

## **ACLU Defense of Religious Practice and Expression**

The ACLU vigorously defends the rights of all Americans to practice their religion. But because the ACLU is often better known for its work preventing the government from promoting and funding selected religious activities, it is sometimes wrongly assumed that the ACLU does not zealously defend the rights of all religious believers to practice their faith. The actions described below – over half of which were brought on behalf of self-identified Christians, with the remaining cases defending the rights of a wide range of minority faiths – reveal just how mistaken such assumptions are. (The list below includes examples since 2000.)

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### **2025**

The ACLU of Tennessee [filed](#) a lawsuit challenging the Bartlett Board of Mayor and Aldermen's denial of a special-use permit requested by the Bartlett Muslim Society to build a mosque. This came after the ACLU and ACLU of Tennessee authored a letter to the Board underscoring the demanding standards of review for government actions that substantially burden religious practice.

The ACLU and ACLU of Arkansas [filed](#) a federal-court challenge to a state law requiring all public schools to permanently display a government-chosen, Protestant version of the Ten Commandments in every classroom. The plaintiffs – who include Jewish and Unitarian Universalist families – argue the law violates the Establishment Clause, religiously coerces children, and undermines parents' free-exercise right to direct their children's religious education.

The ACLU and ACLU of Texas [filed](#) a lawsuit to block a state law requiring all public elementary and secondary schools to display a government-chosen, Protestant version of the Ten Commandments in every classroom. The plaintiffs – who include Christian, Jewish, Unitarian Universalist, and Hindu families – argue the law violates the Establishment Clause, religiously coerces children, and undermines parents' free-exercise right to direct their children's religious education.

### **2024**

The ACLU and ACLUs of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and San Diego and Imperial Counties, [published](#) a report detailing extensive and devastating confiscations of belongings, including religious items, from migrants at the Southern border by U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The ACLU and ACLU of Louisiana [filed](#) a federal-court challenge to a law requiring all public schools in the state to permanently display an official version of the Ten Commandments in

every classroom. The plaintiffs – who include Christian, Jewish, and Unitarian Universalist families – argue the law violates the Establishment Clause, religiously coerces children, and undermines parents’ free-exercise right to direct their children’s religious education.

The ACLU of Rhode Island [filed](#) a lawsuit on behalf of a Native American prisoner challenging the Rhode Island Department of Corrections’ restrictive policies governing the religious freedom of people incarcerated at the Adult Correctional Institutions.

## 2023

The ACLU and ACLU of DC [filed](#) a lawsuit on behalf of a Christian organization whose proposed advertisements for DC Metro buses were rejected because of their religious viewpoint.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Kansas [sent a letter](#) to a Kansas public-school district on a behalf of a Native American boy who was forced to cut his hair short to remain in school. The letter explained that the district’s policy requiring boys to have short hair discriminated based on gender and that officials’ refusal to accommodate our client’s Native American religious practice violated the law. After receiving our letter, the school board unanimously to rescind its hair policy for all grade levels.

The ACLU of Alaska [filed](#) a class-action lawsuit against the Alaska Department of Corrections for denying Muslim prisoners various religious accommodations, including access to religious garb and other religious items.

The ACLU of DC [sued](#) the D.C. Department of Corrections on behalf of Jewish prisoners denied kosher meals unless they could provide a letter from a rabbi verifying their faith. In response to the lawsuit, the Department revised its policy to eliminate the verification requirement.

The ACLU and ACLU of South Dakota submitted a [report](#) to the United Nations Human Rights Committee asking for an investigation into the desecration and exploitation of the Black Hills sacred Indigenous sites. The report emphasized that the U.S. government has violated past treaties with Sioux Nation Tribes by permitting mining on sacred land.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Mississippi, along with the Native American Rights Fund, sent a [letter](#) to a Mississippi school district on behalf of a Native American student denied the right to wear an eagle feather on her graduation cap and receive a traditional star quilt from her family after exiting the commencement stage. In response to our letter, the school district reversed its decision.

The ACLU, the ACLU of Arizona, the Sikh Coalition, and other allies submitted new policy recommendations to officials at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, urging them to adopt specific policies take to protect the religious rights of all migrants—whether Sikh, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, or any other religion—at the border with respect to searching and/or confiscating religious garb and other religious items.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Northern California sent a letter to the San Francisco Juvenile Justice Center on behalf of an incarcerated Muslim youth denied dietary accommodations during Ramadan. After receiving our letter, the Center affirmed that it was working to accommodate the individual's religious needs and developing a new policy to prevent similar violations from recurring.

The ACLU and the ACLU of North Carolina [sent a letter](#) to a public charter school, warning that school officials appeared to violate state and federal constitutional and civil rights when they demanded that a Native American first-grader cut his traditional hair style to conform to the school's short-hair rule for boys.

## 2022

The ACLU and the ACLU of Northern California [sent a letter](#) to planning officials at Santa Clara County, urging them to deny a conditional-use permit for a proposed quarry that would significantly harm Juristac, a sacred religious site for the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Rhode Island [represented](#) a small Wiccan Church after a town Zoning Board of Review threatened to deny a permit previously recommended by the city's planning commission. In response to our advocacy, the Board granted the church's permit.

