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Distrust in Democracy: Insights from the Third Biennial Hubbard Conference

Restoring Faith in Democratic Institutions: The Hubbard Conference on Law and Education

Distrust in democratic institutions is nothing new in America. Surveys commonly find that public trust in government has been sinking over the last century, even as it rises and falls in response to major events. [The Pew Research Center](#) reports that the public's trust reached its peak in 1964 before the start of the Vietnam War contributed to a sharp decline.

In the last twenty years, however, the peaks and valleys of public trust in government which characterized the twentieth century have plateaued at a persistently low level. According to the same Pew data, the number of Americans who say they trust the government in Washington to do what is right “just about always” or “most of the time” has not been higher than 30% since 2007.

Advances in technology are widely thought to have played a role in eroding trust. In the 2000s and 2010s, the new prominence of social media changed the way Americans understood current events and looked for trustworthy information. In the 2020s, generative AI is making it easier than ever before for anyone to falsify images, audio, or video and rapidly circulate it on algorithmically optimized social media feeds. Trust is difficult to cultivate in an information landscape rife with false information.

Many have linked this widespread decline in societal trust with a worldwide decline in democracy. [Our World In Data](#) reports that the number of electoral democracies in the world has fallen to eighty-seven, down from the 2016 high of ninety-five. According to the same classification, ninety-two countries are either closed autocracies or electoral autocracies in 2025, eight more than in 2016. Even fewer countries are classified as liberal democracies. There were only thirty-nine in 2016; in 2025, there were thirty-one.

Many fear that the United States, like other countries around the world, is autocratizing.

Sensing the urgency of this problem, sociolegal scholars and practitioners of law are working to understand what is causing the American public to distrust institutions, to explore ways that trust can be rebuilt in American society, and to seek solutions to public distrust that could strengthen the rule of law and democracy in America.

The third biennial William C. Hubbard Conference on Law and Education, “Restoring Faith in Democratic Institutions,” convened a group of scholars and lawyers in a wide range of disciplines and specializations to share their knowledge



ABF Interim Executive Director Bryant Garth addresses the audience.



William C. Hubbard gives the keynote address.

and insight into the many threats facing American democracy today. Held at the Gleacher Center on the University of Chicago's downtown campus on April 10, 2026, the conference was sponsored by

the American Bar Foundation, the Malyi Center for the Study of Institutional and Legal Integrity, and Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law.

The William C. Hubbard Conference on Law and Education

With a lead investment from William H. Neukom, the ABF established the William C. Hubbard Law and Education Conference Endowment in 2020. The endowment has been further supported by the generosity of numerous donors, including many Fellows of the American Bar Foundation. The Hubbard Endowment is the primary source of funding for the biennial William C. Hubbard Conference, hosted by the ABF with partner institutions in the sociolegal research field. The conference aims to recognize and disseminate innovative and significant scholarship on law and education. The conference is named in honor of William C. Hubbard, who has been a fierce supporter of law and education throughout his career.

Four Types of Political Systems, [from Our World in Data](#):

Closed Autocracy: Citizens do not have the right to choose either the chief executive of the government or the legislature through multiparty elections.

Electoral Autocracy: Citizens have the right to choose the chief executive and the legislature through multiparty elections, but they lack some freedoms, such as the freedoms of association or expression that make the elections meaningful, free, and fair.

Electoral Democracy: Citizens have the right to choose the chief executive and the legislature in meaningful, free, and fair multiparty elections.

Liberal Democracy: Citizens have individual and minority rights, are equal before the law, and the actions of the executive are constrained by the legislature and the courts.

This way of thinking about misinformation—as something that can be managed with fact-checking and media literacy—could be wrong.

Hubbard is the Cofounder and Chair of the Board of Directors of the [World Justice Project](#) (WJP), an organization focused on interdisciplinary research, advocacy, and education surrounding the rule of law. Hubbard has deep ties to the American Bar Foundation, having served as its president from 2010 to 2012. He is also a previous president of the American Bar Association (ABA) and of the American Bar Endowment. He serves as the Dean of the University of South Carolina Joseph F. Rice School of Law, where he is also the University of South Carolina Educational Foundation Distinguished Professor.

