

DEMOCRACY 2025

Messaging Toolkit for Democracy 2025 Partners: The Necessity of Independent Agency Leadership

September 30, 2025

Key Goal: Convey that **certain federal agencies must be guided by independent expertise and leadership to ensure that they are protecting Americans' health, safety and prosperity.** When these agencies **become politicized**, people are harmed.

Background:

- Multiple key federal agencies are “independent”--which means Congress has determined that their leader(s) can only be fired for good cause, not at the President’s whim.
- Since 1935, the Supreme Court has unanimously upheld the importance and legality of this independence, in a case called [Humphrey’s Executor](#).
- This independence is now under threat. The Supreme Court has [recently indicated](#) on the shadow docket that it intends to overrule *Humphrey’s Executor* or at least seriously limit its application.
- The destruction of independent agencies is part of the effort of the far-right legal movement to undermine the ability of the executive branch to function in the best interests of the American people rather than a select few—one of the tools to achieve that goal is destroying expertise within the government.
- For example, the International Monetary Fund [found](#) in 2004 that “[t]ime and again in the past decades, national and regional financial crises have been deepened and worsened by political interference in financial sector regulation and supervision.”
- The elimination of independent expertise within government leads to less effective delivery of services to the public, which erodes the people’s trust in government and means public health and safety are not protected.
- This attack on expertise within the government has been [well-documented](#) before the Trump-Vance administration, but has dramatically accelerated since President Trump took office this term.
- The public would benefit from understanding that the destruction of agencies’ independence isn’t merely a technical legal issue, but is **part of an effort to prevent the government from helping Americans, and Americans will be harmed.**

Suggested talking points on why independent agencies matter:

- Congress created independent agencies to ensure that key decisions by regulators who oversee financial markets, health, and safety, among others, are guided by steady leadership and expertise, and not subject to the political whims of any particular President.

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- Independent agencies include financial regulators, such as the Federal Reserve, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (which ensures that our money is safe in the bank), and health and safety regulators, such as the National Transportation Safety Board (which makes sure that planes and trains are safe), and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (which, for example, makes sure that children’s toys don’t hurt kids).
- These agencies need to be independent so that they can be guided by **expertise** and the **long-term interests** of the American public, rather than the political whims of any president.
- The Trump-Vance administration’s effort to destroy these agencies’ independence could **harm Americans by making us all less safe, less healthy, and less financially secure.**
- These attacks are part of a decades-long effort by the far-right to **undermine the government’s ability to help Americans and keep us safe and secure.**
- Every time agency independence is undermined, such as a commissioner being unjustly fired, is another win for those who put corporate profits ahead of public health and safety.
- Project 2025 called for this effort to destroy independent agencies, and the Trump administration is implementing it.

Examples of how independent agencies protect the American public:¹

- Since the creation of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), “the United States has seen an 80 percent decrease in child poisonings, a 43 percent decline in residential fires, a 47 percent drop in fire deaths, and an almost 80 percent decrease in crib-related deaths.”
- In 2024, the Federal Trade Commission “secured \$337.3 million in refunds for consumers, including more than \$41 million for Texans and \$24 million for Californians.”
- “[W]hen Washington Mutual failed in 2008, the FDIC stepped in to ensure the bank’s insured depositors—mostly individuals and small businesses—were made whole.”
- “Since its founding in 1967, [the NTSB] has investigated more than 153,000 plane incidents as well as thousands of rail, boat, and other transportation calamities.”
- “The [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission] was created in 1964 to enforce the employment discrimination provisions of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Civil Rights Act. Since 1996, the agency has recovered more than \$10.5 billion from employers,

¹ The below examples are from the Center for American Progress’s [piece](#) “How Independent Federal Agencies Help Americans.”

discouraging companies from breaking the law while also putting money back in workers' pockets.”

Polling that guides this messaging toolkit:

In March 2025, [University of Maryland's Program for Public Consultation](#) (PPC) found that **large majorities (65-69%) – bipartisan in all but one case – oppose putting seven currently independent agencies under direct Presidential control. A bipartisan majority of two-thirds (67%) said Presidents should not be able to unilaterally remove the independence of agencies.**

Respondents were asked to evaluate seven currently independent agencies, as to whether they should be put under the direct control of Presidents, who would then have the power to change or overturn agency decisions and fire commissioners. **Large majorities favor keeping the independence** of the Federal Communications Commission (66%), Federal Trade Commission (66%), Securities and Exchange Commission (67%), National Labor Relations Board (65%), the Federal Reserve's regulatory functions (67%), the Federal Election Commission (69%), and the Office of Special Counsel (67%).

Asked who should have the authority to remove the independent status of agencies, **a bipartisan majority of 67% favor keeping that authority with Congress**, rather than Presidents gaining the power to do so unilaterally. This includes majorities of Democrats (81%), Republicans (52%), and independents (73%).

A [YouGov April 2025 poll](#) found that **57% of respondents said it was unacceptable for a U.S. president to assert control over previously independent federal government agencies**, with 24% finding it acceptable.

A [March 2025 YouGov poll](#) found that **42% strongly opposed and 12% somewhat opposed giving the president power over previously independent federal agencies**, with 12% strongly supporting and 16% somewhat supporting.

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If you have suggestions or thoughts on how this messaging toolkit can be more helpful to your organization, please reach out to democracy2025@democracyforward.org.