

# TURMOIL



NCNW Advocacy & Policy

## ***REALITY CHECK ON THE TURMOIL***

***by Tyese Williams, NCNW Advocacy & Policy manager***

*Welcome to what NCNW calls “Turmoil - Reality Check.” With all the developments coming from the three branches of government, one can often feel they are in “a state of great disturbance, confusion, or uncertainty” = TURMOIL.*

*We understand you need to know what is really going on, rooted in facts and reality, so that you can be informed and ready for action. NCNW is prepared to give it to you as it happens.*

### **RFK JR’S AUTISM DATABASE AND THE DANGEROUS IMPLICATIONS**

**Overview:** Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. wants to create an autism registry as part of a study to track the root causes of autism. This database would consist of data from several federal and commercial databases. Including the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Department of Defense (DOD), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and more. With this database the National Institutes of Health (NIH) intends to create a registry to track people with autism. Recently RFK Jr. made a promise to figure out the cause of autism by September 2025 despite multiple health experts saying that this goal is not feasible. Dr. Peter Marks, who led the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER) since 2016 and was recently forced to resign, highlighted that a study on autism utilizing the goals of the database would take years of scientific study.

Furthermore, there are concerns over what the database would mean for privacy. Protections for privacy around medical records are protected by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Autism researchers and advocates have pushed back against the creation of this database citing the potential for misuse of the data. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has denied the creation of a registry, but rather a database that would generate a \$50 million study on autism. Jay Bhattacharya, the NIH Director, proposed collecting data from pharmacy chains, health organizations, insurance claims and medical bills, and wearable devices such as smart watches. A petition against the registry received 50,000 signatures leading HHS to walk back on the measure.

However, HHS appears to have simply changed the name of what they’re doing. The claim is that they’re making a “real world data platform” to “link existing data sets.” Furthermore, the agency did not clarify if individuals would have the option to opt out of the database. However, there are several states that have mandatory autism registries including Delaware, Indiana, North Dakota, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Utah,

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and West Virginia. New Hampshire used to also have a mandatory registry until it was repealed in 2024 with cross partisan support after facing scrutiny. Advocates are hoping that the public attention to the possible federal registry would also lead to scrutiny and include repealing the registries in the states that have them.

### THE ADMINISTRATION PLANS TO END THE NARCAN PROGRAM

**Overview:** The Administration recently proposed ending the \$56 million annual grant for the naloxone program. Naloxone, also known as Narcan, is a drug that is administered in the case of an overdose. This program also provides training to emergency responders on how to administer the drug. The First Responder Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (FR-CARA), the \$56 million grant, provided over 100,000 kits to first responders in 2023. With 77,000 first responders being trained in its use. The goal for fiscal year 2024 was to raise the number of kits to 130,000.

This proposal comes despite the Administration naming overdose prevention as one of its top drug policy priorities. Furthermore, last month the Office of National Drug Control Policy stated its first objective as follows: “To combat the drug crisis and opioid epidemic, largely driven by fentanyl, the Administration will expand access to overdose prevention education and life-saving opioid overdose reversal medications like naloxone.” However, the recent push for a cut is in direct opposition to this statement. Many advocates are also warning that cutting this program could reverse progress on addressing the opioid epidemic citing the abundance of lives have been saved because of access to naloxone over the last decade.

#### Voting Rights Updates

### JUSTICE DEPARTMENT REMOVES LEADERSHIP OF THE VOTING RIGHTS UNIT

**Overview:** The President’s appointees, at the Department of Justice (DOJ), have removed the senior managers in the DOJ voting section and directed attorneys to dismiss all active cases. This comes as part of an attack on the department’s civil rights division. Harmeet Dhillon, a lawyer and former vice chair of the California Republican Party, and ally to the President, was confirmed April 3, 2025, to lead the Civil Rights Division. Dhillon was a lawyer in San Francisco who took cases involving the “culture war” and has been a fixture in right wing media, including Fox News. She also filed various lawsuits on “election integrity” and has supported the President’s efforts to overturn the 2020 election.

