

LAWYERS DEFENDING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Former Federal Judges, Attorneys General and Bar Presidents Join Hundreds of Lawyers Nationwide in Condemning AG Barr's Actions and Supporting DOJ Employees

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Eight former federal court judges, three former American Bar Association Presidents, six former state and local bar association Presidents and four former state Attorneys General were among the hundreds of distinguished attorneys who have signed onto a new Open Letter warning against Attorney General William Barr's "partisan misuse" of the Department of Justice (DOJ) in the challenging election period ahead. The Letter expresses support for DOJ professionals who stand up to such misuse. It states: "They will have broad support in the legal profession, whose best traditions they will be upholding." Made public today, the Letter is signed by 700 lawyers nationwide.

Signers include:

- Thomas Vanaskie, Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, Third Circuit (Ret.)
- Thelton Henderson, Judge, U.S. District Court, Northern District of California (Ret.)
- Grant Woods, former Attorney General, Arizona
- Cheryl Niro, Past President, Illinois State Bar Association
- Marna Tucker, former President, DC Bar
- Lauren Rikleen, former President, Boston Bar Association

Grant Woods, former Arizona Attorney General, expressed deep concern: "An army of government lawyers, mobilized in the wrong direction, can do untold harm to democracy. The strongest bulwark against a partisan leader like Attorney General Barr resides in conscientious professionals who stand up for the Constitution."

The group sponsoring the Open Letter is **Lawyers Defending American Democracy (LDAD)**. Its leader and co-founder is former Massachusetts Attorney General Scott Harshbarger. His co-founder, Gary Ratner, was a co-author and lead signer of the widely-publicized July 2020 [ethics complaint filed](#) against Attorney General Barr with the DC Bar's Office of Disciplinary Counsel.

"By word and deed," today's Open Letter asserts, "Attorney General Barr has demonstrated a willingness to politicize the DOJ by backing and helping to implement the President's most partisan and extreme views. Mr. Trump's refusal to commit to a peaceful transition of power [...] heightens our concern about what actions the Attorney General might take that would undermine the vote and the rule of law."

Retired federal District Court Judge Thelton Henderson stated: "Presiding over a federal courtroom for 37 years, I relied on a nonpartisan, independent Justice Department. I fear that under Attorney General Barr, that trust has been shredded."

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About Lawyers Defending American Democracy

Founded in 2019, Lawyers Defending American Democracy (LDAD) is a 501(c)(4) organization dedicated to fostering adherence to the rule of law. LDAD has issued a variety of Open Letters and statements calling for adherence by public officials to the rule of law and encouraging fellow lawyers, the leaders of bar associations, and the legal academy to join in speaking out against threats to the rule of law.

In late May, the group filed two *amicus* briefs in the case of Michael Flynn and in July co-authored an ethics complaint against Attorney General William Barr, filed with the DC Bar.