

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

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Minneapolis Is a Call to All Legal Professionals to Uphold the Legal System

A Statement from the WSBA President and Executive Director

Recent events in Minneapolis surrounding federal immigration enforcement have shocked and saddened us. We have seen videos of immigration authorities killing Renee Good and Alex Pretti. We have witnessed violence against people exercising their constitutional rights. We have questioned why people are being arrested and detained without clarity regarding legal processes. An escalating cycle of fear, grief, and rage is rippling through communities throughout our state and nation. And—because the killing and harm of civilians by government authorities is not a new phenomenon—we are outraged anew about those prior tragedies.

Legal professionals admitted to practice law have an obligation to ensure accountability under the rule of law. As a concept, “the rule of law” is so overly invoked that it has become meaningless, at best, or weaponized, at worst. But as legal professionals in Washington, we should be united and clear, no matter our political views: **The rule of law means that the same laws apply to everyone, that even government power is bound by the law, and that civil and human rights are guaranteed to all.**

The rule of law does not defend itself. Lawyers must. Judges must. Legal professionals must. Whether in Minnesota or Washington or anywhere in the United States, our work is to *reinforce the public's trust in our legal system as the mechanism for peaceful and just resolution of society's most serious and institutional wrongdoings*. That means all accused are innocent until proven guilty and the guilty are held responsible for their crimes. That means that all parties engage in a good-faith effort to preserve and present facts and evidence. That means safeguarding people who are exercising their Constitutional rights.

At a time when trust and confidence in our democratic institutions is badly shaken, we call on legal professionals to stand as leaders in their communities, to build confidence in legal institutions, and to act with the highest level of integrity and courage in upholding the rule of law.

At a time of escalating violence and hostile threats against courts and judicial independence, we call on legal professionals to unite to make it safer for all of us to do our jobs.

WSBA leaders created a Rule of Law Ambassador Program several years ago to support legal professionals in these efforts—to educate about, build trust in, and promote the rule of law; we will continue to use the ambassador program to provide tools so legal professionals can be leaders in their communities.

Our Constitution is a promise, a set of ideals and a roadmap, that we must preserve and perfect or it will cease to exist. If legal professionals do not vigorously step up to do this work right now, who will?



—President Francis Adewale



—Executive Director Terra Nevitt