By mid-April, Dhillon sent out a new “mission statement” to the department’s sections showing a clear direction of moving away from protecting the rights of marginalized people to supporting objectives of President Trump’s agenda. The statement in essence rolled back Biden-era action that focused on addressing discrimination. These priorities include preventing “voter fraud” and helping states find noncitizens on their voter rolls. However, the new guidance does not protect the Voting Rights Act of 1965 or the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Furthermore, the DOJ has begun to pull back on other civil rights cases including an environmental justice settlement filed on the behalf of Black residents in Alabama, and a pay discrimination case on behalf of a Black lawyer against the Mississippi Senate. Instead of protecting the civil rights cases aforementioned, the DOJ has shared that they will work with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to help states access citizenship data to remove “noncitizen” voters.

It is important to note that these actions come the year before midterm elections in 2026 and off the heels of many unpopular policies that have seen the present majority party’s approval decrease nationwide. Even more, these efforts represent a continued priority to undermine the civil and voting rights of U.S. citizens.

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#### HOUSE REPUBLICANS WALK BACK SOME MEDICAID CUTS

**Overview:** The House Republicans are backing off of some of the proposed Medicaid cuts. A report from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office shared that millions could lose their Medicaid coverage under the various proposals. A move that could be disastrous to many families and vulnerable communities. The Associated Press [reported](#) that some centrist members of the GOP have opposed the cuts that will impact their constituents. This also comes at a time where many representatives have faced scrutiny from constituents in their townhalls back in their home states.

It is important to note that there are still House members who are adamant about passing these cuts. But it is clear that the original budget proposal that Speaker Johnson has pushed for has faced a serious road block. As the situation continues to unravel, the NCNW Advocacy and Policy team will remain observant of the continued events.

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One to Watch...Black Enterprise - **April Jobs Report: Black Women Lost 106,000 Extra Jobs, Most Among All Workers** – Click [here](#) to read.

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#### *State of the People POWER Tour, April 24 – June 15, 2025*

The State of the People POWER Tour, April 24 – June 15, 2025, is a nationwide, people-powered campaign designed to rally, restore, and reimagine what's possible for Black communities across the country. This isn't just a series of events—it's a movement rooted in healing, empowerment, and mobilization. The first phase includes 10 stops across key U.S. cities, where we will amplify local voices, provide tangible support, and build momentum toward a national Black agenda.

The POWER Tour will bring together grassroots organizers, local Juneteenth leaders, creatives, educators, faith leaders, and everyday residents to listen, serve, and act. It's about showing up where our people are—and staying connected.

#### **Tour Dates/Locations**

May 13 – 14 in Newark, NJ  
May 16 – 17 in Richmond, VA  
May 21 – 22 in Detroit, MI  
May 30 – 31 in Jackson, MS  
June 2 – 3 in Louisville, KY  
June 5 – 6 in Altadena, CA

NCNW members are needed to serve as volunteers. To volunteer, click the button below. Show the influence of our #purplepower! <https://forms.gle/MVpq1jD8CmY8d6cv9>

#### **VISIT THE Mary McLeod Bethune Council House**

Make plans to visit the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House. Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune achieved her greatest recognition at the Washington, DC townhouse that is now a National Historic Site. The Council House was the first headquarters of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) and was her last home in Washington, D.C. From here, Dr. Bethune and the NCNW spearheaded strategies and developed programs that advanced the interests of African American women.

#### **4 – NCNW Reality Check for May 10, 2025**

Rangers guide interpretive tours of the house on Thursdays and Fridays at the times listed below. Tours will be offered beginning at 9:45 am and will be given every thirty minutes, and the last tour will occur at 4 pm.

##### **Park Service Notes**

- The site is not physically accessible. The second floor of the home can only be reached by climbing the stairs.
- Visitors cannot join a tour after it has begun.
- Strollers and large bags are not allowed in the historic house.
- Eating, drinking, chewing gum, and smoking are not allowed in the historic house.
- To make reservations for a group larger than 20 visitors, please email [BethuneNHS@nps.gov](mailto:BethuneNHS@nps.gov). Please allow us a couple of days to respond back to you.
- To learn more, click here <https://www.nps.gov/mamc/index.htm>.

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