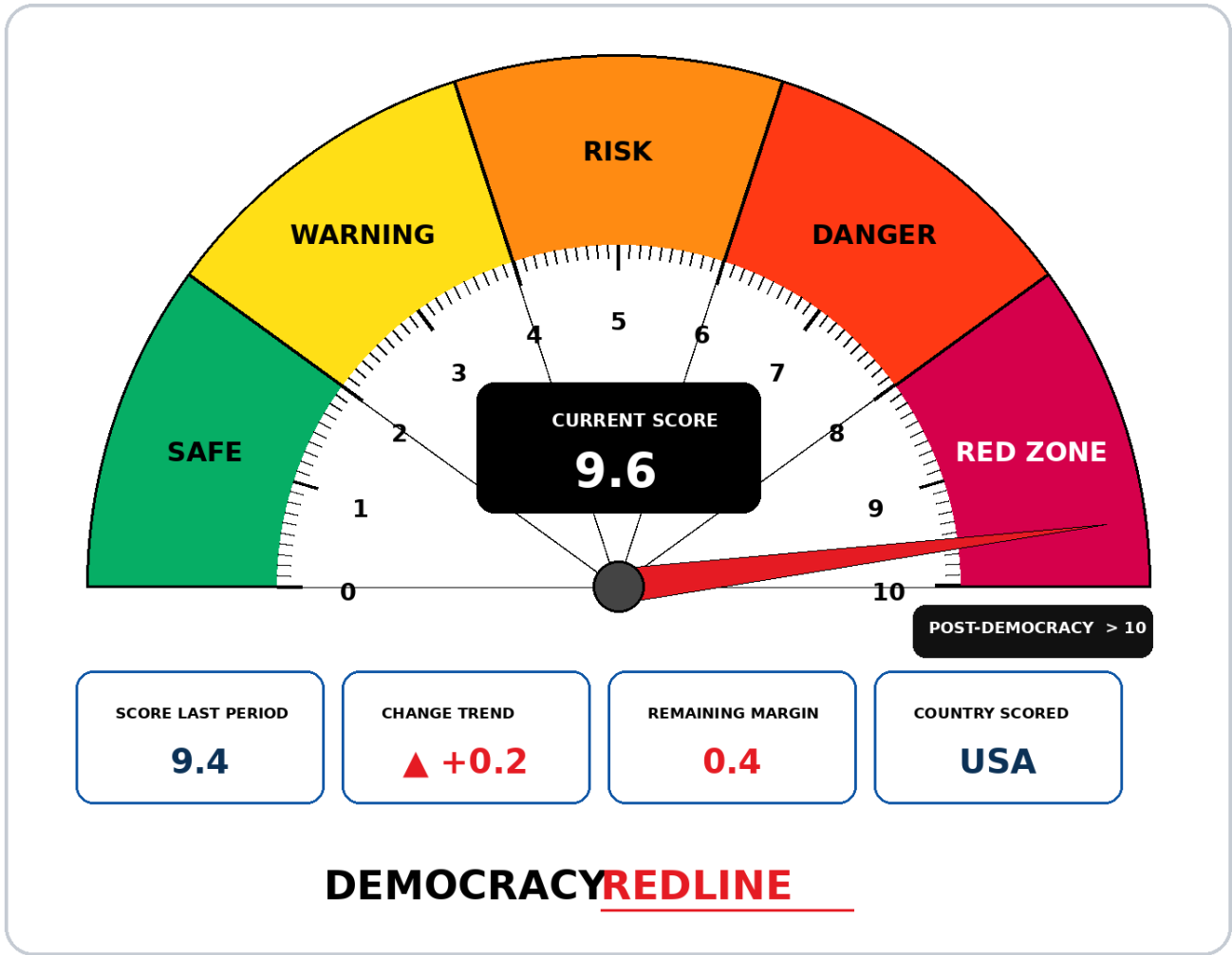




August 2026 Democracy Health Report

The machinery of democratic restraint is becoming the battleground.

