

Project Overview

Social Equity in Governance Standing Panel Project

Background: Over the past several decades, the United States has established a range of laws and administrative practices aimed at promoting broader access to opportunity. In recent months, the federal government has issued a substantial number of executive orders that represent a significant shift in policy direction. These actions have included changes to language used in federal programs and guidance, such as the removal of references to “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” (DEI), and adjustments to how certain community, health, and educational programs are structured and funded. Early reports suggest these changes have had tangible effects in communities across the country. This research project aims to analyze the nature of these policy changes and assess their practical implications for public programs and services.



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Project Description

The Academy's Standing Panel on Social Equity in Governance has started a research initiative looking at the actual impacts of the recent Executive Orders and other actions around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. This includes impacts to the workforce and programs at the federal, state, and local levels and in higher education.

The scope of this project will include an evaluation of:

- Programmatic impacts at the federal, state, local, and tribal levels;
- Restrictions on speech and other protected rights; and
- Impacts on service delivery and government's ability to meet the needs of the people and the communities it serve.

The Academy has appointed a six-member Panel of Fellows to oversee and guide this study. Information on the Panel of Fellows and Study Team is provided on the next page. A final report with findings will be completed by November 2026.

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Panel of Fellows

Mark Funkhouser (Panel Chair),* Mark Funkhouser is currently the Publisher of *Governing* and the Founding Director of the Governing Institute. Previously, he chaired the International Center for Performance Auditing and led as Principal at Mark Funkhouser Speaks. His career in municipal government was especially distinguished during his time in Kansas City, Missouri, where he served first as City Auditor and later as Mayor. Alongside these roles, he shaped minds as an adjunct instructor at the University of Kansas and at Park College's Graduate School of Public Affairs and provided pivotal training at the Government Audit Training Institute part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Graduate School. His expertise was sought by various government bodies, including as an advisor to Ohio's Legislative Services Commission, a consultant for the State Auditor's Office in Kentucky, and Director of Performance Audit for Tennessee's Division of State Audit. Early in his career, Funkhouser's commitment to the public good shone through his work in Pennsylvania, where he consulted for the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee and served as a vocational rehabilitation counselor. As the president of Funkhouser & Associates, his enduring dedication to governance and civic improvement continued to make a lasting impact.

Margaret Simms,* Margaret C. Simms is a Nonresident Fellow at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. Until March 2017, she directed the Low Income Working Families project at Urban. Prior to joining the Urban Institute in July 2007, she was Vice President for Governance and Economic Analysis at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. From May 1 through December 31, 2006, she served as Interim President. Prior to joining the staff of the Joint Center, she was a program director at the Urban Institute. She began her career in academia, with appointments at the University of California at Santa Cruz and at Atlanta University. A nationally recognized expert on the economic well-being of African Americans, her current work focuses on low-income families and on issues of race and economic well-being. She has been a NAPA fellow since 2019 and is Vice Chair of the Social Equity in Governance Standing Panel.

Susan Gooden.* Susan Gooden has built an impressive career in public administration and policy. As Dean and Professor at the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University, she has led with distinction. Her previous experience includes serving as Executive Director of The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute at the VCU Wilder School. Before joining VCU, she held multiple roles at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, including Associate Professor at the Center for Public Administration and Policy, Founding Director of the Race and Social Policy Research Center, and Director of the MPA Program at Virginia Tech's Richmond Center. Susan has also contributed her expertise at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, where she was a Post-Doctoral Fellow in The Carolina Minority Postdoctoral Scholars Program and worked as a Research Evaluator for the Community Social Work Program. She expanded her impact as a consultant with MDRC and was honored with a Fulbright Specialist Award to Zayed University in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Her journey reflects a steadfast dedication to leadership, public service, and the advancement of social policy.

Shannon Portillo.* Shannon Portillo is a professor at and the director of the School of Public Affairs. Her scholarship explores how policies, rules and norms shape the work of public organizations. Her work helps scholars and practitioners understand how inequities are institutionalized in public organizations including local government, policing and the military. Portillo served as co-chair of Kansas Governor Laura Kelly's Commission on Racial Equity and Justice and on Douglas County Board of Commissioners.

Julia Carboni.* Julia L. Carboni, Ph.D., is an award-winning scholar and leader dedicated to fostering inclusive communities and advancing democracy. She is the Director of the William D. Ruckelshaus Center, a Professor at Washington State University, and a Distinguished Scholar at the University of Washington. With a Ph.D. in Management from the University of Arizona, Dr. Carboni has held faculty roles at Syracuse and Indiana Universities, where she advanced collaborative governance and civic engagement initiatives. At the Ruckelshaus Center, she leads efforts to strengthen policymaking in Washington State, including the Project for Civic Health, a partnership to reduce polarization and enhance civic collaboration. She co-designed the Washington Collaborative Elected Leaders Institute, training over 300 elected officials in collaborative leadership. Dr. Carboni's research on governance and public management is widely published and funded by organizations such as the Gates Foundation and IBM Center for the Business of Government. A contributor to professional and community organizations, including ARNOVA, she has also co-founded initiatives like the Indy Food Council. Her work reflects a commitment to advancing democracy through research, leadership, and civic engagement.

Pamela Joshi. Pamela Joshi is dedicated to improving social and economic policies and reducing the administrative burden of human service programs to better serve historically underserved communities, families, and children. As part of the Institute for Equity in Child Opportunity & Healthy development (IECOHD), her research examines how structural factors (e.g., job quality, segregation) and system-level barriers (e.g., exclusionary eligibility criteria, complex applications) shape equitable access to essential resources and opportunities that drive health and well-being outcomes. To address the lack of systematic attention to equity in policy analysis, she led the development of the Policy Equity Assessment (PEA) framework, a tool for evaluating racial equity in public policies affecting children's healthy development. Joshi brings an equity perspective to diverse policy discussions. She served as a senior policy advisor to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Human Services Policy and was a member of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's Child Opportunity Gap consensus study. She currently serves on the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston's Community Development Research Advisory Council and facilitates a research collaborative on Actionable Assessments of Policy Effectiveness and Access for the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children and Families' Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. Joshi's background is in using policy analysis tools to identify and address racial/ethnic inequities in social policies and in improving data quality for policy equity analysis.

PROJECT STAFF

Brenna Isman, Director of Academy Studies

Erika Cintron, Senior Research Associate

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