The ACLU of Kentucky [sued](#) officials at the state Department of Corrections on behalf of a Rastafarian prisoner who was forced to cut his dreadlocks in violation of his religious beliefs. In response to the lawsuit, the Department of Corrections changed its policies to ensure that prisoners may claim a religious exemption to hair grooming standards and to limit the circumstances in which prisoners' hair may be forcibly cut.

The ACLU of Indiana filed a class-action [lawsuit](#) on behalf of Jewish, Muslim, and other women of faith whose sincere religious beliefs require them to have access to abortion, alleging that Indiana's abortion ban violates their religious-freedom rights under Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

The ACLU, along with other civil rights and religious organizations, filed an amicus brief in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit supporting the Thai Meditation Center Association of Alabama after its proposal for a Buddhist meditation center was denied by local officials.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Arizona sent [a letter](#) to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner, notifying him that Border Patrol agents in Arizona were unlawfully confiscating and trashing Sikh asylum-seekers' turbans. The letter requested immediate corrective action. A [follow-up letter](#) sent by the ACLU, the ACLU of Arizona, the Sikh Coalition, and more than 160 organizations highlighted broad opposition to this practice and notified officials that Border Patrol also denied Sikh migrants meals that comply with their religious beliefs.

The ACLU sent [a letter](#) to the Department of Education, urging officials to take action supporting Indigenous students' rights to wear tribal regalia, such as eagle feathers, during their high school graduation ceremonies.

The ACLU, along with the ACLU of Southern California and the ACLU of Minnesota, filed a [lawsuit](#) on behalf of three Muslim Americans subjected to intrusive questioning from border officers about their religious beliefs, practices, and associations in violation of their constitutional rights.

## **2021**

The ACLU and the ACLU of Texas filed [complaints](#) with the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice on behalf of two Native American boys whose public-school district prohibited them from wearing their hair long in accordance with their Native American heritage and religious beliefs.

The ACLU and ACLU of Mississippi successfully [sued](#) officials in Horn Lake, MS, who had unlawfully denied zoning approval for a proposed mosque due to anti-Muslim bias. As a result of the lawsuit, Horn Lake will permit construction of the first mosque ever in DeSoto County, MS.

The ACLU [filed](#) an amicus brief supporting Edward Lee Jones Jr., a practicing Muslim and Black man who has repeatedly been denied access to certain religious books and music while incarcerated in Arizona.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Nebraska [successfully petitioned](#) the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services for a religious accommodation granting our client the right to tithe to his local church.

After the ACLU and the ACLU of Southern California sent a demand letter to a California sheriff's department that had denied kosher meals to a Jewish prisoner for more than a year, the department relented and enrolled the individual in its religious diet program.

In a letter sent by a coalition of 58 groups supporting religious freedom, the ACLU [called](#) for President Biden to protect Oak Flat, a part of the Tonto National Forest and a sacred sanctuary to Western Apache, Yavapai, O'odham, Hopi, Zuni, and other indigenous peoples. The letter denounced the proposed plan to transfer the public lands to a copper-mining company and urged President Biden to support the Save Oak Flat Act, which has been introduced in Congress.

The ACLU [filed](#) an amicus brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in *Ramirez v. Collier*, supporting John H. Ramirez, a Baptist Christian whose final religious requests relating to his execution were denied by Texas prison officials. Mr. Ramirez requested to have his pastor pray audibly and lay hands on him as he dies. Filed on behalf of spiritual advisers who have been present in the death chamber and former high-ranking prison officials who have overseen numerous executions, the ACLU's brief highlighted the important role of spiritual advisors during executions and argued that Texas could easily accommodate Mr. Ramirez's religious practice.

The ACLU and ACLU of Massachusetts filed an amicus brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in *Shurtleff v. City of Boston*, supporting a Christian group's free-speech claim. Boston allows local groups to temporarily fly a flag outside of city hall and has approved all 284 applications for flag-raising over the past twelve years. But when Camp Constitution requested to display its flag for a single hour, the City refused because it had concerns that the flag's religious message would violate the Establishment Clause. While the City's concerns were asserted in good faith, the ACLU's amicus brief argued that, because the city opened a public forum, it could not discriminate based on viewpoint and that displaying the flag, under these limited circumstances, would not have violated the Establishment Clause.

## 2020

The ACLU, the ACLU of Arizona, and the Sikh Coalition sent [letter](#) to the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry objecting to prison officials' forcible shaving of a Sikh prisoner's beard and demanding that officials provide him a turban and allow him to wear it, along with his unshorn hair and beard going forward.

The ACLU represented Reverend Seigen Hartkemeyer, a Buddhist priest and longtime spiritual advisor to Wesley Purkey, in a lawsuit seeking [to delay](#) the federal execution of Mr. Purkey. Rev. Hartkemeyer was religiously obligated to be present at the execution, but his age and health put him at heightened risk of contracting COVID-19. Unfortunately, the courts ultimately rejected Rev. Hartkemeyer's claims, and he ultimately chose to attend Mr. Purkey's execution despite the significant risk to his health.

The ACLU [successfully petitioned](#) the Oklahoma Department of Corrections to allow worship services for death-row prisoners at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary. For ten years, the prison had a blanket ban on congregational religious services for death-row prisoners, in violation of their religious rights.

