

Political Science Organizations Sign APSA Letter Defending Academic Freedom, Democratic Institutions, and International Scholars

AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION | JUNE 6, 2025

Twelve political science organizations have signed onto a public letter led by APSA calling for a reaffirmation of the protections for academic freedom, strengthening of democratic institutions, and a guarantee of the rights for international scholars and students in the United States.

POLITICAL SCIENTISTS DEFEND ACADEMIC FREEDOM, DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, AND INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARS

As a community of scholars and instructors of political science, the American Political Science Association (APSA) and the undersigned political science associations are uniquely and especially qualified to understand governments and how they interact with and shape political institutions, civic organizations, institutions of higher education, and the public. We also understand how governmental actions can pose threats not only to higher education but also for the strength of our democratic institutions.

As members of the academic discipline of political science, APSA and the undersigned associations assert our steadfast support for the freedom of speech and academic freedom for all scholars and students, including those who live, work, and study in the United States. We also assert the critical value of higher education and evidenced-based research in the United States, and call for the unfreezing and continuance of federal funding for academic research. At the same time, we must also express deep concern for the future of research, academia, and higher education in the United States and concern over the health of the institutions that shepherd and protect democracy.

Academic communities in the US are home to preeminent experts, researchers and educators on the topics of government, laws, and the institutions of democracy, including the US Constitution. Recent events have raised grave concerns for the health of the democratic institutions and norms that paved the foundation of American democracy and allow for the pursuit of a more perfect union. We have seen an executive order calling for interference with states' ability to carry out free and fair elections as guaranteed by the US Constitution, in addition to willful disregard of the powers given to the legislative and judicial branches of government by the constitution, and which are the foundations of our constitutional system of checks and balances.

We have also seen a legislative attempt in Congress to require proof of US citizenship to register to vote in federal elections, a requirement that may disenfranchise many prospective voters. These executive actions and bills are alarming signs of

the potential threats facing our democratic institutions and the future of a government run by the people, for the people.

We have also seen a dangerous curtailing of the guarantees of the freedom of speech under the First Amendment of the US Constitution. Academic freedom is one of many integral parts of the freedom of speech: the freedom for scholars and students to teach, learn, research and publish without external interference, retaliation, or threats to their well-being or livelihood. These freedoms are constitutionally guaranteed for all scholars and students working and studying in the United States, regardless of their citizenship status or national origin. As APSA expressed in a statement on April 1st, we are deeply concerned with the rapid increase in hostility towards international scholars and students living and working in the United States. We call upon the higher education community to continue to foster an environment of free expression for all, and we call upon the federal government to afford scholars and students with due process and freedom of speech protection.

We have seen the current administration assert the illegality of "diversity, equity, and inclusion" in federally funded education programs as a justification to interfere in academic research. The Administration has used these specious claims of illegality to attempt to freeze, cancel or discontinue federal research grants and other programs, including many programs that fund political scientists. We have also seen the Administration jeopardize the independence of institutions of higher education by making sweeping cancellations of federal contracts and grants unless colleges and universities concede to an expanding list of arbitrary demands. Most recently, the Administration has further threatened to deploy revocations of non-profit status, an effort with no legal basis, to punish universities and other non-profit institutions. As APSA has expressed in statements on February 7th and April 8th, this multi-level interference is an unacceptable infringement of academic freedom and may cause irreparable damage to the scientific and educational enterprise of the United States.

Additionally, we decry the recent reduction in the availability and accessibility of data and information caused by removal and elimination of federal datasets and other pre-existing and non-partisan information from public websites. The availability of federal datasets is crucial to our ability to engage in data-informed research and scholarship. The removal of resources providing fundamental and factual information about American institutions, events, and society is an unacceptable attack on the scholarly pursuit of truth.

As scholars and members of the academic community, we must defend both our discipline and our scholarly and practitioner communities from the existential threats that the actions of the Administration are posing, and aim to prevent future existential threats regardless of which Administration or partisan affiliation they come from. As scholars of the science and study of politics, we must further call for the vigorous defense of our constitutional system of democracy and government. We call on the Administration to retract these harmful actions and to reaffirm democratic norms, academic freedoms, and the research capacities that have been the foundation of America's innovations, progress, and prosperity.

The United States government must continue to support and protect higher education in America by guaranteeing academic freedom, free inquiry and expression, research capacity, and protecting the stability of institutions of democratic governance.

The following political science associations have signed on to this statement:

American Political Science Association
German Political Science Association
International Political Science Association
International Studies Association
Mexican Political Science Association

Midwest Political Science Association
National Conference of Black Political Scientists
New England Political Science Association
Northeastern Political Science Association
Pacific Northwest Political Science Association
Political Studies Association of the United Kingdom
Southern Political Science Association
Western Political Science Association

Additional signatories will be added as received.

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