William H. Neukom, whose gift made the Hubbard Conference possible, cofounded the World Justice Project alongside Hubbard, and served as the organization's President and CEO. The project was launched as an ABA presidential initiative during Neukom's term as ABA president. A Philanthropist Fellow of the ABF and former ABF Board Member, Neukom was a committed supporter of the ABF's mission and programs throughout his life. [The William H. Neukom Fellows Research Chair in Diversity and Law](#), which supports scholars investigating legal and social issues contributing to inequities in the law, is another ABF initiative supported by a lead investment by Neukom. Neukom passed away in 2025.

Bryant Garth, then the ABF's Interim Executive Director, acknowledged Hubbard's impact in his introduction to the third biennial conference. "He represents what is best in the American legal profession," Garth said. "We need more lawyers and educators exactly like him."

Are We Misunderstanding Misinformation?

The first panel of the day, moderated by ABF Research Professor Jothie Rajah, sought to address the problem of misinformation and disinformation. While the two words are often used interchangeably, they describe different kinds of false information: Misinformation is false information that is spread accidentally, without the intent to harm, while disinformation is spread deliberately and designed with the intent to mislead others. Both misinformation and disinformation lead to confusion about the nature of reality, and the spread of both is thought to be a driving force behind the lack of trust many people have in government institutions, news media, experts, and other sources of information.

While traditional news outlets can and have been sources or amplifiers of false information for decades, social media is the driving force behind the deluge of misinformation and disinformation in contemporary American life. Social media platforms, for their part, have taken a variety of approaches to dealing with misinformation on their platforms. [Meta](#) states that it will sometimes reduce the distribution of content identified by a fact-checker as false and removes misinformation in limited cases. X, formerly Twitter, has shifted from fact-checkers to "community notes:" context or corrections contributed by users (and bots) which have sometimes themselves become [vehicles of misinformation](#). Some organizations and schools have taken up efforts to improve

"The number of people who actually hold or endorse false beliefs in general is small." — Erik C. Nisbet

media literacy with the goal of making people more able to spot misinformation when they encounter it.

During the panel, Erik C. Nisbet argued that this way of thinking about misinformation—as something that can be managed with fact-checking and media literacy—could be wrong. Nisbet is the Owen L. Coon Endowed Professor of Policy Analysis & Communication and the Director of the Center for Communication and Public Policy in the School of Communication at Northwestern University.

Nisbet explained that the dominant model assumes a causal chain between misinformation and social harm: people encounter false information, internalize it as true, and then do something harmful. This way of thinking has driven investment in

fact-checking and media literacy programs, Nisbet argues, but those efforts may not be getting at the root of the problem. "The number of people who actually hold or endorse false beliefs in general is small," Nisbet said.

The problem isn't that people believe lies, but that they are losing trust. Exposure to false information erodes trust in public institutions and in all information, Nisbet argues, more than it leads people to change their beliefs or take any particular action. The lack of confidence created by misinformation, to Nisbet, "is actually more consequential and more destructive to democracy than any type of belief in a false fact."

Nisbet noted that interventions like fact-checking and media literacy training can



Conference participants during a Q&A session.

increase skepticism in ways that can be counterproductive, because they increase skepticism toward *all* information. This leads him to conclude that, because people are more inclined to reject truth than to believe in falsehoods, a strong approach against false information should seek to increase trust in credible sources rather than seeking to decrease trust in false information, which is already often viewed as untrustworthy.

Ray Block Jr.'s approach to managing false information was similarly informed by an emphasis on the importance of trust. Block is the Laurence and Lynne Brown-McCourtney Early Career Professor in the McCourtney Institute for Democracy and a Professor of Political Science and African American Studies at Penn State. Block is also the Inaugural Michael D. Rich Distinguished Chair for Countering Truth Decay at the RAND Corporation. Block connected the erosion of trust with political polarization.

"We are polarized, and polarization is correlated with disinformation," he said.

Block sees community-level interventions as being more effective at building trust than interventions into state or federal law. These interventions are also easier to implement. Block discussed interventions that encourage people living in the same geographic area to discuss problems in their communities and work toward solutions. These conversations produce impactful solutions while building community and social relationships, Block said, which he believes are extremely important for sustaining democracy.

V. S. Subrahmanian brought a technological dimension to the conversation. Subrahmanian is the Walter P. Murphy Professor of Computer Science at

Northwestern University, where he is also the Codirector of Northwestern's Network for Collaborative Intelligence. He is a Faculty Fellow at the Northwestern Buffett Institute for Global Affairs.

