



The International Academy of Trial Lawyers Condemns Statements by Department of Homeland Security General Counsel that Attempt to Intimidate Federal Judges

July 27, 2026—The impartial administration of justice by an independent judiciary is a pillar of the Rule of Law. To uphold the Rule of Law, lawyers in the United States are bound by professional standards that forbid any attempt to intimidate or pressure judges.

For both reasons, the [International Academy of Trial Lawyers](#) condemns the irresponsible and dangerous statements targeting United States District Judges made by James Percival, the General Counsel of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), on July 17-24, 2026.

Parroting a DHS “Worst of the Worst” list that targets violent criminals, Mr. Percival on July 24 issued a series of social media posts that began, “Today, in honor of the @DHS.gov Worst of the Worst series, I am starting a new series: Worst of the Worst, District Judges Edition.” Mr. Percival followed this post with a lengthy rant asserting that five “district judges are engaged in mutiny against the Supreme Court. It must stop!” and went on to claim their decisions were “open defiance of the Supreme Court, plain and simple.”

These were not isolated incidents. For example, on July 17, he reposted a comment about his own appearance on a podcast in which, “I explained how partisan district judges enter orders in bad faith, knowing they will be reversed, solely to run out the clock.” July 17, 2026, at 3:55 p.m. Some of his social media followers responded with threats that judges should be arrested, or worse.

Mr. Percival’s statements are dangerous and irresponsible. They go beyond legitimate criticism of judicial rulings to disparage judges personally and target them for intimidation. As we said in an [earlier statement](#) with the American Board of Trial Advocates, the International Society of Barristers, and the National Bar Association and others:

Throughout history, authoritarian regimes have understood that the first step in dismantling democracy is silencing those who uphold the rule of law. When the legal system is weakened—when judges are threatened, when lawyers are punished for representing their clients, when court rulings are ignored—tyranny is not far behind. Today, we are witnessing such a moment in America.

We say again what we have said before: “We reject the rhetoric that seeks to delegitimize the courts, the legal profession, and the rule of law itself.”

Mr. Percival is a high government official. His statements are an open attempt to prejudice the administration of justice by intimidating and disparaging United States District Judges. His inflammatory rhetoric undermines the Rule of Law. Mr. Percival should immediately withdraw his statements and express regret for making them.



About the Academy

The International Academy of Trial Lawyers (the Academy) is a fellowship of lawyers with a singular mission: to protect and promote the Rule of Law. Founded in 1954, the Academy is composed of distinguished trial lawyers recognized for skill, experience, ethics, and civility. It includes both plaintiff and defense counsel in civil litigation, as well as prosecutors and defense lawyers in criminal cases. The Academy includes trial lawyers from the United States, Canada, and more than 30 other countries. Fellowship is by invitation only. Nominees must have distinguished themselves through careers defined by exceptional trial skills, professionalism, and integrity. They become Fellows only after a rigorous vetting process that includes both peer and judicial review.