

## Jessica L. Waters Biography April 2026

Jessica L. Waters, J.D., is a Senior Scholar in Residence in the American University School of Public Affairs. She also currently serves as the Director of the [American University School of Public Affairs \(SPA\) Leadership Program](#) where she focuses on equipping students with experience, skills, and knowledge to prepare them for leadership roles in public service. Professor Waters is also a Faculty Fellow in the [Center for University Excellence](#), which brings university research expertise to pressing problems in the public domain.

Waters recently served for seven years as American University's first Dean of Undergraduate Education and Vice Provost for Academic Student Services (2016-2023). She was previously Associate Dean of the American University School of Public Affairs and director of multiple undergraduate programs.

Her research focuses on reproductive rights law and policy, particularly exploring questions related to the legal impact of women's medical decisions during pregnancy and childbirth, abortion regulation and access, state control of reproductive decision-making, employment-based conscience protections for reproductive health care providers, and the reproductive rights of employees working for religiously affiliated employers. Her work has been published in the *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender*, the *Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law*, the *American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy and the Law*, the *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, and the *Stanford Journal of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties*. Waters is a frequent media expert and commentator for local, regional, and national outlets. She delivered a 2016 TEDx talk, *Changing the Reproductive Rights Conversation*, and has recently authored op-eds for *The Conversation*, *Ms. Magazine*, *The Hill*, and *USA Today*.

Prior to joining the AU faculty full-time, Waters was a litigator at WilmerHale, where she specialized in criminal defense litigation, internal investigations, and reproductive rights litigation and advocacy. She also clerked for the Honorable Emmet Sullivan on the D.C. District Court. Waters also previously served on the Children's Law Center Advisory Board and as a guardian ad litem in the D.C. courts.