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Neal Katyal Runs a Legal SWAT Team to Combat President Trump

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Minutes after President Trump issued his 2017 executive order restricting travel from seven majority-Muslim countries, veteran attorney Neal Katyal was on the phone. By the next morning, some of the world's biggest companies, including Apple, Netflix, and Facebook, had signed on to Katyal's amicus brief opposing the ban.

That striking reversal—Silicon Valley has a long habit of political insouciance—will culminate at the Supreme Court on April 25, when Katyal argues against the administration in the case *Trump v. Hawaii*. He'll be on familiar ground when he enters the famed wood-paneled chamber. The acting solicitor general from 2010 to 2011, he argued seven cases in front of the court last year—more than any other attorney in the country—and broke the record for cases argued by a minority attorney, previously held by Thurgood Marshall.

When he graduated from Dartmouth College in 1991 and told his Indian immigrant parents he planned to attend Yale Law School, they cried—not because they were proud, he says, but because lawyers are poorly regarded in India and they viewed his choice as an embarrassment. “For them, it was be a doctor or an engineer,” Katyal says. He eventually became one of Georgetown Law School's youngest-ever professors at age 27, bringing with him a philosophy he calls “extreme centrism” that was heavily influenced by work during law school with now-Chief Justice John Roberts, who was then in the private sector. He later clerked with Associate Justice Stephen Breyer. “Whatever your politics are, [Katyal has] great legal chops,” says Ilya Shapiro, a researcher at the libertarian Cato Institute. “Even if I disagree with him, I take him seriously, and I can't say that about everybody.”

Between teaching classes, Katyal wrote rules for the Department of Justice governing the appointment of special prosecutors and served as lead counsel for *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, the 2006 case that ultimately did away with military tribunals at Guantanamo Bay. Now tenured at Georgetown, he moonlights as a partner at international law firm Hogan Lovells and runs Georgetown's nonprofit Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection. Created in 2017 in response to what Katyal sees as an overreach of executive power by Trump, ICAP is kind of like

a legal SWAT team: Katyal helps to identify and champion cases likely to make it to the Supreme Court; the travel ban is his first to make it all the way. “Every time the president opens his mouth and torches American values, we get calls and emails,” he says. “It’s now up to the media and courts.”