

The International Academy of Trial Lawyers Reaffirms: No Official Is Above the Law

Government officials are not free to act as “judges in their own case”

MINNEAPOLIS, MN, December 03, 2025: [The International Academy of Trial Lawyers](#) (the Academy) condemns Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem’s recent statement affirming her defiance of a federal court order instructing her to turn planes around and stop the illegal deportation of Venezuelan migrants.

“Compliance with court orders is essential to the Rule of Law,” said Academy President Joe H. Tucker, Jr. “In case after case, the Supreme Court of the United States has ruled that parties are not free to disobey court orders simply because they disagree with them. Instead, the proper remedy is to comply with the order and either appeal or seek a stay.”

Secretary Noem’s claim that she had “complete authority and following the law and Constitution” to decide whether to comply with a federal court order is fundamentally wrong. Supreme Court precedent is clear that federal court orders “must be obeyed,” and government officials are not free to act as judges in their own cases.

“The Supreme Court and lower courts have upheld this basic principle of the Rule of Law for more than a century,” Academy Board member Kathy Patrick stated. Ms. Patrick added that “A court order issued by a court with jurisdiction is lawful and binding when issued, unless and until it is stayed or reversed on appeal. This is not open to debate. It is a core principle of the Rule of Law and must be followed.”

The Academy rejects any claim of unchecked authority that would permit public officials to disregard binding court orders. Such claims abuse public power and disrupt the Rule of Law that the Academy is dedicated to protecting. We call on the courts to hold publicly elected and nominated officials accountable. Democracy depends on this.

About the Academy

The International Academy of Trial Lawyers is a fellowship of lawyers with a singular mission to protect and promote the Rule of Law. Founded in 1954, the Academy consists of the best trial lawyers as measured by skill, experience, ethics, and civility. It represents both sides of the trial bar: prosecutors and defense lawyers in criminal cases; plaintiff and defense counsel in civil litigation. To learn more, visit [IATL.net](#). Follow the Academy’s social media profiles and listen to the Academy’s podcast, The Rule of Law: The Academy Speaks here: linktr.ee/IATL_RuleofLaw.

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