Published August 10, 2026

Category scorecard

Category	July	August	Move
Election Integrity	9.5	9.8	+0.3
Rule of Law & Court Compliance	9.6	9.7	+0.1
Habeas Corpus & Due Process	9.6	9.7	+0.1
Coercive State Power	9.2	9.4	+0.2
Weaponized Justice	9.6	9.8	+0.2
Press Freedom	9.4	9.6	+0.2
Civil Society	8.4	8.6	+0.2
Institutional Oversight	9.4	9.7	+0.3
Military / Intelligence Neutrality	9.2	9.4	+0.2

Executive summary

August's defining development is the convergence of pressure on election administration, intelligence, Justice Department accountability, independent information, and coercive enforcement. Safeguards remain functional, but increasingly as emergency response systems confronting completed actions.

Election Integrity & Peaceful Transfer

9.8 / 10. The remaining Election Assistance Commission leadership was removed, DOJ warned election officials of possible criminal liability, and the administration continued a nationwide voter-file campaign despite 21 consecutive court defeats. Selectively declassified intelligence was then used to renew claims that the 2020 election was compromised. State resistance and judicial review remain strong, but neutral federal election support has been materially weakened.

Rule of Law & Court Compliance

9.7 / 10. Courts repeatedly imposed real limits, yet the government forced judges to defend boundaries through serial litigation. DOJ professional-responsibility capacity declined as misconduct complaints rose, leaving courts to carry more of the accountability burden. Judicial authority remains enforceable, but voluntary compliance and internal correction are less reliable.

Habeas Corpus & Due Process

9.7 / 10. The first operational use of the Alien Terrorist Removal Court moved a national-security removal case into an unusually secretive forum. Mandatory detention, airport arrests, bond-hearing disputes, and expression-linked immigration enforcement added pressure. Courts still hear habeas claims and sometimes order release.

Coercive State Power

9.4 / 10. Two fatal ICE shootings involved people whom agents were not initially seeking. The public record does not yet establish criminal wrongdoing by individual agents, but mistaken identity, disputed official accounts, enforcement intensity, and weakened oversight form a serious systemic warning.

Weaponized Justice

9.8 / 10. Todd Blanche was confirmed as attorney general after controversy over a proposed \$1.8 billion compensation fund for Trump allies and an arrangement affecting Trump-family tax audits. Senate concessions demonstrated remaining leverage, while the underlying proposals, leak investigations, and election-official warnings deepened concern that justice power is being personalized.

Press Freedom

9.6 / 10. DOJ withdrew defective subpoenas to New York Times reporters after judicial scrutiny, but the leak investigation continued. Pentagon access restrictions remained in place, and the FCC removed the national television ownership cap. Formal publication remains free, while source protection, access, and media pluralism are less secure.

Civil Society

8.6 / 10. A judge blocked the VA's third effort to terminate a union agreement covering roughly 320,000 employees. Immigration and visa powers continued to affect political expression and association. Courts remain a meaningful

counterweight, keeping this category below 9.0.

Institutional Oversight

9.7 / 10. DOJ's Office of Professional Responsibility and inspector-general capacity weakened as allegations increased. The proposed compensation and tax arrangements illustrated personalized-governance risk. Congress extracted concessions and continued oversight, but durable consequences remained inconsistent.

Military / Intelligence Neutrality

9.4 / 10. Intelligence deteriorated more sharply than the uniformed military. Declassified material was used in an election narrative, ODNI personnel were cut under inexperienced acting leadership, and the incoming DNI declined to affirm the certified 2020 result. The armed forces remain professional, outside electoral administration, and subject to courts.

Overall judgment

The Democracy Redline Index rises from 9.4 to 9.6. The system remains operational. Its remaining safeguards are now operating inside the conflict rather than safely outside it.

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