



ICNY
Interfaith Center of New York

NEW YORK
LAW SCHOOL

LAW, RELIGION, AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN CHALLENGING TIMES

Thursday, March 20, 2025

8:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

New York Law School

Abbey Hall Auditorium

185 West Broadway

New York, NY 10013

3.0 credits available in
Professional Practice (NY
transitional and nontransitional)

Conference for Attorneys, Civic and Faith Leaders, Nonprofit Professionals, and the General Public

Faith-based and secular nonprofit organizations provide vital services for all New Yorkers and play essential roles in American democracy. Congregations, community organizations, social service agencies, advocacy groups, and more—scholars from Alexis de Tocqueville to Robert Putnam have described these civil society organizations as the very lifeblood of our democratic system, but their future is uncertain in our increasingly polarized social and political environment.

Long-standing norms for houses of worship, social service providers, and nonpartisan policy advocates have been challenged in recent years, and proposed legislation could further alter or curtail their work. Religious communities sheltering or supporting undocumented immigrants could be criminally liable for faith-based acts of service. Advocacy organizations could lose their nonprofit status on the basis of arguably protected political speech. Social service agencies supporting historically marginalized communities—including racially diverse and LGBTQ+ New Yorkers—will need to pursue their critical missions while grappling with potential changes to state and federal law and regulations.

Join us as we explore the rapidly shifting legal landscape of American civil society. A keynote dialogue will bridge partisan and religious divides to highlight the important work of civil society organizations. Panel discussions focused on tax, nonprofit, and immigration law will feature legal scholars, policy advocates, and community leaders. In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville famously argued that “The health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens.” All are welcome to join the conversation.



Program Agenda

8:30 a.m.–9:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast
9:00 a.m.–9:10 a.m.	Welcome and Opening Remarks Anthony Crowell , Dean and President, New York Law School
9:10 a.m.–10:00 a.m.	Keynote Dialogue: Civil Society and Grassroots Democracy Moderated by William P. LaPiana , Dean of Faculty, New York Law School Rev. Dr. Emma Jordan-Simpson , President, Auburn Theological Seminary; Associate Pastor, The Concord Baptist Church of Christ Edward Mechmann , Director of Public Policy, The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York
10:00 a.m.–10:10 a.m.	Break
10:10 a.m.–11:30 a.m.	Regulating Civil Society Through Tax and Nonprofit Law Panel (1.5 credits in Professional Practice) Moderated by Ann F. Thomas , Otto L. Walter Distinguished Professor of Tax Law, New York Law School Tiffany Gourley Carter , Public Policy Director and Counsel, National Council of Nonprofits Musa Jemal , Tax Attorney in Private Practice; Member, The Muslim Bar Association of New York Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum , Senior Rabbi Emerita, Congregation Beit Simchat Torah Benjamin Leff , Professor of Law, Washington College of Law, American University
11:30 a.m.–11:40 a.m.	Break
11:40 a.m.–1:00 p.m.	Regulating Civil Society Through Immigration and Asylum Law Panel (1.5 credits in Professional Practice) Moderated by Rev. Dr. Chloe Breyer , Executive Director, Interfaith Center of New York Alina Das , Professor of Clinical Law and James Weldon Johnson Professor; Co-Director, The Immigrant Rights Clinic, New York University School of Law Cynthia Groomes Katz , Managing Attorney, HIAS New York Dr. Rucha Kaur , Managing Director of Education and Community Development, The Sikh Coalition Elizabeth Reiner Platt , Director, The Law, Rights, and Religion Project, Columbia Law School