



Governor Kathy Hochul, left, of New York, and Robert Tembeckjian, right, administrator and counsel to the New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct. Office of Governor Kathy Hochul/Courtesy photo.

NEWS

'Call to Action:' Hochul, Speakers at Armenian Bar Event Decry Trump Administration's Immigration Enforcement

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Bar Associations



By Emily Saul

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul on Wednesday issued a sharp rebuke of the Trump Administration's immigration enforcement tactics as she called on lawyers to fight back against attacks on the rule of law.

"My friends, this is a call to action, more than you ever could have imagined," said Hochul, a Democrat, Wednesday night at the Armenian Bar Association's annual Public Servants Dinner, where she was an honoree. "This is a call to action to use your legal power as attorneys and as judges and public servants and people who are focusing on what is right in society."

"If we don't step up and meet this moment, your children, your grandchildren, will look back and say, 'Where were you?'" said Hochul.

The comments came days after President Donald Trump issued an executive order aimed at identifying and potentially ending federal

funding to sanctuary cities, and as more and more stories emerge of individuals being detained or deported without due process.

The Public Servant's Dinner, held at the Yale Club, celebrates the public service of lawyers, judges and others and coincides with the Armenian Genocide.

Through the evening, speakers shared their families' journeys to the United States and, in some cases, sharply criticized the current climate and policies surrounding immigration.

"My own family embodied an immigrant experience profoundly pertinent to deeply disturbing events in our country today," said Robert Tembeckjian, administrator and counsel to the New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct.

His own family, he shared, crossed the border into the U.S. illegally 11 years after fleeing the genocide.

"It is part of the magic of America that nearly 100 years later, the grandson of illegal immigrants could achieve high government office and be standing at the lofty rostrum of privilege and acceptance that is the Yale Club," Tembeckjian stated.

Tembeckjian lambasted the "glee" shown by administration officials following the recent "highly public" arrest of an immigration judge in Wisconsin, who is accused of helping a man evade immigration authorities.

He thanked the Armenian Bar Association for "recognizing the value of public service in a political era poisoned by great cynicism and unbridled narcissism, these are difficult days for public service, as our national leadership routinely degrades their values and often unheralded contributions to American life."

The Armenian Bar Association event also honored Ken Khachigian, a chief speechwriter for President Ronald Reagan and a longtime aide to

President Richard Nixon.

Khachigian did not discuss the present state of affairs, instead focusing his speech on the powerful role played by language and legacy in public service.

He said he drew upon his own family's experience to inform one of Reagan's best-known addresses, a 1985 speech at Bergen-Belson concentration camp in West Germany.

"Reagan had to manifest an understanding of the Holocaust, and the only way I could help him achieve that was through my personal experiences, stories of the Armenian Genocide," he said.

Closing out the event, U.S. District Court Judge Claire Checci of the District of New Jersey recounted her family's path to America.

"My story is not a new one," she said. "It belongs to all of you, to every immigrant family in the United States. It's a story of hope, determination, hard work, resilience and love."

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