anger and anxiety that you do, and they are probably just waiting for someone to get the ball rolling.
    - Start by connecting with people over the phone to see how they receive the idea of demanding a town hall. Then, ask them to connect with their friends about the prospect of one.
  - The following emails succeeded at one of these firms. Use them as templates to send your own.
    - OPTION 1: We appreciate your effort to provide information about the firm's agreement with the Trump Administration. Nevertheless, as you are aware, these events have caused serious concern to many about the firm's commitment to its long-standing principles. Associates still feel there are many important questions unanswered. Questions that have direct bearing on both our day-to-day responsibilities as well as the core values of the firm going forward. We, the undersigned associates, respectfully request an in-person town hall or series of town halls this week at which associates can ask questions directly of firm leadership.
    - OPTION 2: We, the undersigned associates, write to request that the firm host a town hall no later than [DATE] to discuss the deal with the Administration. We appreciate that in the past few days, you and many partners have taken the time to address associate concerns and questions on this issue individually, but we need to hear from firm leadership directly and cohesively. The lawsuits filed by other firms complicate our firm's position for the undersigned. We feel it is critical to hear directly from leadership about our firm's response to the Executive Order, in a collective setting where our shared concerns can properly be heard and addressed. We worry about what message it will send if the firm determines such a meeting cannot be held. Therefore, we ask that you announce the plan for a town hall as soon as possible.
- Ask questions and listen carefully to the answers to decide what you should do next—Consider asking leadership some of the following questions, either at a town hall or in smaller groups.
  - The Administration has implied that firms subjected to orders agreed to donate millions in pro bono services because they did something wrong. For instance, the White House Press Secretary recently stated: "Big Law continues to bend the knee to President Trump because they know they were wrong, and he looks forward to putting their pro bono legal concessions toward implementing his America First Agenda." Did our firm do anything wrong and did we agree to such a characterization making this deal?

- We've been told the consequences of not making this deal would have been the demise of the firm. What specific steps and analysis was undertaken to conclude this? How quickly would we have gone under? What clients specifically threatened to walk? Should associates be concerned about the firm's stability?
- Many of us are concerned that the Administration will come back and demand more from us, including firing specific partners, requiring us to take on specific clients, abandoning certain clients, or reducing our effort to recruit diverse talent. What is our plan in the face of those demands?
- As a partnership of attorneys, what is the firm's duty to uphold the rule of law and the United States Constitution? What is our plan to defend the rule of law?
- We have lost trust with some of our clients, in particular our pro bono clients. Many of whom perceive this deal as us being unwilling to fight the Administration. Aside from big donations to causes or a high-profile pro bono case, what is the firm's plan to rebuild our credibility?
- Please explain how this deal does not pose "a significant risk that the representation of one or more clients will be materially limited by the lawyer's responsibilities to..... a third person or by a personal interest of the lawyer"? (Model Rule 1.7). Any practice involving the government—not merely litigation but regulatory, contract negotiation, etc.—often requires the backdrop of a threat of litigation. Can we still realistically offer that option to our clients?
- What should our response be if we are on a client pitch and are asked "why should we hire a law firm that was willing to fight against action that was so patently unlawful"?
- This agreement appears to already be having substantial consequences for recruiting. What are we supposed to say when students ask why, as one of the nation's leading law firms, we didn't fight?
- Will I be able to reject any pro bono that we have agreed to handle on behalf of the Administration?
  - (Related: Will the firm be transparent about which pro bono assignments "count" towards the firm's pro bono pledge?)
- Will the pro bono that we are handling on behalf of the Administration count towards my bar pro bono requirement, given that this pro bono largely does not seem to be on behalf of the indigent?
- Can the firm assure associates they will still be able to work on the types of pro bono cases that address issues they cared about and were working on previously at the firm? Even if you can, will accomplishments in working on those cases be removed from associate's firm profiles?
- There are reports of rightwing organizations reaching out to firms that have agreed to deals with the Administration. These organizations have eagerly engaged in conduct that has harmed the resilience of our democratic institutions by supporting unlimited money in elections and encouraging the politicization of the judiciary. Under this agreement, do we have any obligation to agree to support their organization and these causes?
- Will the firm continue to take on matters to which the Administration is adverse? For

example, the fight for reproductive rights, trans and other LGBT rights, as well as other clearly unconstitutional EOs such as matters involving the Proud Boys or other hate groups, etc.?

