

LAW DAY 2025

Monterey County Bar Foundation Board of Directors

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THE CONSITUTION'S PROMISE: OUT OF MANY, ONE

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As we celebrate the long 4th of July holiday weekend with family and friends, enjoying fireworks displays and patriotic pageantry, it is fitting to recall that on July 4, 1776, representatives from 13 disparate but United States of America declared independence from a tyrannical king and proposed as their motto "E Pluribus Unum" meaning "Out of Many: One" - the theme of Law Day 2025.

Law Day began on May 1, 1958, with President Dwight D. Eisenhower's proclamation, which was followed by Congress's official designation in 1961 of May 1st as Law Day – the day that serves as a reminder of the importance of the rule of law to all Americans.

Law Day celebrations often include events like essay writing contests, webinars, discussions about the law, and visits to schools by legal professionals and public figures.

I was honored, as a member of the Board of Directors of the Monterey County Bar Foundation, to be invited by Chris Devers, CEO of Rancho Cielo, to attend this year's Law Day celebration at California State University Monterey Bay's World Theater. The celebration was well attended by students from several Monterey County high schools as well as students from CSUMB, and the speakers delivered enthusiastic, thought-provoking commentary on the meaning of Law Day and how it is particularly topical in the current political climate in our country.

Regardless of our personal politics, it would be hard to deny that the rule of law in these United States is currently under attack, which, as lawyers, judges, paralegals, legal assistants, and law students should be of concern, if not alarming.

I was also granted the opportunity to interview Chris Devers both in advance of and at the actual Law Day 2025 event. Chris has been the driving force behind the Law Day celebrations at CSUMB for several years and is happy to talk about its importance to our young people. What came through loud and clear from my conversations with Chris is that he is passionate and personally committed to Law Day and all that it represents – *particularly the rule of law*.

Chris has seen what happens in less-developed countries where the rule of law is either weak or nonexistent – rampant corruption, crime, violence, and fear. He has also seen evidence of the same problem here in our country and, in fact, in Monterey County, where drug cartels have controlled criminal activity from the inside of U.S. prisons.

Chris's professional background is as an educator. He understands the best way to counter the attacks on the rule of law in our country is through education.

Teaching our young people the importance of the rule of law to the way of life we are so fortunate to enjoy is key. Education begins with encouraging students to exercise their right to vote, followed by making them aware of the many career opportunities to be found in the legal field. Whether it be a career in law enforcement, a legal education, serving as an attorney and officer of the court, a judge, or as an appointed or elected official, there are many ways to dedicate one's life to upholding the rule of law.

I found the event inspiring and felt proud to be both a U.S. citizen and a lawyer as I listened to Keynote Speaker David Faigman, Chancellor & Dean of UC College of Law, San Francisco, and Featured Speaker Jose Ramirez, Chief Probation Officer, Monterey County.

Dean Faigman warned of the danger to our democracy when our system of checks and balances is compromised by Congress's unwillingness to exercise the powers granted to it by the Constitution out of fear of reprisal from the Executive branch. He also expressed concern over the chilling effect the Executive branch has had on lawyers by taking punitive actions against law firms who represent clients in opposing the current administration.

Chief Ramirez described how, with the encouragement of his wife and others encountered on his journey, education led to seemingly unattainable career opportunities.

The Keynote Speaker and Featured Speaker presentations were followed by a distinguished panel of legal professionals and public dignitaries (including Monterey County District Attorney Jeannine M. Pacioni and Sheriff Tina Nieto). Each of the panelists described the circuitous journey that led to their current position, inspiring students to understand they, too, could accomplish what might seem out of reach. The panelists then responded to questions from students and faculty moderated by Monterey County Presiding Judge Elect Rafael Vasquez.

The Monterey County Bar Foundation is pleased to recognize Law Day as one of the organizations we have selected to receive a grant in 2025. We thank our generous donors for making this grant possible, and we thank Chris Devers for the work he is doing in support of Law Day.

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