

Fall 2025

# Impact Report

the  
center for investigative  
reporting

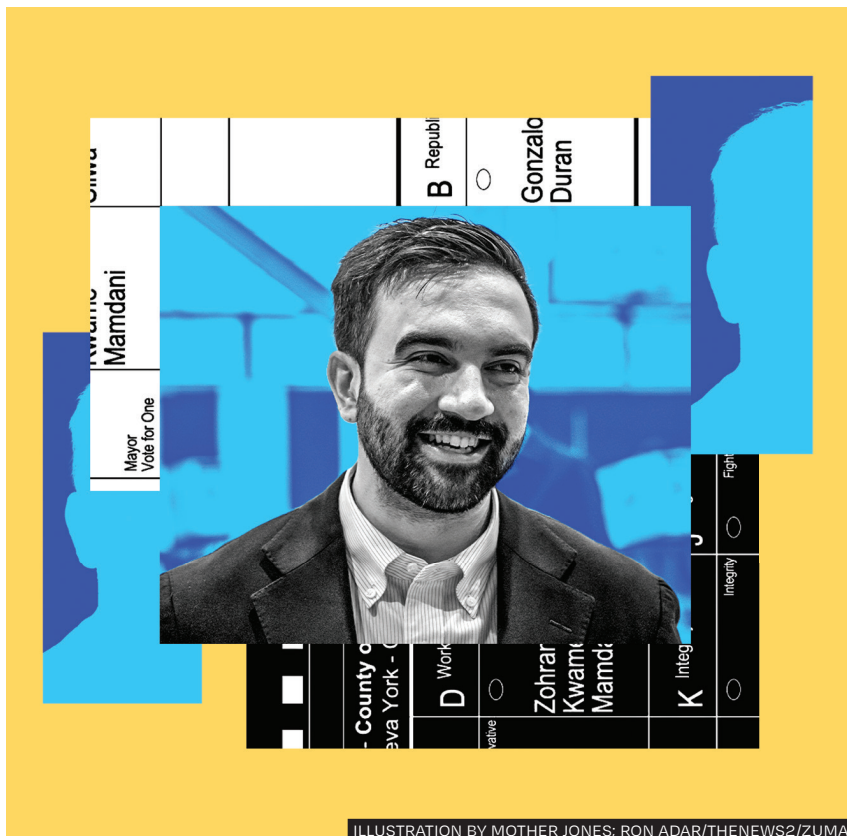


ILLUSTRATION BY MOTHER JONES; RON ADAR/THENEWS2/ZUMA

## Engagement

The November elections spoke loudly. At a time when the headlines reflect the creep of authoritarianism and the dizzying speed of disinformation, the results showed that power does not only flow from the top down. Americans chose to make up their own minds.

How can journalism equip people to make up their own minds and take action in this historic moment? Through a dogged commitment to finding audiences, from print and podcast to video. Since the start of the year, our videos have drawn a record 60 million views (and counting), with several reaching audiences in the millions across TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. And on the opposite end of the spectrum from fast to slow news, our print presence is stronger than ever: *Mother Jones* recently surpassed the highest subscription total in its 50-year history, climbing to 230,000 subscribers—nearly 30% more than at the time of our 2024 merger.

## The Throughline

We follow the longer arc of a story across time, stitching together the throughlines other newsrooms fail to see.

**Hannah Levintova's** May 2025 reporting on a chain of hospitals owned by Steward Health Care, which had spent years squeezing profits from facilities while patient care suffered as executives enriched themselves, shined a light on a particularly troubling aspect of Steward's business practices. Over the years, Steward's top brass sold many of its hospitals to a related company and rented them back. The scheme provided Steward's private equity owners with a windfall of \$800 million, but the exorbitant rents meant that hospitals slashed services, cut staff, and couldn't afford key supplies, with sometimes disastrous results for patients. Eventually, Steward's bubble burst, and last year it became one of America's largest hospital bankruptcies, owing vendors \$9 billion. In response, Sens. Bernie Sanders, Edward Markey, and Richard Blumenthal introduced legislation on October 8, 2025, to protect health systems from similar predatory real estate investment trust deals.