Subrahmanian played an audio clip of a conversation between Nicolas Maduro, then President of Venezuela, and one of his top administrative officials. The clip, which included action movie-like background music, included a realistic-sounding discussion between the two men about manipulating the outcome of an upcoming election.

The clip was uploaded to the [Global Online Deepfake Detection System \(GODDS\)](#), a project of Subrahmanian's at Northwestern. The online tool allows journalists to upload content and have it analyzed to determine if it is likely real or fake.

The clip of Maduro was identified by GODDS as a likely fake. Subrahmanian speculated that background music was added to the clip to make it harder for human listeners to detect the clip as fake—making tools like GODDS all the more useful for journalists who need to quickly assess information they encounter.

Subrahmanian's research has also focused on analyzing when deepfakes are produced and circulated in high numbers. In examining the 2024 election, his research found that increased deepfake activity occurred three or four days before a significant election event. The deepfakes also garner more engagement before an election event than after.

With an understanding of the patterns of deepfake distribution, regulators can prioritize resources around key election events when influence attacks are most likely, Subrahmanian argued. This could

"The civil rights frameworks of the 1960s are at an end, and the VRA is only the leading indicator that the framework is going to have to change."

—Guy-Uriel Charles

make it possible for social media platforms to respond to deepfakes early, before they're able to spread widely.

The End of the VRA, and the Rise of Voter ID

The Voting Rights Act (VRA), passed in 1965, prohibited racial discrimination in voting. It was a landmark achievement of the civil rights movement. [According to the Brennan Center](#), the disparity in registration rates between Black and white voters fell substantially in the decade following the act's passing. The act is also responsible for the requirement that voting materials be provided in multiple languages, among other protections for voters.

While the act has been reauthorized by Congress multiple times, its constitutionality has been repeatedly challenged. Rulings by the Supreme Court about the act have limited its usefulness as a tool against racial discrimination in voting.

In 2013, *Shelby County v. Holder* effectively ended the preclearance requirement, which required that states with significant histories of discrimination obtain federal approval before making changes to their voting laws or districts to ensure these changes were not racially discriminatory. [In her dissent](#), Justice Ginsburg memorably compared the decision to "throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet."

More recently, the 2026 *Louisiana v. Callais* decision increased the requirements for

vote dilution claims under Section 2 of the VRA, making it more difficult for voters to argue that their vote has been diluted by redistricting. In this decision, the Court also ruled that a Louisiana voting map designed to be racially balanced was unconstitutional, allowing the state's governor, Jeff Landry, to postpone Louisiana's May primaries so that the state could draw new maps. Many have speculated that *Callais* will lead other states to follow suit in drawing maps that underrepresent Black voters.

These two landmark cases and a number of others have made the VRA less effective as a tool against racially motivated voter suppression; moreover, new tactics of voter suppression are not well addressed by the act.

Scholars on the second panel of the day addressed the legacy of the VRA and considered how voting rights can be protected against racial discrimination. The panel was moderated by Traci Burch, a Research Professor at the ABF and a Professor of Political Science at Northwestern University. The panel began with Guy-Uriel E. Charles, who spoke about the history of the VRA and considered what might come in its place. Charles is the Charles Ogletree, Jr. Professor of Law and the Faculty Director of the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race & Justice at Harvard Law School.

Charles spoke to the VRA's current status, explaining that remedies to discrimination are increasingly being viewed as discriminatory in and of themselves. This

makes it difficult for legal remedies that have been effective against discrimination in the past to have an impact. “The structural mechanism that we’ve known as the VRA is not coming back,” Charles said. “Quite frankly, I think the civil rights frameworks of the 1960s are at an end, and the VRA is only the leading indicator that the framework is going to have to change.”

Sean Morales Doyle echoed this sentiment. Doyle is the Director of the Brennan Center’s Voting Rights and Elections Program. He reflected on research produced by the Brennan Center which investigated a claim that the *Shelby County* decision rested on: that preclearance may have been necessary in 1965, but Black voters were no longer experiencing systemic discrimination by 2013. Researchers at the Brennan Center examined the racial turnout gap—the difference in voter turnout rates between Black and white voters—to determine if this claim was true. Their research focused on

voter records from across the country from 2008 to 2022.

