



The Impact of *CASA v. Trump*: State Attorneys General are now the Most Powerful Defenders of Rights and the Rule of Law

In its June 27, 2025, decision in *CASA v. Trump*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that federal district courts do not have the general authority to issue “universal” injunctions that apply across the country.¹ As a result of the decision, state attorneys general may now be Americans’ best bet for relief from unconstitutional and illegal actions.

The Court ruled that, generally, judges can only issue injunctions that apply to the plaintiffs appearing in the case.² For larger groups to obtain an injunction, individual plaintiffs would have to use a complicated set of tools, such as the class action process — which is a complex, expensive, and time-consuming barrier to legal relief.

This leaves states in the unique role of being plaintiffs who, by entering federal court through their attorney general, represent the interests of all stakeholders within the state — which includes millions of individuals, businesses, organizations, institutions, and even the state’s natural resources like land and animals.

This new standard essentially means that, absent the use of special procedures, if 23 people bring a lawsuit challenging an illegal policy, a successful ruling can guard the rights of only those 23 people. However, if 23 state attorneys general challenge the same policy, a successful ruling can guarantee the rights of—at a minimum—the 155 million residents of their states.³

¹ A coalition of 23 state attorneys general, a nonprofit organization, and a few individuals had successfully challenged in the lower courts President Trump’s unconstitutional attempts to strip citizenship from babies born in the U.S. to immigrant parents. The Supreme Court’s decision in the consolidated cases did not touch on the important underlying question of birthright citizenship; instead, it addressed the question about how litigants can stop illegal policies from taking effect nationwide.

² Despite this general prohibition, district courts may issue broader injunctions if such an injunction is necessary to provide “complete relief” to parties before them, and that injunction may incidentally provide a benefit to individuals who are not parties to the case.

³ And that relief can possibly sweep nationwide given the unique nature of harms that states experience that may necessitate uniform application of a ruling across all 50 states.

Thus, a person's rights may depend on whether they live in a state whose attorney general is willing to fight for their rights and stand up against federal abuse. While attorneys general that stand together to protect their states and citizens against federal abuses win critical injunctions to stop harmful policies, Americans living in other states have no such protection.

The *CASA* decision underscores the importance of a state attorney general who is willing to stand up for the rule of law and challenge the Trump administration's overreach. State attorneys general have prevailed in suits to stop the administration from illegally terminating public health funding, freezing billions in federal funding to states, and defunding and shutting down programs such as AmeriCorps and the Institute of Museum and Library Services—but with the *CASA* decision, these victories will now be limited only to plaintiff states.

Those who live in states with attorneys general unwilling to challenge this administration will no longer automatically benefit from the protection of nationwide injunctions from federal courts. This clear contrast demonstrates what a difference an AG makes.