**Julianne McShane's** May 2025 reporting on DOGE cuts to federal grants administered by the Women's Bureau was cited by Rep. Rosa DeLauro when she questioned the labor secretary on the cancellations at a House Appropriations hearing in May. The Labor Department quietly reposted these grants in July.

**In 2024, CIR reporters** Rachel de Leon and Julia Lurie chronicled the story of Taylor Cadle, who reported sexual assault by her adoptive father when she was 12, only to be charged with false reporting. Cadle eventually documented the assaults on her (continued on page 2)



ILLUSTRATION BY BRITT SPENCER

POLITICS

## Project 2026: The Plan to Rig the Next Election

*Mother Jones'* National Voting Rights Correspondent Ari Berman's cover story detailed all the ways in which the president and his allies are taking cues from the authoritarian playbook to rig the midterms in their favor, "supercharging a new war on democracy." Berman's reporting was featured in appearances on *The Majority Report*, *The Al Franken Podcast*, *Assembly Required* with Stacey Abrams, C-SPAN's *Washington Journal*, and WNYC's *Brian Lehrer Show*, cited in *Salon*, Heather Cox Richardson's newsletter and on *Fresh Air*, and earned recognition from the Sidney Hillman Foundation.

In previewing one of the most consequential cases before the Supreme Court this fall, *Mother Jones* reporter Pema Levy unpacked what's at stake as the Supreme Court sets out to potentially undermine the 1965 Voting Rights Act's mandate that minority voters have an equal opportunity to elect representatives of their choice. Her reporting was cited by *SCOTUSblog* and in an Instagram series by *NowThis*. In an appearance on *On the Media*, Levy also delved into her reporting on the dual state theory—first used to describe the separate tracks of justice available in Nazi Germany to those who were afforded legal protections, versus those who lived without them.

phone and the perpetrator was brought to justice; she has now filed a lawsuit in federal court alleging that her civil rights were violated by police and prosecutors.

**In a November 2023 *Reveal* episode**, reporter Brian Howey documented a troubling practice among some California law enforcement agencies. When the police kill someone, those same police departments are then often responsible for notifying the family. Howey confirmed that in at least 20 instances, instead of delivering the news of the death immediately, investigators seized the opportunity to first gather unflattering information about the decedent. The story won a George Polk Award for Justice reporting in 2024. In October 2025, California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed legislation that will require investigators to tell the families of people seriously injured or killed by police what has happened to their loved one before questioning them.

**CIR's long-running Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) case** against the Department of Labor, seeking access to corporate diversity data, was decided by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in favor of CIR, drawing a critical line for federal contractors: the government cannot outsource work and then claim that information is no longer subject to FOIA.

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This case is a significant step toward greater transparency and a necessary check on overbroad claims of confidentiality by contractors—particularly at a time when more agencies are outsourcing their work to companies like Palantir, SpaceX, Amazon, and so forth.

Victoria Baranetsky, CIR General Counsel





PHOTOGRAPH BY BRIAN CAHN/ZUMA

POLITICS

## Reporting on Charlie Kirk's Legacy

In the aftermath of right-wing commentator Charlie Kirk's killing, CIR's reporting provided essential context and clarity amid a rapidly evolving media narrative. Across our newsroom, we unpacked the forces that shaped Kirk's rise in the MAGA movement, offering a measured, fact-based account that helped audiences navigate a moment of confusion and misinformation. Within hours of the shooting, *Mother Jones* reporters Anna Merlan, Julianne McShane, and Kiera Butler captured the reactions by some on the right—including calls for civil war. David Corn's viral video, noting that no remembrance of Kirk is complete without an accounting for the incendiary and, at times, bigoted language he employed, provided a much-needed counterpoint to those canonizing Kirk—a theme Corn continued to explore on *The Left Hook with Wajahat Ali*. National affairs editor Mark Follman joined host Al Letson on *More To The Story* to discuss how Kirk's killing is fueling the Trump administration's campaign of political retribution—"a recipe for more violence," he warned. "The very top of our political leadership is stoking a political and cultural war."

