

Year in REVIEW

2019

A Letter from our Interim President

ACS is committed to realizing the promises of the Constitution by building and leading a progressive and diverse legal community dedicated to advancing and defending democracy, equality, liberty, access to justice, and the rule of law. In 2020, ACS will formally launch our new Strategic Plan, which will provide the framework and resources to ensure that ACS will continue to be the nation's preeminent progressive legal organization, capable and ready to tackle the unique challenges we face.

With a flagrant disrespect for the rule of law modeled from the Oval Office on down, the Trump administration seeks to advance legal theories and judicial nominees that undermine the hard-earned progress we've made in the past few decades. The notion that the law should be a force for good is under threat every day as this administration tries to roll back hard-fought advances in areas like reproductive justice, LGBTQ rights, immigration, workers' rights, and environmental protection.

The Constitution and our laws must be interpreted in light of the text, history, and lived experience of our vibrant and diverse country. Our nation's institutions and centers of power should reflect these diverse experiences and work to lift up all people, rather than seek to attack and disenfranchise those who do not have a seat at the table.

ACS, with our network of over 200 lawyer and student chapters around the country, is prepared and willing to push back on these incursions. We believe and will continue to advocate that "We the People of the United States" is an inclusive commitment.

Thank you for standing with us.

Warmly,

Zinelle October

Zinelle October
Interim President, ACS

2019 Highlights



Total
Chapters:
218

New
Chapters in 2019:
13

Total
Events:
Over **1500**



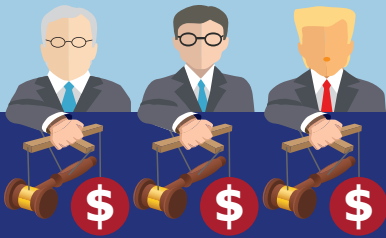
17 **#ME**
TOO **♀**
Listening Sessions
around the country

TOP RATED



A Changing Judiciary

After just 32 months in office, Donald Trump has seen the Senate confirm over 150 of his more than 200 judicial nominees, including two Supreme Court Justices. He has appointed nearly one in four appeals court judges, radically transforming the circuit courts. To put that in context, that's nearly half the number of confirmations that President Obama made during his eight years in office.



President Trump's judicial nominees fit a very clear mold. They are:

- 87% white.
- 78% male.
- Young – the average age of judges confirmed under President Trump is 50. His youngest confirmed nominee is 36.

These judges are already transforming the judiciary and will continue to do so for decades to come. An overwhelming majority of these judges represent a narrow and regressive vision of the Constitution – and, as we all know, these are lifetime appointments.

ACS firmly believes that an independent and diverse judiciary is essential to our democracy and the rule of law. We are committed to continuing our work to educate lawmakers and the general public on the importance of the courts and of building a progressive and diverse pipeline to ensure a future federal bench that better reflects America. Recent efforts include a public campaign calling for questions at presidential debates on the issue and our Love Our Constitution annual program that reached over 700 participants this year.

Building the Progressive Pipeline



ACS worked with our chapters and partners in 21 target states in 2019 to build out and map progressive pipelines on the local and state levels. ACS has a distinct advantage for our pipeline work: our diverse network of progressive lawyers. No other organization has such a robust or expansive chapter structure. As a result, ACS members have a deep understanding of the local, regional, and national political landscapes.

Law Students

ACS works with our law student chapters to identify early on those who are or should be interested in pursuing clerkships, honors programs, and fellowships. ACS staff and network members provide resources, guidance, and personal contacts for students to pursue these opportunities. ACS Faculty Advisors serve as our “boots on the ground” at law schools throughout the country, helping to facilitate connections and conversations between students and judges looking for talented clerks.

Recent Graduates

After working with our student members throughout law school, ACS provides them the opportunity to network and engage with our lawyer chapters in their communities. Our lawyer chapter members often serve as mentors, helping ACS student members connect

to job opportunities and build strong relationships within their communities.

Mid-Career – Running for Office

ACS recognizes the importance of progressives holding elected office and encourages our members to seek opportunities to serve the public in that capacity. To that end, ACS cultivates individuals who are interested in or actively pursuing local, state, and federal elected office. Through our Leaders from Law initiative, ACS provides in-depth trainings, educational opportunities, and forums for our members to engage with one another and learn best practices before they pursue political opportunities.

Appointments and Judicial Nominations

ACS members are often interested in seeking judicial positions or executive appointments at the state or federal levels. From ACS programming to networking spaces to individual mentoring, we give members tools to explore these positions and introduce them to those with experience and knowledge of the appointment and nominations processes. We continue to expand our efforts to build stronger relationships with partner organizations that are focused on developing a diverse, progressive pipeline to help ensure that ACS remains a key resource in these efforts.

No other organization I know of makes so much effort to educate and shape young progressive lawyers who care about the future of our country. ACS has a bold, positive, attainable vision for the future of our democracy, and I look forward to continuing to be a part of it.