“What we found is that the racial turnout gap was growing nationwide during this time period,” Doyle said. After the *Shelby County* decision, “the racial turnout gap in previously covered jurisdictions—jurisdictions that were previously subject to preclearance—grew about twice as fast as in the rest of the country.”

The research pointed to local decision making, including things like moving polling places, as being a driver of racial discrimination. Without the preclearance requirement, the impact of these changes can be harder to stop and harder to see, Doyle noted.

Janelle Wong, whose presentation focused on voter ID laws and documentary proof of citizenship laws, spoke to some of the new ways that voters are experiencing racial discrimination. Wong is the Director of



Conference participants attending a reception following the conference.

Asian American Studies and a Professor in the departments of American Studies and Government and Politics at the University of Maryland. Wong explained that about a third of people in the US are not sure if ID is required to vote. Voter ID laws vary from state to state.

Voter ID laws require voters to present a government ID—often a photo ID—to vote, register to vote, and/or receive a ballot. Stricter documentary proof of citizenship laws require that a person proves their citizenship to vote. [The SAVE Act](#), which was passed by the House of Representatives in April 2025, would make these laws nationwide policy. Under the act, all Americans would be required to provide proof of citizenship to register to vote and to show a valid photo ID to vote. Proof of residence would also be required, and universal mail-in voting would be prohibited, among other restrictions. At the time of this writing, the act remains stalled in the Senate.

Wong argued that the impacts of these laws will be unpredictable because Americans' access to their citizenship documents is not uniform. She explained that survey data have shown that Republican voters are less likely than other voters to have a valid passport, while people who have changed their names (including some married women and transgender people), lower income people, people in rural communities, and younger people are less likely to have access to documents proving their citizenship and bearing their correct name. While the survey uncovered some larger national trends, Wong noted that these trends also vary from state to state.

The complicated ways these laws can affect voters should be a caution to those attempting to use voter ID laws with partisan goals, Wong argued. "These restrictive

provisions affect everybody," she said. "And they affect everyone in a really negative way, producing further barriers to voters."

If the SAVE Act does pass the Senate and is signed into law, the ramifications would be difficult to predict. Undoubtedly, it would become more challenging for all Americans to vote, further weakening democracy and the rule of law in America.

In 1965, the VRA was a monumental step forward for civil rights in America. In 2026, it can't protect voters from all forms of racial discrimination. While the right strategy or framework to replace the VRA is not entirely clear, researchers spoke strongly to a need for more protections for voters of color and a shift in thinking about what democracy is and how it should function.

William C. Hubbard on the Global Decline of the Rule of Law

The work of the World Justice Project was the focus of the [keynote address](#), delivered by William C. Hubbard.

The World Justice Project is an independent, multidisciplinary organization working to create knowledge, build awareness, and stimulate action to advance the rule of law worldwide. Like the ABF, the WJP takes an interdisciplinary approach to the legal issues its research addresses.

[The Rule of Law Index](#) is a signature project of the WJP since 2008. The index evaluates countries around the world on eight elements of access to justice and gives each country an overall score. The index has found, for the eighth year in a row, that the rule of law has declined in most countries. In the 2025 report, the US ranks 27th out of 143 countries overall.

Thousands of experts from around the world contribute to the index, which also relies on hundreds of thousands of surveys, many of which are conducted in person. “It’s an expensive, time-consuming, labor-intensive process, but we believe in the validity of it,” Hubbard said. Data from the WJP is used by the OECD, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, and other organizations.

In the 2025 report, the US ranked 112th out of 143 countries on accessibility and affordability of civil legal justice and 106th out of 143 countries on the impartiality of the criminal justice system. Hubbard noted that many Americans feel that the justice system is unfair, and that the public’s trust in systems of government more generally is failing. “A powerful majority of Americans recognize that our system of checks and balances is not working well,” he said.

Research is an “imperative” part of the fight for truth, Hubbard said, particularly when traditional guardrails on power—institutions, norms, and other protections—are failing

or under attack. “I believe this research also supports the premise that virtues such as order, humility, industry, sincerity, moderation, and justice are all key to the health of our nation and the survival of our republic,” he went on to say.

Hubbard also highlighted education as a cornerstone of democracy. “The ideals of education, virtue, and happiness are inextricably intertwined, and a threat against one is a threat against them all. That’s why the attacks on academic freedom are so harmful,” he said. “We as citizens must do all we can to protect it.”