## What should I be doing if I'm not sure I want to stay at the firm?

- Make an exit plan—know what your personal lines are and how you'll leave if you're being forced to cross them. This may be different for everyone—and that is okay.
  - Have an accountability buddy outside of the firm—somebody who can help you honestly assess whether you're in denial about the moral compromises you've made.
  - Begin to have necessary conversations exploring other options—know what type of job you'd want to move to, make a plan to make that happen.
    - Make the short-term financial decisions necessary to make that possible.
  - Consider whether speaking out about why you left is right for you.
    - This is a personal decision, but this is the moment to be brave, every person who speaks out is meaningfully pushing back on authoritarian consolidation, helping those of us who aren't privy to the inner-workings of firms better understand what's happening, inspiring others to act.
    - If this is something you're considering, [here's some information](#) about how to do that responsibly. You can always contact our team at PPP ([hello@peoplesparity.org](mailto:hello@peoplesparity.org)) and we'll be happy to support you if you choose to speak out publicly.
  - Know that it's not too late—just because you stayed after the announcement of the original agreement doesn't mean you have to stay and doesn't mean you can't draw your own lines.
    - Many law firm partners have left capitulating firms in the wake of the deals. It is also worth remembering that many partnership agreements require a notice period before partners can leave, so more defections may come.
      - Examples: [Karen Dunn](#) & others left Paul, Weiss to form a new firm; [Damian Williams](#) left for Jenner; and other [top lawyers left Wilkie](#) for Cooley.
    - Sometimes departures take more time and don't make as big of headlines—but they still matter a great deal.

## What should I be doing if I'm planning on staying for the foreseeable future?

- Communicate with the firm's pro bono coordinator or, even better, the management committee, about what pro bono asks the firm will and won't accept.
  - Eventually, it may be the case that you need to prioritize talking specifically about what pro bono cases you as an individual will accept—but right now, enough is still up in the air when it comes to execution of these “agreements” that there remains an opportunity to get the firm to commit to holding some sort of line.
- Press for transparency on what pro bono projects the firm believes will “count” to the deal. (See above in the section titled “What should my next steps be regardless of whether or not I want to stay at the firm?” for details on what questions to ask that have worked so far.)

- As you become more senior and move into leadership:
  - Join the pro bono committee, associates committee, or diversity committees.
  - Mentor newer associates and be a person who can help other people at the firm work through tough moral issues.

## I'M A BIG LAW ASSOCIATE WHOSE FIRM HASN'T MADE AN "AGREEMENT" WITH THE TRUMP ADMIN (YET).

### What are best practices to prevent my firm from caving?

- Talk to your colleagues. It can feel like you are the only one who cares or is worried about this, but that is almost certainly not true.
  - If you're not yet ready to proactively start conversations, be open to having others discuss this with you—especially if you're a more senior associate, make space for these conversations with more junior attorneys.
  - Begin to document who your allies are when it comes to holding your firm accountable. Right now, the Administration's attention seems to have moved off of law firms, but that doesn't mean that there won't be more pressure on firms to capitulate over the course of the next three years. It's important to be ready to move quickly if and when the moment arises.
  - Use formal channels to raise concerns collectively, like through the associate's committee. Typically, your AC representatives have regular meetings with firm management to raise concerns — this is the right time to use those mechanisms and act collectively. If your firm has other channels (like an office-wide lunch, or town hall) use those as appropriate.
  - Don't be afraid to use informal channels too—sharing your views at lunch and happy hour builds a sense of collective purpose.
  - Discuss your concerns with partners that you work with. Ask them about what the firm is doing too and learn their views. Many partners likely share your concerns—ask them what you could do as associates to help them help you get the message to firm leadership.
- Gather information about the consequences for other firms that have made deals, and present to leadership (or provide to others that can present).
  - Key examples include:
    - [Microsoft](#) dropped a firm that made an agreement and hired Jenner instead in major litigation, and [Cognizant](#) fired Paul, Weiss due to their deal.
    - Letters from congressional democrats to deal firms are keeping this in the press, meaning striking a deal doesn't get you out of the spotlight.
    - Firms have lost major talent.
    - Skadden faces an NLRB complaint for trying to shut down associate dissent.
  - Highlight your concern that there is no enforceability/oversight of the "deals"—Trump is now asking firms to take on coal mine leases, police officer defense, or trade deal negotiations.

