

LAW SCHOOL

Maybell Romero
Associate Dean for Faculty Research and Programs
McGlinchey Stafford Associate Professor of Law

August 31, 2026

Eleanor Barrett
Deputy Director
The American Law Institute
Via: https://www.ali.org/forms/young_scholars/

Re: Nomination of Carla Laroche for the ALI Early Career Scholars Medal

Dear Ms. Barrett:

I write to nominate my colleague Carla Laroche, Felder-Fayard Associate Professor of Law at Tulane University School of Law and Core Faculty at the Murphy Institute, for the ALI Early Career Scholars Medal. Professor Laroche has held a tenure-track appointment since July 2023, well within the Medal's seven-year eligibility window, and her scholarship on felony disenfranchisement is the kind of work the Medal is designed to recognize. Professor Laroche's work is doctrinally rigorous, empirically grounded, and built to be relied upon by legislatures, courts, lawyers, and other advocates working to move the law forward.

The main thread of Professor Laroche's research agenda traces a sustained inquiry into how states use facially neutral legal structures to exclude people with criminal convictions—disproportionately Black people, and Black women in particular— from the ballot box. Three of her articles, which have been provided with this letter, demonstrate both the depth of this agenda and its concrete potential to shape law reform.

In *Black Women and Voter Suppression*, 102 B.U. L. Rev. 2431 (2022), Professor Laroche used Florida's post-Amendment 4 “disenfranchisement maze” as a case study showing how facially race-neutral voting-rights-restoration schemes merely reproduces Jim Crow-era exclusion. The article also details specific potential state and federal reforms, from streamlined restoration procedures to targeted funding for community-based voter assistance, that legislators and advocates can implement directly.

In *Voter Emancipation in Slavery's Afterlife*, 56 Seton Hall L. Rev. 201 (2025), she builds on that foundation with a novel taxonomy of Black women's “proactive” and “reactive” legal resistance to voter exclusion, tracing a through-line from slavery to present-day criminalization of the vote. The article closes with a concrete reform agenda which she addresses to legislatures, election officials, and community

organizations, for finally dismantling the practices she identifies, reflecting the reform-oriented ambition the Medal recognizes.

Her forthcoming article, “Voter Zoning,” (Yale L. & Pol’y Rev., forthcoming 2026), is the most ambitious installment yet. Professor Laroche imports the doctrinal structure of zoning and public nuisance law to reframe felony disenfranchisement as a system of “physical” and “administrative” voter zoning. This novel lens that lets her identify barriers, such as prison mail policies and polling-place placement near school-based supervision restrictions, that voting rights scholarship has largely overlooked. The article’s proposed framework for “inclusionary voter zoning” gives states and advocates a structured template for reform grounded in a body of law—zoning and property—that is far more receptive to judicial and legislative intervention than voting rights doctrine has proven to be. The Article’s timing also sharpens its significance. It directly engages the Supreme Court’s April 2026 decision in *Louisiana v. Callais*, which gutted Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act by requiring plaintiffs to prove discriminatory intent rather than effect. It also explains why Professor Laroche’s zoning-based framework offers a path to reform through state and local law precisely where federal voting-rights doctrine has now been foreclosed. Doctrinal innovations like these have the potential to move law reform forward where more conventional approaches have stalled.

Professor Laroche has also secured a Tulane University Carol Lavin Bernick Faculty Grant for 2026–27 to continue this research and has several additional works-in-progress that extend the same reform-oriented inquiry. Her scholarship is grounded in years of direct advocacy on these exact issues, including her work as a Southern Poverty Law Center Law Fellow on Florida’s mass incarceration reforms and her role as counsel in the Florida Supreme Court’s advisory opinion proceedings on Amendment 4. Few early-career scholars bring that combination of sustained doctrinal innovation and litigation experience to their academic work. It is a large part of why her scholarship reads not as an academic exercise but as a genuine roadmap for practical and possible reform.

For these reasons, I recommend Carla Laroche for the ALI Early Career Scholars Medal without reservation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maybell Romero", with a stylized, flowing script.

Maybell Romero

Associate Dean for Faculty Research and Programs

McGlinchey Stafford Associate Professor of Law