

Principles for the Independence of the Legal Profession

THE PREAMBLE

The objectives of the Principles for the Independence of the Legal Profession are to ensure the preservation of a robust and independent bar; to ensure that all lawyers are able to carry out their duties ethically and in compliance with the rules of professional conduct; to protect and serve the effective functioning of the independent judiciary; to promote the availability of competent counsel for all parties, without regard to interest, ideology, popular support, or government disfavor; to defend the bedrock right to counsel and all the protections of the Bill of Rights; and to support the maintenance of the rule of law for all those subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.

Attorneys and legal organizations, large and small, are urged to support and observe these Principles.

THE PRINCIPLES

As a legal organization that endorses the Principles for the Independence of the Legal Profession, we shall strive to apply these Principles with good faith and integrity. We intend to develop and implement policies, procedures, education¹, and internal reporting structures to ensure commitment to these Principles. We believe the application of these Principles will help to preserve a system of governance under the rule of law – a system in which everyone is governed by publicly available rules that are known in advance, applied equally in all cases according to their terms, and binding on both private actors, entities and the government.

Accordingly, we acknowledge our role as attorneys to:

- Defend our constitutional right to be free from government coercion or retaliation for activities that are protected by the First Amendment, including representing clients, donating to causes of concern, and expressing beliefs regarding the value of equal opportunity. This principle covers individual lawyers as well as the organizations with which they are associated.
- Respect the Rules of Professional Conduct binding upon us as members of the legal profession, representatives of clients, and officers of the legal system – including our duty, when necessary, to challenge official actions.
- Uphold our duty as members of the legal profession to provide legal services to those unable to pay, by providing legal services directly, or to organizations that are designed primarily to address the needs of people of limited means. Protecting the rule of law is also an essential task required of all members of the bar and must be safe from any interference by the government or any other organization. The duty to provide equal access to justice is a paramount obligation of all members of the legal profession.

¹ Attorneys and legal organizations should strive to educate others in the legal profession about the continued need for professional commitment to these Principles.

- Undertake our duties as attorneys, in accordance with our oath, mindful of the importance of honest counsel in ensuring access to justice to all who seek our counsel and in maintaining public confidence in the actual and perceived integrity of the legal process.
- Encourage the application of these Principles by all those we represent be they individuals, businesses, or federal and state governments.
- Refuse to accept any representation where a condition of such representation would violate any of the foregoing.