- It is worth noting that, at least at first blush, none of these meet the ABA definition of pro bono, which is providing legal services to the indigent, or organizations that serve the indigent, or to certain charitable organizations.
  - For example, Cadwalader has considered satisfying its “pro bono” commitment by [handling state prosecutors’ criminal appeals](#).
  - Does your firm have a pro bono policy? Take a look at what it currently says and see if it would need to be changed to accommodate the Trump deal.
- Continue to stay informed and spread the word. Inside many big firms now, management feels like the tide has shifted away from making “deals” and that these agreements are deeply unpalatable (because they are). Keep talking about it, because that has an impact.
- Consider your personal line & action plan.
  - Take steps to prepare yourself financially if you feel you’ll want to quit.
    - Reach out to mentors and colleagues at other firms, organizations, or law schools. Re-engage with your network so you feel prepared to job hunt if you so choose.
  - There is a lot of gray area between quitting on the spot and accepting capitulation. You can be honest about your personal line and plan.
    - Tell partners you like your job and colleagues (if true) but do not see yourself spending your career at a firm that does not share your values.
    - If you’re a litigator, express your concern that your ability to zealously represent clients will be compromised if the firm is always concerned about how litigation decisions will be received by the Administration. Express that you’d rather practice law at a firm free from that undue influence.
    - Share how important the principles of rule of law are to you. While we serve our clients, our oaths as lawyers first and foremost are to the constitution—yes, it may sound cheesy, but if it is important to you, share that. That’s why we all went to law school in the first place!

### What do I do if my firm is quiet caving?

- Pay attention
  - Note everything that’s changing within your firm—support for attorneys of color, recruitment practices, connections to nonprofits and advocacy organizations, pro bono opportunities, etc.
    - Understanding the long-term impacts of law firms’ actions (or inaction) in this moment is going to be crucial to building a plan to undo harm long term. The more real-time documentation we have, the better.
  - Keep trying to take on the same pro bono cases.
- As discussed in the preceding section, make an exit plan and build accountability mechanisms for yourself.

## I'M AN EMPLOYEE OF AN ORGANIZATION THAT USES A BIG LAW FIRM AS OUTSIDE COUNSEL.

As a client of law firms, you and your organization have significant power in your relationship with those firms. Firms pay close attention to how their actions affect clients and the dollars they are taking in from those clients. Firms that have publicly settled with the Administration and firms that are quietly caving to the Administration's demands are devaluing the ethical standards of the legal profession.

### How should I talk about this within my organization?

- Talk to your colleagues and legal leadership. You'll be surprised to learn how many lawyers across the political spectrum agree with you.
  - If you're a senior person on the team, lead the discussion on how your legal team can meet the moment by reconsidering which firms are hired and how you can have conversations with your existing outside counsel.
  - If you're a junior person or don't feel comfortable raising this broadly, have informal discussions with your colleagues and build momentum such that it can be raised in a broader forum.
  - Discuss which firms you currently use, identify ones that are problematic, and see where you can hire firms standing up against the Administration. Use resources like the [George-town Law tracker](#) to help!
  - See if your legal team can partner with firms on pro bono clients that are under attack.
- Values. Many organizations have stated public values (equal rights, respect, diversity, doing the right thing, etc.). Use these to frame why this issue is important – not just for you or the legal team but the organization as a whole. Selecting outside counsel who align with these values is important and helps partners at firms who want to push back on settling with the Administration.
  - Remember to pay attention to which firms have settled and which firms are quietly caving by [abandoning their clients](#)
- Optics. Your organization probably has customers, employees, and other stakeholders. The organization's choice of firms sends a brand message about its principles, values and ethics and can impact:
  - customer acquisition and retention
  - recruiting
  - employee retention
  - investor sentiment

