

**Call for Participation in a Discussion Group on  
State and Local Courts in the Age of Trump  
Due date: October 3, 2025**

**Introduction**

This is a Call for Participation in Discussion Group on State and Local Courts in the Age of Trump to be held during the in-person AALS Annual Meeting from January 6-9, 2026, in New Orleans.

Discussion groups allow a small group of faculty to engage in a sustained conversation about a topic of interest. This discussion group's participants are expected to write and share a short abstract (3 pages, double-spaced) to begin their participation in the discussion. The rest of the session will feature a lively and engaging discussion among the small group of participants. The participants in this discussion group will be the individuals identified in the original proposal submitted to the Program Committee, plus additional individuals selected from this "call for participation". There will be limited audience seating for those not selected in advance to be discussion participants.

**Description**

In recent years, a small but growing group of scholars has begun researching and writing about state and local court systems. Some have approached these courts from a criminal justice perspective. Others have taken an access to civil justice perspective. Others have applied clinical experience. Still others have examined the legal and political structures that shape these courts. This is a burgeoning and important field, just beginning to cohere. State and local courts play an interesting and undertheorized role in our current legal regime. On the one hand, they adjudicate most court proceedings in the United States, receiving little media attention or scholarly scrutiny. That independence allows them, for better or worse, to operate separate and apart from the federal doctrines that dominate most accounts of the legal system. On the other hand, these courts (and especially state courts) provide important checks on federal power. They can hold federal officials accountable for violations of state law and provide individuals rights that go beyond their federal counterparts.

The goal of our discussion group is to hear from scholars and advocates who study state and local courts about this underexplored dual function of these courts. In doing so, we hope to foster this growing community. Discussants will learn from one another and the audience and discuss both how to build support for more research in this area and also what new directions to explore.

**Call for Abstracts**

The Annual Meeting Program Committee invites faculty and administrators who would like to join this Discussion Group to submit a three-page abstract that addresses **by October, 3 2025**. Current organizers and confirmed discussion participants include

- [Justin Weinstein-Tull](#), Professor of Law, Arizona State University (moderator)
- [Adam Sopko](#), Associate Professor of Law, University of Colorado – Boulder
- [Llezie Green](#), Professor of Law and Director of the Civil Justice Clinic, Georgetown Law

- [Tonya Brito](#), George H. Young Chair Professor of Law, University of Wisconsin
- [Kathryn Sabbeth](#), Professor of Law, Rutgers Law School
- [Diego Zambrano](#), Professor of Law, Stanford Law School
- [David Freeman Engstrom](#), LSVF Professor in Law, Stanford Law School
- [Daniel Wilf-Townsend](#), Associate Professor of Law, Georgetown Law
- [Alexandra Natapoff](#), Lee S. Kreindler Professor of Law, Harvard Law School
- [Todd Venook](#), Climenko Fellow and Lecturer on Law, Harvard Law School
- [David Marcus](#), Professor of Law, UCLA School of Law
- [Miriam Seifter](#), Richard E. Johnson Bascom Professor of Law, Wisconsin Law School
- [Lauren Sudeall](#), David Daniels Allen Distinguished Chair of Law, Vanderbilt Law School
- [Pamela Bookman](#), Professor of Law, Fordham Law School
- [Sara Sternberg-Greene](#), Professor Law, Duke Law School

Space in this Discussion Group is limited; the Committee, along with the faculty organizer who proposed this discussion, will select the remaining discussion participants from the abstracts submitted. At the AALS Annual Meeting in January, selected participants will make a one-two minute presentation during the Discussion Group. The remaining time will be devoted to a moderated, roundtable group discussion.

Each submission for this Discussion Group should include:

- The title of the submitted presentation/paper;
- The name, school and email of the applying participant;
- A three-page, double-spaced abstract that addresses state and local courts under federal power and state and local court systems.
- The curriculum vitae of the applying participant.

In reviewing the submitted abstracts, the discussion group organizer and selection committee will consider the following:

- The fit and overall quality of the abstract for the Discussion Group;
- The diversity that the applying participant may bring in terms of a variety of factors including viewpoint diversity, institutional affiliation, and status (tenure-track, non-tenure track, tenured); and if applicable.
- The applying participant's willingness to publish his or her paper along with other Discussion Group papers.
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Abstracts are due by **October 3, 2025** and should be submitted using the online submission form: <https://aalsweb.wufoo.com/forms/pc011ac030993p/>

