

Back to the Lab: The Promise of States in Checking Federal Power and Advancing Individual Rights

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2026

9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (Eastern time)

Rutgers Law School, 123 Washington Street, Newark, NJ 07102

Join us for a symposium that analyzes and evaluates the multifaceted tools and powers of state governments. Given the increasing concentration of authority in the federal executive branch and the reduction of oversight by Congress and the federal courts, state constitutions and laws present a promising avenue for checking federal overreach and misrule. State laws and constitutions can be pathways for progress, establishing legal and social precedents that promote individual rights and safeguard democratic ideals across the nation.

The two main panels will explore two specific themes: (1) developing interpretive tools that are unique to state constitutions; and (2) states as ideal arenas for expanding individual rights. We will also hear from students about their recent work related to state autonomy and checking federal power. Speakers include legal scholars and practitioners who are leading the fight against federal overreach on behalf of states and their residents.

Co-sponsored by Rutgers University Law Review and Rutgers Law School Institute for Professional Education.

CLE Credit: NJ: 5.0 | NY: 5.0 | PA: 4.0

CLE Fee: \$100

See page 2 for agenda. See page 3 for CLE details.

CLE registration: rutgerscle.com

No CLE registration: go.rutgers.edu/rulr-symposium-2026

AGENDA

8:30 a.m. **CHECK-IN AND BREAKFAST**

9:30 a.m. **WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS**

10:30 a.m. **DEVELOPING INTERPRETATIVE TOOLS THAT ARE UNIQUE TO STATE CONSTITUTIONS**

- **Professor Quinn Yeargain**, 1855 Professor of the Law of Democracy and Associate Professor of Law, Michigan State University College of Law
- **Professor Constance Van Kley**, Assistant Professor, University of Montana Blewett School of Law
- **Justice Brent Appel**, Instructor of Law; Deputy Director of the Institute for Justice Reform & Innovation, Drake University Law School, Des Moines, Iowa

Moderator – **Professor Bernard Bell**, Professor of Law, and Herbert Hannoch Scholar, Rutgers Law School

12:00 p.m. **LUNCH**

1:00 p.m. **STUDENT PANEL**

- **Elizabeth Roberts**, Rutgers Law School
- **Meghna Govindu**, Rutgers Law School

Moderator – **Professor Rose Cuison-Villazor**, Distinguished Professor of Law, and Chancellor's Social Justice Scholar, Rutgers Law School

1:35 p.m. **STATES AS IDEAL ARENAS FOR EXPANDING INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS**

- **Professor Jared M. Trujillo**, Associate Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law
- **Professor Michael Gregory**, Clinical Professor of Law, Harvard Law School
- **Professor Michael A. Rebell**, Professor Emeritus of Law and Educational Practice; Executive Director, Center for Educational Equity, Teachers College, Columbia University
- **Professor Paul Finkelman**, past president, chancellor, and distinguished professor of history, Gratz College, Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania

Moderator – **Professor Adam Sopko**, Associate Professor of Law, University of Colorado Law School

3:45 p.m. **CLOSING REMARKS**

4:30 p.m. **RECEPTION AND DINNER**

All guests are welcome and encouraged to continue the conversation.

CLE INFORMATION

Rutgers Law School is an approved New Jersey (418) and Pennsylvania (824) continuing legal education provider. In addition, this program qualifies for New York CLE credit pursuant to the [Approved Jurisdiction policy](#). If you are seeking CLE credit, you must attend, complete an attendance form and evaluation, and have paid the applicable CLE fee.

NJ CLE Information: This program has been approved by the Board on Continuing Legal Education of the Supreme Court of New Jersey for 5.0 hours of total CLE credit.

NY CLE Information: This non-transitional continuing legal education program qualifies for a maximum of 5.0 credit hours, of which 5.0 credit hours can be applied toward the Areas of Professional Practice requirement. New York attorneys must view the entire program or an entire panel to receive CLE credit.

PA CLE Information: This program has been approved by the Pennsylvania Continuing Legal Education Board for 4.0 hours of substantive law, practice, and procedure CLE credit.

Other Jurisdictions: Rutgers Law School does not seek direct accreditation of live programs or webinars in other states. However, many states allow attorneys to earn credit through reciprocity or self-submission. Attorneys must research CLE rules and request accreditation from their respective states. Rutgers Law School will provide proof of attendance.

Format: Faculty in room with participants. Questions are allowed during the program.

Degree of Difficulty: All levels.

Attendance Reporting: Attendees must sign in upon arrival and take an attendance form and evaluation. Upon departure, they must certify their attendance and return the completed forms.

Rutgers Law School will provide certificates of attendance at the conclusion of the program for New Jersey and New York attorneys and submit attendance for Pennsylvania attorneys within 30 days of the program, if the CLE requirements have been met.

CLE Materials: Thorough, high-quality, and carefully written materials shall be distributed to all attendees electronically before or at the program.

Accessibility: We strive to make our programs accessible to all registrants. Contact us if you have an accessibility need or encounter any issues while attending our events at ipe@law.rutgers.edu or at 973-353-5928.

Cancellation Policy: Cancellation notices must be received by email to ipe@law.rutgers.edu at least 24 hours before the program to qualify for a refund, less a \$10 administrative fee, or full credit toward another program within a year of the program date. There are no refunds after this time except for extraordinary circumstances as determined by the director or program coordinators. Substitutions are accepted.

Financial Aid Policy: We are strongly committed to professional development and seek to make our programs affordable to attorneys. If possible, we will provide reduced tuition, tuition waiver or scholarship to attorneys who demonstrate financial hardship. Requests should be made prior to the program date by email to ipe@law.rutgers.edu.