## Here's a sample email that you can send to legal leadership within your organization to prompt switching away from law firms that are caving to the administration:

*Hi [senior attorney's name],*

*I wanted to raise an issue for broader discussion on the team as we continue to evaluate our relationships with outside counsel. As you know, several big law firms, including [firm that your company uses], recently settled with the Trump administration. I understand how critical continuity and experience are in our outside counsel relationships, but given [your company's] organizational values [e.g., integrity, ESG], it is worth reconsidering the firms that we select to represent us. It is concerning that these firms are unwilling or unable to stand up for themselves and brings into question whether they will be willing to stand up for [your company]. Many companies are already moving work away from these firms due to similar concerns.*

*I'd be happy to work with the team to run a process to select alternative firms that are highly qualified and capable to assist us on [upcoming legal work / ongoing legal work that currently goes to a firm that caved].*

## Speak with your colleagues at other organizations

Your advocacy for the rule of law doesn't have to stop at your organization. There are many others like you on legal teams in organizations across the country. Speak with your colleagues at industry events, conferences, and ABA meetings and discuss how you are handling this within your organization, tactics to create momentum with your legal team, and what's been impactful with your outside counsel.

## What should I say to the Big Law partner I work with?

You may feel uncomfortable calling up the partners that you work with and having a conversation about this issue. Remember that even big law partners are largely supportive of the rule of law and are probably not happy about the settling or potentially settling with the Trump Administration. This conversation will give the partner the opportunity to pass your message along to the firm's management. The more firms hear that clients are raising this as an issue, the less likely they are to settle with the Administration.

Talking points.

- Let the partner know that you and your organization are paying close attention to which firms are settling with the Administration.
- The firm's posture will impact your organization's decision on who to hire for matters going forward.
- Ask questions about what sorts of pro bono projects the firm has been taking on and whether there's been a shift in that work.
- Most law firms have included value statements around diversity, equity, and inclusion and equal justice on their websites for many years. This is a matter of integrity - does the firm actually



stand by those values?

**Sample Script. Here's a sample script in case you need a starting point:**

*Hi [partner],*

*Thanks for taking the time to speak with me today. I'm reaching out to discuss the recent settlements between several big law firms and the Trump Administration.*

*As a client, I've always prioritized working with firms that both provide excellent legal work and whose stated and practiced principles reflect values important to me and the company - integrity, upholding the rule of law, diversity, and equal justice.*

*Based on reporting regarding the settlements and public statements made by the Administration, I am deeply concerned that your firm and others that proceed with such settlements are compromising those ideas.*

*As a legal team, we are paying close attention to which firms are settling with the Administration, as well as which firms are dropping existing pro bono clients and taking on pro bono clients aligned with the Trump Administration.*

*To be clear, if your firm chooses to settle with the Administration, [company name] will be very unlikely to hire the firm for new work. While I understand that this is a difficult decision for any firm, it is important to me that the firm understands that our company's dollars will be spent at organizations that reflect its values.*

## CONCLUSION

Organizing is never easy. It's a challenging, iterative process that requires building community, setting clear goals, and being prepared to use an array of tactics to turn the power of people into meaningful change. If you're thinking about organizing to prevent Big Law from caving further to the demands of the Trump Administration, we applaud you. It is going to take the work of lawyers and law students standing up to powerful forces within our profession if we are going to restore true democracy in the United States, and we hope you will commit to being part of that work in whatever way you can.