The ACLU successfully petitioned the Air Force for a religious accommodation allowing our client to wear an unshorn beard in accordance with his Eastern Orthodox faith.

## 2019

The ACLU of Michigan [sued](#) county officials after they threatened to demolish the homes in an Amish community because, in accordance with their faith, they did not use modern running-water and sewage systems. The parties eventually settled the lawsuit, with the county paying attorneys' fees and entering into a consent judgment that will allow the Amish to continue their traditional way of life.

The ACLU called for a Department of Homeland Security investigation into widespread religious freedom [violations](#) by Border Patrol and ICE, including confiscating Bibles from Christians and forcing Muslims to eat pork.

The ACLU [successfully petitioned](#) the Air Force for a religious accommodation allowing our active-duty Sikh client to wear a turban, beard, and unshorn hair.

The ACLU and ACLU of Arizona [sent a letter](#) to an Arizona school district on behalf of a Native American student who sought a religious accommodation to wear beadwork and an eagle feather on her graduation cap in accordance with her religious beliefs.

The ACLU [successfully represented](#) Airman 1st Class Sunjit Singh Rathour in obtaining a religious accommodation from the Air Force to wear his turban, beard, and unshorn hair in compliance with his Sikh religious beliefs. A1C Rathour became the first Airman to complete both basic training and advanced technical training while wearing his Sikh articles of faith.

The ACLU, ACLU of Oklahoma, and the Prison Law Office [sent a demand letter](#) to the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, objecting to the prison's death row conditions and ban on congregational worship for death row prisoners, a violation of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, which provides heightened protections for prisoners' religious exercise.

## **2018**

The ACLU and ACLU of Michigan (2018) [secured](#) an accommodation for an Air Force JAG officer to wear hijab.

The ACLU of West Virginia (2018) [ensured](#) that the city of Wheeling continued to allow a Catholic woman to offer her home for hospitality and fellowship to those in need.

The ACLU and ACLU of Southern California (2018) vindicated the rights of an ordained Baptist minister whose parole officers prohibited him from attending church.

[Preliminary Injunction](#)  
[Settlement Agreement](#)

The ACLU of Hawaii wrote a [letter](#) to the Hawaii DMV in support of a Muslim woman who was wrongly told she would have to remove her hijab in order to obtain a driver's license photo.

The ACLU and ACLU of Oregon filed a [friend-of-the-court brief](#) supporting the religious-freedom rights of Christian, Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu asylum-seekers detained at an Oregon federal prison, where their ability to practice their faith was unlawfully restricted.

The ACLU and allies filed suit on behalf of Christian, Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu asylum-seekers detained at a federal prison in California, where their religious-freedom rights were repeatedly [violated](#) by prison officials.

The ACLU and the ACLU of North Carolina filed a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of a Rastafarian prisoner who sought to observe certain holy days in accordance with his religious beliefs.

## 2017

The ACLU of Indiana (2017) [won](#) a preliminary ruling in favor of a Muslim prisoner seeking halal meals with meat.

The ACLU of Florida (2017) [secured](#) a settlement for Muslim prisoners denied halal meals while other prisoners received faith-based diets.

The ACLU and ACLU of Delaware (2017) [reversed](#) a school's decision to suspend a Muslim high school student who wears a kufi. The school agreed to allow the student to wear his kufi in school, amend district policy, and provide training on students' religious freedom rights.

The ACLU and ACLU of Minnesota (2017) [joined](#) a friend-of-the-court brief supporting a Seventh-day Adventist whose employer revoked her job offer after she asked for a religious accommodation.

The ACLU and ACLU of Georgia (2017) [advocated for](#) the rights of [a Christian woman](#) who was forced to remove her religiously motivated head covering when she visited her brother in prison. An officer told her that only Jews and Muslims would be allowed to enter with a head covering worn for religious reasons.

The ACLU and ACLU of Louisiana (2017) [won](#) the right of a Rastafarian prisoner to wear dreadlocks in accordance with his sincerely held religious beliefs.

The ACLU of Idaho (2017) [secured](#) kosher meals for Jewish prisoners.

The ACLU of West Virginia (2017) [contacted](#) school officials on behalf a Muslim student who said his classmates and teacher harassed him for his faith.

The ACLU and ACLU of Virginia (2017) [filed a friend-of-the-court brief](#) in support of a mosque for which the County Board of Supervisors denied a pump and haul permit.

The ACLU, with affiliates and allies across the country (2017), brought suit against President Trump's Muslim ban.

<https://www.aclu.org/legal-document/complaint-declaratory-and-injunctive-relief-0>

The ACLU and the ACLU of Alabama (2017) favorably settled the case of a Christian woman who was forced by the DMV to remove her headscarf, which she wears for religious reasons.

<https://www.aclu.org/cases/allen-v-english>

## 2016

The ACLU of Michigan (2016) [represented](#) a prisoner claiming that the vegan diet provided to him was not kosher, in violation of his religious beliefs.

The ACLU and ACLU of Arizona (2016) secured an accommodation for a Muslim woman who, for religious reasons, did not want to reveal her hair color on her driver's license.



The ACLU and the ACLU of South Carolina (2016) [supported](#) a Muslim student's request to wear hijab as part of her uniform at a public military college.