– ACS network member on GreatNonprofits.org

Building the Network



ACS builds relationships between members at our National Convention in Washington DC

Our network is the heart and soul of ACS. It is a source of ideas, innovation, energy, and talent, all focused on achieving a fairer and more just country by advancing and defending the Constitution's fundamental principles of democracy, liberty, access to justice, and the rule of law.

Our network starts with law students eager for mentoring and leadership opportunities – and ACS provides the connections they need. Through programming featuring renowned advocates, scholars, and judges, chapters educate their members about the critical issues facing our country. Working with ACS lawyer chapters and the national office, our student chapters also provide law students with meaningful opportunities for professional development, mentoring, and participation in substantive projects.

ACS has lawyer chapters in more than 40 cities, with additional chapters in formation. These chapters regularly host programs on key legal issues. Lawyer chapters provide access to a community of lawyers, judges, and elected officials, fostering connections that can open doors and facilitating introductions at these events and beyond. They provide engagement and pro bono opportunities and help students build skills critical to career development and success in the legal community. In sum, the ACS network is a laboratory for building a comprehensive progressive agenda that can be realized through our partners and allies across the country, and through a membership and leadership that reflects the diversity of the nation.

Building Knowledge

Our chapters host over 1,000 events per year on timely and important subjects, including voting rights, LGBTQ equality, immigration, judicial nominations, administrative law, and more. Our chapters exist as a resource to connect those with shared values and provide information and messaging guidance about hot-button issues.

Taking Action



Our Constitution in the Classroom program reached over 34,000 students in 2019

We help our members connect and stay active in their legal communities. ACS chapters provide hands-on opportunities to take action, including notice and comment campaigns, as well as our national staff's work to pair members with pro bono projects and amplify local legal voices. Highlights from 2019 include ACS chapters stepping up to help bring the #MeToo movement to the legal community, holding over 17 events and listening sessions throughout the country; and our Constitution in the Classroom program, through which ACS members educated over 34,000 students across the country about the Constitution, our largest participation to date.

Criminal Justice Reform



For ACS, criminal justice reform remains a priority. We firmly believe that our criminal justice system must address longstanding racial and economic disparities, and our work will continue to advocate for initiatives and policies that recognize this imperative to achieve meaningful progress.

ACS chapters have taken the lead to aid state-specific changes and address policies that directly impact those formerly incarcerated. Some of these efforts include working with coalition partners in Florida to assist voters in advance of legislation rolling back the ballot initiative that restored voting rights to individuals with felony convictions, assisting with marijuana expungement clinics in California in light of recent changes in state law, and hosting trainings to help lawyers in our network to assist with rights restorations clinics in Tennessee.

Our State Attorneys General Project has also worked extensively to address criminal justice reform. Quarterly calls with our partner AG offices have fostered deeper coordination between states on reform options, identifying risk assessment models, fines and fees practices (specifically drivers' license suspensions), and other important issues. Police accountability has also emerged as a priority for the Project alongside our chapters' community discussions with local leaders and advocates on proactive solutions to police shootings and over-policing in places like California, New York, Chicago, and other areas.

State Attorneys General Project



State attorneys general play an increasingly important role as the last defense against an administration that seeks to curtail civil liberties and impose unethical mandates on states. ACS recognized the important role that these offices play and, as a result, has devoted significant time and resources to growing our State Attorneys General Project.

The Project develops and disseminates legal resources and hosts programming relevant to the needs of state attorneys general and the attorneys who work for them. In 2019, ACS held 19 public events with current and former state attorneys general and their staff, and convened multiple private gatherings on important issues like immigration, the census, and criminal justice reform.

Impeachment Inquiry Resources

The impeachment resources section of our website includes FAQs, in-depth analysis of legal aspects of the impeachment inquiry, and blog posts from scholars and expert practitioners (including former federal prosecutors) about breaking news. Check for frequent updates at aclaw.org/impeachment.



Convention 2019

ACS held our National Convention in Washington, DC, June 6-8, bringing together nearly 1,000 lawyers, law students, judges, and policymakers to address some of the most urgent and challenging issues confronting our nation.

Panels considered timely issues like structural reform of the Supreme Court; the role that state courts and state constitutions can play in protecting rights and liberties; and the need to develop a comprehensive government reform agenda to repair and safeguard our democracy in the post-Trump era.



Conversation with freshman Members of Congress Hon. Colin Allred, Hon. Sharice Davids, and Hon. Jennifer Wexton



2019 ACS Lifetime Achievement Award winner Bryan Stevenson

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aclaw.org/acsblog



All Voting Is Local

ACS, along with our national partners, is fighting to protect and expand the right to vote for every American through the All Voting Is Local project. We know that systemic barriers stand between eligible voters and the ballot, and we know that expanding access to the ballot is essential for our democracy. Assisting local advocates is where we can have the most impact, and that approach informs our work.

In 2018, All Voting Is Local launched on-the-ground campaigns in five swing states to protect enfranchisement and increase voter turnout. As we head into one of the most consequential elections of our lifetime, All Voting Is Local will expand these efforts through a unique combination of data-driven organizing, advocacy, and strategic communications.



1899 L Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 393-6181 • [ACSLaw.org](https://aclaw.org)

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