Following Kirk's killing, false equivalencies and finger-pointing flourished. Our side-by-side video comparing Trump's and Biden's responses to political violence—using only their own words—struck a chord with audiences hungry for context. It became our most-viewed video of the year so far, surpassing 8.5 million views.

POLITICS

## Holding a Trump Official Accountable

Federal Housing Finance Agency Director Bill Pulte has been making headlines for attacking Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook—a target of the Trump administration—over a clerical error she made on her mortgage documents. On October 14, 2025, *Mother Jones* reporter Hannah Levintova revealed that Pulte himself had failed to file a key form with the Securities and Exchange Commission within the required 10-day timeframe at the start of his tenure. Pulte corrected the omission after Levintova's story was published that same day.

IMMIGRATION

## Probing a \$915 Million Contract to Help Immigrants "Self-Deport"

Earlier this year, the Department of Homeland Security awarded a nearly \$1 billion aviation contract to a small company with no experience handling the "self-deportation" flights outlined in the agreement. Dan Friedman and Nick Schwellenbach's investigation into the company, Salus Worldwide, traced a close relationship between a senior DHS official and the CEO of Salus Worldwide. Following their reporting, a group of 11 senators sent a letter in late October to DHS and ICE, seeking clarification on the contract's scope, the services to be provided, and whether normal procurement procedures were bypassed.



ILLUSTRATION BY MOTHER JONES; ALEX BRANDON/AP; GETTY

JULY 1–OCTOBER 30

## By the Numbers:

# 36 million

video views across platforms

# 150%

increase from fall 2024

# 3.3 million

engagements

# 130%

increase from fall 2024

# 35 million

impressions

# 206%

increase from fall 2024

## TOP SOCIAL STORIES

**Donald Trump Has a History of Making National Tragedies Worse** by Anna Yeo (September 2025) | 8.8M views

**Charlie Kirk's Memorial Was Christian Nationalism's Biggest Moment** by Garrison Hayes (September 2025) | 6M views

**"It's Abhorrent": A Whistleblower Contractor Speaks Out as Gaza's Famine Spreads** by Jessica Le Masurier and James West, video by Sam Van Pykeren and Peter Berger (July 2025) | 3M views

**A 90-Second Crash Course in Trump's Betrayal of American Soy Farmers** by Anna Yeo and Henry Carnell (October 2025) | 1.8M



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PHOTOGRAPH BY VICTOR J. BLUE

## POLITICS

# Immigration Enforcement and the Rise of the Police State

*Mother Jones* reporter Isabela Dias illuminated the human toll of President Trump's decision to end Temporary Protected Status for Venezuelans—part of the largest de-legalization campaign in US history. Rep. Pramila Jayapal took to social media to share Isabela's reporting, declaring:

*Trump is ripping legal status away from millions of hard-working, rule-abiding immigrants — just so he can increase deportation numbers.*

*It's cruel, it's ripping families apart, and it must end.*

As they did previously in an appearance on *The Bulwark*, Dias and reporter Noah Lanard continue to expose the brutality of the administration's immigration policies, a theme comprehensively explored in *Mother Jones'* November+December "American Gulag" package.

## HEALTH CARE

# Providing Transparency in Police Department AI Use

In August 2025, Tekendra Parmar reported that more and more police departments in the United States are using artificial intelligence to draft incident reports—and deactivating oversight tools designed to ensure accuracy and human review. He found that at least 21 police departments across 10 states were using the technology, including six agencies in California. Palmer appeared on KJZZ (NPR Phoenix), KVPR (NPR Fresno), and NPR's *Marketplace Tech*, while his reporting was cited by *Tech Policy* and listed as one of MSNBC's top stories. In October, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed legislation requiring greater transparency and accountability in how law enforcement agencies use artificial intelligence in police reports.