Democratic Backsliding is a Worldwide Problem

As the WJP’s research shows, the decline of democracy is a global phenomenon with complex causes. The third panel of the day examined the unique ways in which democratic backsliding is manifesting in countries around the world. Tom Ginsburg led three panelists in conversation on the global rise of authoritarianism. Ginsburg is a Research Professor at the ABF, and the Leo Spitz Distinguished Service Professor of International Law and Ludwig and Hilde Wolf Research Scholar at the University of Chicago.

Richard W. Carney began by describing the relationship between economic development, capitalism, and authoritarianism. Carney is an Associate Professor and Head of the Global and Area Studies Division at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in Shenzhen. He noted that there has been a clear trend toward authoritarianism worldwide, and that this trend is particularly concentrated in emerging and developing economies in Central Asia, South Asia, and Africa. These

Factors considered by WJP's Rule of Law Index:

- **Constraints on Government Powers**
- **Absence of Corruption**
- **Open Government**
- **Fundamental Rights**
- **Order and Security**
- **Regulatory Enforcement**
- **Civil Justice**
- **Criminal Justice**

economies account for an increasingly large share of the global GDP. Carney attributed this rise in part to the political and economic influence of China in these regions.

Laura Gamboa continued the conversation by considering how the trends of authoritarianism play out in the United States and across the Americas. Gamboa is an Associate Professor of Democracy and Global Affairs at the University of Notre Dame. In her analysis, she drew a comparison to Colombia in 2009 and Venezuela in 2004, saying that there is debate about whether the US has become a competitive authoritarian regime or not. “The checks and balances in the United States are very limited, but there’s still some minimum amount of vertical accountability, via voting and organized movements, like protests and demonstrations,” she said.

Aziz Z. Huq considered the current position of the United States in relation to

authoritarianism in terms of “continuities and novelties:” that both existing weaknesses in the structure of government and novel uses of power by the Trump administration have underpinned democratic backsliding in the United States. Huq is the Frank and Bernice J. Greenberg Professor of Law at the University of Chicago. He is also an ABF Collaborating Scholar.

Huq noted that the “built-in assumption that branches of government will necessarily be averse to one another” is one such continuity, as is the assumption that the structure of appointments to the judiciary would “ensure an air gap” between the executive and judicial branches. In both cases, Huq said, partisanship has “overwhelmed any kind of institutional effects within nationally elected actors.” Coordination between branches of government to meet partisan ends is nothing new, and it is useful to any party attempting to consolidate power.



Jothie Rajah, V. S. Subrahmanian, Erik C. Nisbet, and Ray Block Jr. during the first panel of the day.

Existing weaknesses in the structure of government and novel uses of power by the Trump administration have underpinned democratic backsliding in the United States.

The “novelties” Huq pointed to include the current administration's use of regulatory power. In one such novelty, [conditions were placed by the FTC on two merging advertisement agencies](#), Omnicom and IPG, holding that the company resulting from the merger would be prohibited from directing advertising away from media publishers based on the publishers’ political or ideological viewpoints. In Huq’s view, this decision makes it harder for content that is racist or extremist to lose financial support from advertisers, potentially bolstering the ability of far-right views to be expressed openly on social networks and in media.

Political Violence Reshapes Democracy

When we think of political violence, we often think of the most shocking, high-profile incidents; assassinations or attempted assassinations of presidents in particular leave their marks on the psyches of Americans. The reality of political violence is more varied and has complex effects on democracy.

Political violence has also been on the rise for at least the last ten years, [as The Independent has reported](#), with more partisan political violence occurring or being planned in the US since 2016 than in the twenty-five years before 2016.

The final panel of the conference, moderated by Michael S. Kang, took on this important issue. Kang is the Class of 1940 Professor of Law at Northwestern University.

It isn’t only high-profile politicians who become the targets of political violence—local elected officials and government workers are often unseen targets of violence. Laurel Harbridge-Yong spoke to the impact on democracy of violence directed at local officials. She is a Professor of Political Science and a Faculty Fellow at the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University.