The ACLU of Nebraska (2016) [backed](#) a mosque for which the City Council denied a conditional use permit.

## **2015**

The ACLU and the ACLU of Texas [filed](#) an amicus brief in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in support of a Muslim prisoner seeking the right to wear a kufi and keep his beard long in accordance with his religious beliefs.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Texas [filed](#) an amicus brief in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit supporting Muslim prisoners' challenge to a Texas Department of Criminal Justice rule that permitted communal worship only if the services were directly supervised by prison personnel or a "vetted volunteer." The rule severely limited the ability of Muslim prisoners and prisoners of other minority faiths to participate in group worship.

The ACLU of New Hampshire (2015) [filed suit](#) on behalf of a prisoner's mother and three-year-old son against a prison policy that prohibits Christmas cards, prayer cards, and drawings sent through the mail.

The ACLU of Hawai'i (2015) [secured](#) the rights of a pastor and his wife to hand out religious literature on a public sidewalk.

The ACLU of Pennsylvania (2015) [interceded](#) on behalf of a Christian inmate seeking to have a communal prayer during the Christmas holiday.

The ACLU of Northern California (2015) [represented](#) a Native American public high school student who wanted to wear a ceremonial feather in his graduation cap.

The ACLU and ACLU of Florida (2015) successfully [persuaded](#) Walt Disney World to accommodate a Sikh mail carrier who wanted to perform his regular job duties with his religiously mandated beard and turban intact, regardless of the company's "Look Policy."

The ACLU and the ACLU of the Nation's Capital (2015) [won](#) a lawsuit allowing a Sikh student to enroll in ROTC while still wearing his articles of faith.

The ACLU of Indiana (2015) [challenged](#) a state law preventing sex offenders from attending religious worship services.

The ACLU of Virginia (2015) defended students' right to wear rosary beads in a public high school.

The ACLU of Michigan (2015) [backed](#) Christian evangelists' right to protest at a street festival.

## **2014**



The ACLU [sent a letter](#) to the U.S. Army urging officials to add Humanism to the Army's list approved list of approved religious-preference designations for service members. In response to our letter, the Army updated its faith-codes list.

The ACLU, the ACLU of Alabama (2014), and a cohort of former corrections officials [filed a brief](#) in support of a Muslim prisoner who was denied the right to grow a half-inch beard in compliance with his religious beliefs.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Alabama (2014) [filed a lawsuit](#) to protect a pastor's right to provide housing and ministry to those in need.

The ACLU of Texas (2014) [spoke out](#) against overly broad subpoenas served on pastors. The ACLU of New Jersey (2014) [defended](#) a man's right to wear a religious head-covering in court.

The ACLU of Louisiana (2014) [secured](#) a student's right to maintain his religiously mandated hairstyle.

The ACLU of Nebraska (2014) [supported](#) a man's right to hand out the gospel of Jesus Christ outside an arena.

The ACLU of Virginia (2014) [decried](#) the state's denial of a permit for a National Day of Prayer event on Capitol Square.

The ACLU of Tennessee (2014) [defended](#) an elementary-school student's right to read his Bible during a free-reading period.

The ACLU of Virginia (2014) [supported](#) the right of Christian students to proselytize on a community college campus.

The ACLU of New Jersey (2014) [defended](#) an orthodox Christian man's right to wear his religious head-covering in a municipal courtroom.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Florida (2014) [filed a friend-of-the-court brief](#) supporting Jewish prisoners' right to receive a Kosher diet.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Wyoming (2014) [sent a letter](#) protesting the Wyoming Department of Corrections' practice of prohibiting prisoners from wearing religious headgear outside of their cells.

## **2013**

The ACLU and ACLU of Eastern Missouri (2013) [sought](#) access to religious websites that had been blocked at the public library.

The ACLU of Alabama (2013) [represented](#) a prisoner seeking to wear his hair unshorn in accordance with his Native American faith.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Oklahoma (2013) [filed a brief](#) in support of a Muslim job applicant who faced religious discrimination in the hiring process.

The ACLU of Washington (2013) [supported](#) the right of Orthodox Christian, Hindu, and Muslim employees to an accommodation for their religious dietary needs.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Mississippi (2013) [defended](#) the right of a Sikh man to wear a turban and carry a kirpan, without being subjected to harassment, in encounters with the Mississippi Department of Transportation and a Pike County judge/ during a traffic stop and courtroom appearance.

The ACLU and the New York Civil Liberties Union (2013) [filed a lawsuit](#) challenging the New York City Police Department's practice of targeting entire Muslim communities for discriminatory and suspicionless surveillance.

## **2012**

The ACLU and ACLU of Florida (2012) [submitted](#) a brief in support of prisoner's request for kosher meals.

The ACLU of North Carolina (2012) [advocated](#) for allowing a 6-year-old to read aloud a poem with the word "God" in it at her school's Veterans Day assembly, in response to school officials' decision to remove the word.

The ACLU of North Carolina (2012) [objected](#) to a decision by the presiding deputy of a Lenoir County courtroom to eject a man observing court proceedings after he refused to remove his kufi – a knitted skull cap commonly worn by Muslim men.

