

## Biography

Spencer Overton is the Patricia Roberts Harris Research Professor of Law at George Washington University in Washington, DC, and also directs the GW Equity Institute's Multiracial Democracy Project.

Professor Overton is the author of a book and several academic articles and popular commentaries on democracy and public policy, including [\*State Power to Regulate Social Media Companies to Prevent Voter Suppression\*](#), 53 U.C. DAVIS LAW REVIEW 1793 (2020) and *The Implications of Section 230 for Black Communities* (forthcoming 2024). He has testified before Congress on policies to stop online disinformation ([June 2020](#), [October 2020](#), and [March 2023](#)).

Professor Overton's work as a commissioner on the Jimmy Carter-James Baker Election Commission and the Commission on Presidential Nomination Timing and Scheduling shaped the modern voter ID debate, resulted in Iowa restoring voting rights to over 80,000 returning citizens, and resulted in more diverse states like South Carolina and Nevada being moved to the beginning of the modern Democratic presidential primary process.

Professor Overton led the 2008 Obama transition team's Election Assistance Commission agency review group, and during the Obama Administration he served as Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Office of Legal Policy (the "think tank" of the Department of Justice). In that position, he partnered with other senior White House and Justice Department officials to lead the Administration's policy efforts on democracy issues, including conceptualizing and/or implementing policies related to the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act, the National Voter Registration Act, and the Voting Rights Act.

From 2014-2023, Professor Overton served as the President of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies—America's Black think tank—where he rebuilt the organization and worked closely with civil rights groups, the Congressional Black Caucus, and various other federal, state, and local policymakers to increase diversity among top political appointees and to devise and advance racially-equitable policies. Professor Overton has also served on the national boards of the American Constitution Society, the Center for Responsive Politics (Open Secrets), Common Cause, Demos, and the Leadership Conference Education Fund, and served as an advisory board member of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission.

Professor Overton has also practiced law at the firm Debevoise & Plimpton, clerked for U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Damon J. Keith, and graduated with honors from both Hampton University and Harvard Law School.