
LAWYERS DEFENDING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Students Strengthening American Democracy

Our Origin Story

Credit for this initiative originates with Amherst College Professor of Jurisprudence and Political Science, Austin Sarat, who saw the critical need for students to learn more about the nature of democracy and why it is so important to protect it. As a part of his myriad activities to teach and write about our constitutional form of government and its vulnerabilities, Professor Sarat galvanized a group of students to undertake an important mission: engage their peers across the campus in the cause of saving democracy.

Out of these conversations came a simple but critical idea. They would create a pledge asking students to agree to pursue a democracy-related job, internship, or volunteer opportunity during their time at Amherst College. These student leaders immediately rallied throughout the campus and launched the “Take the Pledge” campaign. More than 350 students have already heeded the call and signed the pledge.

In addition, to further support efforts to mobilize students around the cause of protecting democracy, Amherst College has created a new Fellowship Program. The college’s Democracy Fellows will conduct research, continue promoting the Take the Pledge campaign, and

implement other steps to become involved in efforts to understand and help end the threats facing our democratic institutions.

The success of this Amherst experience demonstrates what can be accomplished with student engagement combined with guidance and support from administrators and faculty.