

LAWYERS DEFENDING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

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Ethics Complaint Targets Boris Epshteyn's Alleged Role in Trump Administration Campaign to Pressure Law Firms

BOSTON, MA – Lawyers Defending American Democracy, Democracy Defenders Fund, and a coalition of distinguished law professors and retired judges [have asked the Attorney Grievance Committee of the Supreme Court of the State of New York to investigate](#) whether Boris Epshteyn violated the New York Rules of Professional Conduct while purportedly leading the Trump administration's efforts to intimidate and silence major national law firms. The administration's efforts included intimidating and coercing lawyers and law firms through the issuance of a series of punitive executive orders and memoranda issued against individual law firms, which led nine law firms to enter into settlement agreements with the administration to avoid these executive orders or to have them rescinded.

“One of the first things the Trump administration did was to target some of our nation’s largest law firms to prevent them from joining any legal challenges to the Administration’s illegal agenda,” said Virginia Canter, chief counsel and director of ethics and anti-corruption at Democracy Defenders Fund. “Our democracy relies on the freedom of lawyers to represent organizations and individuals of their choice, without fear of retaliation by the federal government. Boris Epshteyn appears to have played a critical - yet, highly secretive - role in this pressure campaign. It is imperative that there is transparency regarding these efforts and that he is held accountable for any possible violations he may have committed while trying to intimidate these firms and the legal community as a whole.”

[The complaint](#) details Epshteyn’s apparent role in the effort, alleging that he personally led settlement negotiations on behalf of the Administration and later participated in additional negotiations in which at least one firm agreed to provide unpaid work for the Administration.

“Lawyers need to stand together in defense of our profession and our justice system,” stated Mark Friedman, a principal author of the ethics complaint and a volunteer with Lawyers Defending American Democracy. “This administration's efforts to silence law firms are among the most egregious actions they have taken. That a lawyer may have led this activity in violation of the ethics of his profession is something that needs to be examined.”

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Lawyers Defending American Democracy (LDAD) was founded in 2019 and is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the protection of the rule of law, the Constitution, and democracy. LDAD's work includes authoring Calls-to-Action, amicus briefs, and articles calling for adherence to the rule of law and encouraging the legal profession and the public to join in speaking out against threats to the norms, freedoms, and principles of our democratic institutions. LDAD's most recent initiative is Meeting the Moment, a call to lawyers across the country to engage with their communities in response to the attacks on our democratic institutions. For further information about LDAD, see <https://ldad.org/>