The ACLU of Pennsylvania (2012) [filed a brief](#) in support of a fifth grader's right to share her religious beliefs with classmates by distributing invitations to a Christmas party hosted by a local church.

The ACLU of Virginia (2012) [represented](#) four Sikh men challenging a law that allows ordained ministers to receive a license to perform marriages without posting a bond, but requires representatives of religions that have no ordained ministers, like Sikhism, to post a \$500 bond.

The ACLU of Louisiana (2012) [filed a lawsuit](#) on behalf of a member of Raven Ministries, a Christian congregation that regularly preaches the Gospel in New Orleans's French Quarter. The lawsuit challenged a city ordinance that restricts religious speech on Bourbon Street after dark. As a result of the lawsuit, a federal judge issued an order that blocks enforcement of the law.

The ACLU of Michigan (2012) [successfully represented](#) Muslim and Seventh-Day Adventist prisoners in a religious class action challenging two Michigan Department of Corrections policies: one which accommodated Jewish inmates by providing kosher meals while denying Muslim inmates halal meals, while the other failed to excuse inmates from their prison jobs on the Sabbath.

The ACLU of Virginia (2012 and 2010) opposed bans on students' right to wear rosary beads at two public middle schools. The schools dropped the bans after receiving letters from the ACLU.  
[Letter to Matacoa Middle School](#)  
[Letter Fairfield Middle School](#)

The ACLU of Utah (2012) [filed a lawsuit](#) on behalf of members of the Main Street Church, a non-denominational Christian church in Brigham City, who were denied access to certain city streets for the purpose of handing out religious literature. An agreement was reached with the city allowing church members to distribute their literature.

The ACLU of New Mexico (2012) [filed a lawsuit](#) on behalf of two Christian street preachers who were arrested multiple times for exercising their First Amendment rights by preaching in public.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Texas (2012) [filed a brief](#) in support of an observant Jewish prisoner's right to receive kosher meals.

## **2011**

The ACLU of Texas (2011) [opposed](#) a public high school's policy prohibiting students from wearing visible rosaries and crosses in the Brownsville Independent School District.

The ACLU of Nebraska (2011) [opposed a policy](#) at Fremont Public School that would prevent students from wearing Catholic rosaries to school.

The ACLU of Texas (2011) [filed a brief](#) in support of students in the Plano school district who wanted to include Christian messages in their holiday gift bags.

The ACLU of Virginia (2011) [defended](#) the free religious expression of a group of Christian athletes in Floyd County High School who had copies of the Ten Commandments removed from their personal lockers.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Southern California (2011) [filed a lawsuit](#) on behalf of a Sikh inmate who has faced multiple disciplinary sanctions for refusing to trim his beard on religious grounds. Keeping unshorn hair is one of the central tenets of the Sikh faith.

The ACLU of Connecticut (2011) [filed a lawsuit](#) on behalf of a Naval officer who sought recognition as a conscientious objector because of his Christian convictions against war. After a period of intense religious study, reflection, and prayer, he had come to realize that his religious beliefs were in conflict with his military service. The officer's request was subsequently granted and he received an honorable discharge.

[New York Times Article](#)

The ACLU of Southern California (2011) [filed a lawsuit](#) against the FBI alleging that an agent had infiltrated a California mosque and violated the constitutional rights of hundreds of Muslims

by targeting them for surveillance because of their religion.

[Washington Post Article](#)

## 2010

The ACLU and the ACLU of Oklahoma [sued](#) the state of Oklahoma on behalf of Muslim residents in response to voter approval of a state constitutional amendment that prohibited state-court judges from considering “Sharia” law in their decision making. The lawsuit argued that the amendment was based in anti-Muslim bigotry and would deny Oklahoma Muslims equal access to the judicial system.

The ACLU of Virginia [sued](#) the Town of Richlands for violating a resident’s free-speech and religious-freedom by denying him a license to open a tarot-reading business in accordance with his Hermetic faith based on hostility toward his religious viewpoint and practice. In settling the lawsuit, the town changed its unlawful ordinances and authorized the business to proceed.

The ACLU of Colorado (2010) [supported](#) the rights of students in Colorado Springs School District 11 to wear crosses, rosaries, and other religious symbols. A middle school had announced a policy forbidding students from wearing certain Christian symbols unless they were worn underneath their clothing.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Kentucky (2010) [appealed](#) the denial of a zoning permit for a Muslim prayer space in Mayfield. After ACLU involvement, the permit was granted.

The ACLU of San Diego and Imperial Counties (2010) [wrote a letter](#) in support of a church in El Centro, California, that was prohibited from relocating to a building in the downtown district.

The ACLU of Washington (2010) [sued](#) the Pierce County Jail in Tacoma, Washington, for religious discrimination against two Muslims who were forbidden from participating in group prayer, denied dietary accommodations, and refused religious clothing.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Georgia (2010) [sued](#) the City of Douglasville on behalf of a devout Muslim woman who was restrained, arrested, and jailed for several hours after refusing to remove her religious head covering.

The ACLU of Florida (2010) [filed a lawsuit](#) on behalf of a local homeless ministry, the First Vagabonds Church of God, challenging an Orlando ordinance that prohibits service of food to groups in the same public park more than twice per year. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit eventually enjoined the city from enforcing the ordinance, allowing the church to resume providing food to the homeless.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Texas (2010) [filed a brief](#) in the U.S. Supreme Court in support of a Texas state prisoner seeking damages after prison officials denied him the opportunity to participate in Christian worship services.

