



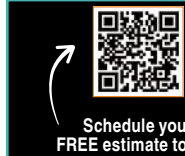
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Palladium-Item

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2026 | RICHMOND, IND.

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

ANALYSIS



ICE and other federal officers take a delivery driver into custody on Aug. 16, 2025, in Washington, DC. In 2025, the United States showed the largest decline ever observed for the right to be free from forced disappearance.

ANDREW LEYDEN/GETTY IMAGES

U.S. human rights scores plummet

Data shows deterioration of multiple freedoms

K. Chad Clay

University of Georgia
THE CONVERSATION

In the lead-up to the 2026 midterm elections, how is the U.S. government performing in terms of human rights? Listening to politicians, it can be difficult to know.

On one hand, some have pointed to a number of potential human rights abuses committed by the government inside and outside its borders in the past two years.

On the other hand, while marking the United States' 250th anniversary this year, President Donald Trump called the country "the home of freedom," "the land of liberty" and "the most extraordinary, most exceptional, most incredible nation ever to exist on the face of the earth."

"We're doing better now than we've ever done before," he said.

So which is it?
According to many of the human rights data sources available, the United States lags behind most other high-income democracies – countries that are both members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Develop-



A demonstrator throws a tear gas canister back at law enforcement during clashes that erupted after authorities declared an unlawful assembly during a 2025 No Kings protest in Los Angeles. The United States has consistently scored poorly on measures of assembly, association, opinion, expression, political participation, religion and belief. ETIENNE LAURENT/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

ment and classified as high income by the World Bank. The United States' poor performance spans civil and political rights, such as the right to be free from torture and the right to political participation, as well as economic and social rights, including the rights to health and food.

In fact, the United States has been a relatively poor performer across many of these rights for quite some time, regardless of the political party in power.

Even accounting for the United States' prior poor practices, however,

See RIGHTS, Page 2A

Officials find issues with city's financial report

Virginia Black

Richmond Palladium-Item
USA TODAY NETWORK

CENTERVILLE — Indiana officials said in a report released earlier this month that Centerville officials should fix "internal control deficiencies" in their reporting of the town's finances.

The State Board of Accounts supplemental compliance report for 2025, written by state examiner Paul Joyce, noted late disbursements, overstatements, an unreported data breach in May that resulted in two unauthorized electronic bank payments totaling more than \$40,000, and overdrawn cash balances.

Perhaps the most egregious allegations involved the use of town money to benefit employees.

Clerk-Treasurer Sarah Rice issued a check to herself dated Dec. 26 for \$680, the report said. "The check was processed and signed by the clerk-treasurer without town council approval."

She "cashed the check at a local bank and took the proceeds to the county clerk's office and presented the proceeds as payment toward the child support arrearage owed by a town employee," the report said. "The town

See ISSUES, Page 2A

Sing along at this free Richmond anniversary event

Jane Imbody

Richmond Palladium-Item
USA TODAY NETWORK

A free concert celebrating America's 250th anniversary will give Richmond residents the chance to sing along with local choirs at The Reid Center on Sept. 27.

The concert begins at 3 p.m., and admission is free, according to a community announcement. The event, titled "America 250: A Community Sing," will feature performances by the IU East Richmond Chorale and Community Choristers while inviting attendees to join in singing familiar selections.

Organizers say the program will highlight music from different periods of American history and showcase genres including jazz, folk and popular music. Songs tied to historical events and broader American themes will be included, along with music reflecting

See CONCERT, Page 2A

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