

CBPP STATEMENT

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Contact: Jacob Kaufman-Waldron, 202-408-1080,
jkaufmanwaldron@cbpp.org

We Must Protect and Defend Vigorous Debate

Statement of Sharon Parrott, CBPP President, on President Trump threatening a lawsuit against the Center for American Progress

President Trump last week threatened legal action against the Center for American Progress (CAP) for publishing a report with which he disagrees. This marks another disturbing, anti-democratic effort by the President to silence those with opposing views. Our Constitution protects our right to engage in vigorous debate — debate that makes our nation stronger.

Indeed, our nation has achieved most of our major steps forward through contentious debate, in which people with different views have presented and debated their arguments in the court of public opinion.

If the President disagrees with CAP's data analysis, he or his Administration is free to engage in public debate on the issues, challenge CAP's methodology, and present other data, ideally equaling CAP's transparency about its data and methodologies.

Instead, the President is reverting to threats that demonstrate an utter disregard for the First Amendment and its foundational role in a functioning democracy.

In more than three decades of engaging in policy analysis and debate, I have disagreed with others' analyses, and others have disagreed with mine. In all that time, I cannot recall another President threatening a group with legal action because he disagreed with an analysis and its conclusions.

Scrutiny and debate lead to sharper thinking and better ideas. Bullying and scare tactics do the opposite.

CAP and think tanks across the political spectrum must be able to publish their analyses without fear of political retaliation, as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

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