The ACLU of Alaska (2010) [advised](#) the Alaska Department of Education to respect the religious freedom of Russian Old Believer families by arranging alternate testing dates for the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, which conflicts with Holy Week for Russian Old Believer students. Students may now take the test on different testing dates.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Maryland (2010) [filed an amicus brief](#) in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit on behalf of Steven Kanai, a conscientious objector who self-identified as a Christian but also found meaning in the non-violent and compassionate teachings of Buddhism.

The ACLU of Maryland (2010) [came to the defense](#) of a practicing Muslim woman who was denied a foster care license simply because she does not allow pork products in her home. The woman was fully qualified and made clear that she allows foster children to worship as they please.

The ACLU, its national chapter in Puerto Rico, and its affiliates in New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island (2010) [filed a friend-of-the-court brief](#) opposing restrictive laws that effectively ban Jehovah's Witnesses from freely expressing their faith on the streets of Puerto Rico. The brief supports a challenge by the Witnesses to Puerto Rico statutes authorizing local neighborhoods to deny citizens access to public residential streets.

The ACLU of Arizona (2010) [successfully challenged](#) a Maricopa County policy restricting religious head coverings worn by detainees and inmates in county custody. The ACLU of Arizona brought the case on behalf of a Muslim woman who was denied the right to wear a head scarf while detained by the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office. MCSO now allows Muslim women to wear head scarves during the intake and booking process after a brief initial search.

## **2009**

The ACLU of San Diego and Imperial Counties (2009) [wrote a letter](#) in support of a family's right to host a home bible study after the family was cited for violating a county zoning code.

The Maine Civil Liberties Union (2009) [filed suit](#) against the City of Portland on behalf of the Portland Masjid and Islamic Center, a group of Muslims seeking to use a former television repair shop they had purchased for prayer services and religious study. In response, Portland amended its land-use ordinance, and the Portland Planning Board granted approval to the project. The new mosque will primarily serve as a religious and cultural center for Muslim families who came to this country from Afghanistan fleeing religious persecution following invasion of their country by the Soviet Union.

The ACLU of Maryland (2009) [successfully settled](#) a lawsuit on behalf of a Christian ministry for the homeless in the town of Elkton, Maryland, which had purchased a site for a religious day center to help the local community through job training, food, showers, and religious services. Though the site is legally zoned for the use of churches and centers that provide those services, the zoning board had refused to recognize the religious nature of the center, placing unreasonable

limitations on the ministry. The ACLU of Maryland reached a favorable settlement with the town, affirming the church's right to operate its day center for the homeless.

The ACLU and the ACLU of the National Capital Area (2009) [filed suit](#) on behalf of a young Quaker whose religious beliefs prevent him from registering for the draft without some official way to record his claim of conscientious objection in the registration process. He is a birthright Quaker and does not believe that he can offer himself as a candidate for the military.

The ACLU and the ACLU of New Jersey (2009) [filed a successful lawsuit](#) on behalf of a New Jersey prisoner – an ordained Pentecostal minister – to restore his fundamental right to preach to other inmates. The minister had preached at weekly Christian worship services at the New Jersey State Prison in Trenton, New Jersey for more than a decade when prison officials suddenly banned that activity without any justification. As a result of the ACLU lawsuit, state officials agreed to allow the minister to resume preaching and teaching Bible study classes under the supervision of prison staff.

The ACLU of Florida (2009) [filed a lawsuit](#) on behalf of two families from the Dove World Outreach Center, defending their constitutional right to express themselves in public school with t-shirts stating, "Islam is of the devil." The suit claims that the school has been inconsistent in enforcing restrictions on free speech.

The ACLU of Michigan (2009) [filed a friend-of-the-court brief](#) on behalf of the First Baptist Church of Ferndale after local residents cited a zoning ordinance to prevent the church from providing social services to the poor and homeless on church property. The ACLU argued that zoning boards may not burden the free exercise of religion simply because neighbors object. The Oakland County Circuit Court denied the request of the residents, allowing the church to continue providing services.

The ACLU of Tennessee (2009) [came to the defense](#) of a group of student teachers who conduct church services with the homeless in a public park. The ACLU successfully negotiated with the Metro Board of Parks and Recreation to revise a policy that had unfairly blocked religious groups' regular use of park space.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Virginia (2009) [argued against](#) the censorship of religious materials being sent to detainees in the Rappahannock Regional Jail. The ACLU wrote a letter to the superintendent of the jail, asking that the jail stop removing Christian-themed materials and biblical passages from letters written to detainees. As a result of ACLU involvement, the prison agreed to change its policies and allow religious mail.

The ACLU of Michigan (2009) [submitted a comment and testified](#) before the Michigan Supreme Court on a proposed court rule that would give judges the discretion to bar women who wear religious veils, or niqabs, from testifying. The ACLU argued that denying women their day in court because of their religious dress violated the Michigan Constitution's Religious Freedom Clause.