Harbridge-Yong discussed qualitative interview data which revealed that non-white people and women in elected roles were burdened by violence, harassment, and threats more than their peers. Individuals belonging to these groups also reported that they experienced more worry about harassment and violence. Threats and violence can and have led elected officials to leave their positions or withdraw from the public; Harbridge-Yong cited [Adam Harbridge \(no relation\)](#), the former mayor of The Village, Oklahoma, as one elected official who resigned following persistent harassment. For groups that are already underrepresented in elected office, such as people of color, LGBT people, and women, bearing the burden of harassment, violence, and threats can further limit representation.

Harbridge-Yong explained that finding a solution to the violence faced by local elected officials and government workers can be complicated. She noted that when elected officials seek to use government resources to procure security for themselves, their families, or their homes, “constituents can see it as a kind of self-dealing or enriching yourself at the

cost of the public.” Preventative measures, like de-escalation trainings, investment in mental health support, and making threat assessment plans were seen as favorable alternatives by those surveyed in the same study.

Gowri Ramachandran brought the perspective of election workers into the conversation. Ramachandran is the Director of Elections and Security in the Brennan Center’s Elections and Government Program.

Before 2020, election workers were often unseen. Most election workers, Ramachandran said, are women; their work can be varied and challenging. “It’s extremely underpaid work, even compared to other sorts of government positions,” she said. Some election workers are themselves elected, but often these positions are unelected and very administrative, with some election workers also certifying marriages, keeping records, or doing other

kinds of clerical work beyond administering elections.

When conspiracy theories began to circulate about the 2020 election, these previously unseen workers became targets of threats, harassment, and violence. “This experience of being scrutinized and receiving all these threats was a real shock to this population,” Ramachandran said.

The Brennan Center has worked to advocate for legal changes that could help protect election workers from public scrutiny. One measure the organization has advocated for is the expansion of address confidentiality programs. Many states already had these programs, which allow people experiencing domestic violence to have their address removed from their public voter file, making their address more difficult to discover. The Brennan Center has found success in getting legislatures to expand these programs to cover election workers, but



ABF Research Professor Traci Burch during a Q&A session.

bringing address confidentiality to states without the program already in place has proven more challenging.

Banning weapons in state capitals and making it possible for candidates to ban weapons from their events is another violence prevention strategy the Brennan Center has advocated for—with far more opposition. Even in Minnesota, where Melissa Hortman, a State Senator, was assassinated, [conservatives in the legislature were resistant](#) to these kinds of reforms.

Part of the challenge of addressing political violence stems from the fact that it can take so many different forms. Jay Young shared his insights into the diverse ways in which judges, elected officials, and election workers have been targets of harassment. Young is the Senior Director of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties at Common Cause.

Young described a recent spate of [“pizza-doxings”](#) affecting federal judges, in which

perpetrators ordered pizzas to be delivered to the homes of judges in the name of Daniel Anderl, the son of US District Judge Esther Salas, who was killed by a gunman in an attack targeting his mother.

Young explained that harassment can also take more diffuse forms, including mass FOIA requests for sensitive information. Key swipe data for government buildings can be obtained in a FOIA request, for instance, and that information can be used to stalk an elected official as they arrive at and leave government buildings for work.

Young’s comments put the statistics of earlier presentations into context. “What all the data that you’ve heard about means is that people are feeling threatened, they’re feeling discouraged, they want to leave their jobs, and this is producing a brain drain of people who know how to do this work,” Young said. “They don’t know us anymore, and if they did know us, they’re scared of us now.”



Laurel Harbidge-Young, Gowri Ramachandran, and Jay Young during the last panel of the day.

Legal Scholarship in a Changing World

Jeffery Rosen's 2025 book *The Pursuit of Happiness* profiles several framers of the Constitution with the goal of understanding what the "happiness" in that famous phrase meant in their lives.

William C. Hubbard reflected some of Rosen's thinking in his keynote. "Those famous words in the Declaration of Independence do not mean the pursuit of pleasure or feeling good," he said. "The pursuit of happiness meant the pursuit of virtue, industry, temperance, moderation, and sincerity. To the founders, the health of the republic depends on the pursuit of virtue by its citizens and by its leaders."

In the six years since the Hubbard Conference was first convened, the landscape of law in the United States has changed in drastic and surprising ways. The work of scholars at this year's conference reflected the complexity and severity of the problems the nation is currently facing. Their collaboration and conversation spoke to the strength of a legal and academic community committed to understanding a changing world, and to pursuing something akin to those ideals framed in the Declaration of Independence 250 years ago. ✂

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