

July 2026 Democracy Health Report

Overall score: 9.4 / 10 | Prior: 9.2 | Movement: +0.2 | Status: Deep Red Zone

The Red Zone Is Becoming an Operating Condition

July did not produce one cinematic collapse. It produced simultaneous pressure on election administration, agency independence, press freedom, prosecutorial neutrality, transparency compliance, and congressional war powers. Courts, Congress, state officials, journalists, and civil institutions still imposed meaningful resistance, but resistance is becoming the full-time operating system of constitutional government rather than its emergency backup.

Category	July score
Election Integrity & Peaceful Transfer	9.5
Rule of Law & Court Compliance	9.6
Habeas Corpus & Due Process	9.6
Coercive State Power & Policing Norms	9.2
Political Targeting / Weaponization of Justice	9.6
Press Freedom & Information Control	9.4
Civil Society & Associational Freedom	8.4
Institutional Checks & Anti-Corruption	9.4
Military & Intelligence Neutrality	9.2

Why the score rose

The largest increases came in Election Integrity, Press Freedom, Institutional Checks, and Military / Intelligence Neutrality. The administration removed the remaining Election Assistance Commission members, DOJ warned state election officials about possible prosecution, reporter subpoenas escalated the federal leak campaign, and new military action resumed despite congressional war-powers resistance.

Rule of Law & Court Compliance - 9.6

The Supreme Court preserved birthright citizenship, and lower courts continued to enforce meaningful limits. At the same time, presidential removal power expanded sharply and DOJ entered a substantive compliance dispute over the Epstein Files Transparency Act and a federal disclosure order. No contempt finding has been verified.

Election Integrity - 9.5

The EAC purge, DOJ pressure on state officials, federal funding conditions, and conflicting SAVE database orders created a more centralized and coercive election-administration environment. The Supreme Court preserved state

ballot-receipt grace periods, and Georgia officials resisted another redistricting cycle.

Press Freedom - 9.4

DOJ subpoenas to New York Times journalists and a joint DOJ-Pentagon leak-prosecution initiative raised the legal cost of source protection. Journalists also faced arrests and assaults at immigration protests. A court blocked Pentagon escort restrictions for Times reporters.

Institutional Checks - 9.4

A federal judge dismantled the proposed Anti-Weaponization Fund, demonstrating real judicial resistance. Yet the structural independence of federal agencies weakened, and the Epstein disclosure dispute showed how much institutional energy is now required to force transparency and compliance.

Military & Intelligence Neutrality - 9.2

Congress asserted war-powers authority, but the administration resumed hostilities and reimposed a naval blockade under contested authorization. National-security institutions also became more involved in politically sensitive leak enforcement.

What still worked

Birthright citizenship was preserved. Mail-ballot grace periods survived. Geofence surveillance was limited. The Anti-Weaponization Fund was blocked. The Pentagon escort rule was suspended. Congress, courts, state officials, and continuing prosecutions still provided meaningful resistance.

What 9.4 means

The United States has not reached complete institutional collapse. It is operating in a phase where several safeguards are simultaneously near failure conditions. The remaining margin for error is extremely thin, and each unresolved confrontation becomes precedent for the next.

What to watch next

Watch EAC vacancies and voter-data demands; Epstein disclosure litigation and inspector-general findings; reporter-source contempt proceedings; additional removals from independent agencies; and whether congressional war-powers action changes military conduct in practice.

Summary judgment

July moved Democracy Redline to 9.4 out of 10. Not because every institution failed, but because too many institutions are being asked to prevent failure at the same time.

Methodology note: The score uses the published Version 1.2 model. Events receive one primary category to avoid double-counting; cross-category relevance is preserved in the evidence ledger. Contested compliance is not labeled contempt without a judicial finding.