The ACLU of Louisiana (2009) [argued](#) for the right of Christian preachers to distribute pamphlets at the Breaux Bridge Crawfish Festival. The ACLU wrote a letter to the mayor in support of the preachers, who had been ordered to stop handing out religious material.

The ACLU of Louisiana (2009) [filed a federal lawsuit](#) on behalf of Donald Leger, a devout Catholic and prisoner on death row at Angola State Prison. The lawsuit challenged a prison policy mandating that all televisions on death row be tuned to predominately Baptist programming on Sunday mornings. Under the terms of a settlement in the case, Mr. Leger was able to view Catholic Mass regularly and was permitted private confessional visits with a priest.

The ACLU of Texas (2009) [filed a friend-of-the-court brief](#) in support of a Christian pastor and his faith-based rehabilitation facility in Sinton, Texas. The ACLU urged the court to reverse a decision that had prohibited the pastor from operating his rehabilitation program near his church and also had sharply limited the reach of the Texas Religious Freedom Restoration Act. In June 2009, the Texas Supreme Court agreed and ruled in favor of the pastor.

The ACLU of Maryland (2009) [filed discrimination charges](#) with the E.E.O.C. on behalf of three Orthodox medics who were told that they could not ride on calls with the Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company (PVFC) unless they shaved their religiously required beards. The PVFC claimed that the beards might prevent the medics from wearing specialized safety masks that the PVFC hopes to purchase in the future.

The ACLU of Georgia (2009) [drafted a policy](#) that was adopted by the Georgia Judicial Council, the policy-making body for Georgia courts, which clarified that religious head coverings can be worn in Georgia courthouses. The ACLU of Georgia advocated for the adoption of this policy after learning about troubling reports of incidents at the Douglasville Municipal Court, where Muslim women were faced with the choice of removing their headscarves or being barred from the courtroom.

The ACLU of Delaware (2009) represented the Episcopal Diocese of Delaware in a threatened eviction action against a congregation that was meeting in an elementary school on Sunday mornings. Because the school district permitted a wide variety of other groups to use its facilities, the ACLU wrote to the school district explaining that, as a general rule, public buildings must be made available to religious groups on the same terms that they are made available to the general public. In January 2009, the parties reached an amicable resolution permitting the church to continue using the facilities.

The ACLU of Pennsylvania (2009) [filed a lawsuit](#) on behalf of the Shenkel United Church of Christ, objecting to North Coventry Township's refusal to allow the church to house homeless people for one month out of the year. The case is similar to several earlier actions brought by the ACLU on behalf of churches in the Pennsylvania towns of Brookville and Munhall.

The ACLU of Kentucky (2009) [represented](#) several members of the Swartzentruber Amish, an Old Order Amish sect, in an attempt to overturn their criminal convictions for failing to display



slow-moving vehicle emblems on their horse-drawn buggies. The Swartzentruber Amish object to displaying the emblems because they perceive them as worldly symbols that are to be avoided.

The ACLU of the National Capital Area (2009) [brought suit](#) on behalf of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish firefighters and paramedics who wear beards as a matter of religious observance. The district court agreed with the ACLU that the District of Columbia's policy prohibiting these individuals from wearing beards violated their religious freedom rights, and the Court of Appeals affirmed in 2009.

The ACLU of Arizona (2009) [filed a lawsuit](#) on behalf of a Maricopa County Sheriff's Office detention officer who was demoted and eventually forced to leave for failing to abandon his practice of wearing a beard in accordance with his Muslim faith.

## **2008**

The ACLU of Michigan (2008) [filed a successful lawsuit](#) on behalf of a Benton Harbor minister who was sentenced to 3 to 10 years in prison for writing an article both criticizing the judge and predicting what God might do to the judge who presided over his case – actions protected by the constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and religious expression.

The ACLU of Southern California (2008) [filed suit](#) on behalf of members of a faith-based charity organization after park rangers threatened to arrest the members for serving hot meals and distributing Bibles to the homeless on Doheny State Beach.

The ACLU of Louisiana (2008) [filed a brief](#) in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit supporting an individual's right to quote Bible verses on public streets in Zachary, Louisiana.

The ACLU of Pennsylvania (2008) filed several declaratory judgment actions to confirm the validity of marriages performed by clergy who do not regularly preach in a church or to a congregation.

The ACLU of North Carolina (2008) assisted an individual who had been banned from riding the bus in Raleigh for reading his Bible aloud. As a result of the ACLU's intervention, he was permitted back on the bus system.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Texas (2008) [filed a friend-of-the-court brief](#) in the Texas Supreme Court in support of mothers who had been separated from their children by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). The DFPS seized more than 450 children from their homes in Eldorado, Texas, following vague allegations about child abuse by some members of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. While fully supporting the state's commitment to protecting children from abuse, the ACLU argued that Texas law and the U.S. Constitution required that the children be returned unless the state could provide the requisite evidence of abuse. In May 2008, the Texas Supreme Court unanimously ruled, consistent with the ACLU position, that the state must return the children to their homes pending further investigation of allegations of abuse.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Wyoming (2008) [represented](#) a Wyoming prisoner who was prevented from possessing bald eagle feathers, the single most sacred religious symbol of his Native American tribe.

The ACLU (2008) [struck an agreement](#) with officials at the Wyoming State Penitentiary over new prison dining policies that more fully accommodate their religious practices and beliefs.

The ACLU of Missouri (2008) [sued](#) the City of Poplar Bluff after the City's public library disciplined a part-time employee who objected to participating in the promotion of a Harry Potter book. The employee, a devout Southern Baptist, had religious objections to the promotion, which she believed encouraged children to worship the occult. The lawsuit argued that the city violated federal law by refusing to accommodate her sincerely held religious beliefs.

The ACLU of Delaware (2008) came to the defense of a Muslim nurse who was told she could not wear her religious head covering to work at the New Castle County Detention Center. After the ACLU's intervention in the matter, the nurse received her requested religious accommodation.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Texas (2008) [came to the defense of](#) a five-year-old Native American boy who was forced into in-school suspension for wearing long braids as an expression of his religious beliefs and cultural heritage. A federal judge ruled that this policy violated the U.S. Constitution and state law, and the school district was required to provide the child an exemption from its restrictive dress code. The case is now on appeal.

## **2007**

The ACLU of Florida (2007) [argued in favor of](#) the right of Christians to protest against a gay pride event held in the City of St. Petersburg. The city had proposed limiting opposition speech, including speech motivated by religious beliefs, to restricted "free speech zones." After receiving the ACLU's letter, the city revised its proposed ordinance.

The ACLU of Oregon (2007) [defended](#) the right of students at a private religious school not to be pressured to violate their Sabbath day by playing in a state basketball tournament. The Oregon School Activities Association scheduled state tournament games on Saturdays, the recognized Sabbath of students and faculty of the Portland Adventist Academy. The ACLU argued that the school's team, having successfully made it to the tournament, should not be required to violate their religious beliefs in order to participate.

The ACLU of Colorado (2007) came to the defense of a Jewish law student who needed to reschedule the first day of her bar exam because of a conflict with a day of religious observance. After a letter from the ACLU, she was granted the requested religious accommodation.

The ACLU of Texas (2007) [represented](#) a Texas man who was ordered out of the courtroom by a Justice of the Peace and threatened with arrest when he refused to remove his turban – worn in accordance with his Sikh faith – while defending himself against a traffic citation.

The ACLU of Michigan (2007) [filed a lawsuit](#) in Wayne County Circuit Court against Old Redford Academy, a public charter school in Detroit, for violating a ninth grade student's right to wear his hair long in accordance with a verse in Leviticus. Despite the religious basis for his long hair, the school suspended him and referred him for expulsion for violating its "closely cropped" hair policy. The judge issued an injunction ordering the Academy to let the student return to school.

The ACLU of West Virginia (2007) [sued](#) on behalf of a Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) university student who won a prestigious scholarship to West Virginia University. Although the state scholarship board provided leaves of absence for military, medical, and family reasons, it denied the ACLU's client a leave of absence to serve on a two-year mission for his church.

The ACLU of North Carolina (2007) challenged a North Carolina Department of Corrections policy making all religious services in prison English-only, thereby denying access to many inmates. The North Carolina Division of Prisons agreed to review the policy and the need for religious services in languages other than English in the state correctional system.

The ACLU of Colorado (2007) defended the rights of prisoners in the Teller County Jail to receive a proper diet consistent with their religion. After jail officials determined that prisoners would not have "certain religious articles or diets," the ACLU wrote a letter of inquiry which resulted in a revision of the jail's policy to allow for religious accommodation.

The ACLU of Pennsylvania (2007) came to the defense of a second-grade student who, in response to a class assignment to write a story, submitted a story about Easter and redemption. After the teacher rejected the submission because of its religious content, the ACLU wrote a letter to the school on the student's behalf. The principal and teacher subsequently apologized, and the principal agreed to instruct his teachers on the law.

The ACLU of New Jersey (2007) [defended](#) the right of an elementary school student who was prohibited from singing "Awesome God" in a voluntary after-school talent show for which students selected their own material. The ACLU submitted a friend-of-the-court brief. After a favorable settlement was reached for the student, the federal lawsuit was dismissed.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Pennsylvania (2007) [prevailed](#) in their case on behalf of an Egyptian Coptic Christian who had been detained and who claimed he had been tortured by the Egyptian government because he refused to convert to Islam. After permitting Sameh Khouzam to stay in the United States for nine years based on evidence that he would probably be tortured if he returned to Egypt, the U.S. government changed its position in 2007 and sought to deport Mr. Khouzam based on diplomatic assurances from the Egyptian government that Mr. Khouzam would not be tortured upon return. As a result of the ACLU's advocacy, a federal court granted Mr. Khouzam an indefinite stay of deportation to Egypt.

The ACLU of North Carolina (2007) wrote a letter to the Dismas Charities Community Correction Center on behalf of a former resident who was told he could not drink wine during communion services while confined at the Center. After the ACLU advised the Center of its obligations under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000, the Center revised its communion policy to comply with federal law.

The ACLU of Colorado (2007) [came to the defense of](#) a Seventh-Day Adventist who was being refused a religious diet in prison. After the ACLU communicated with prison authorities on the prisoner's behalf, the diet was provided.

The ACLU of Georgia (2007) [filed a federal lawsuit](#) to help obtain a zoning permit for a house of worship on behalf of the Tabernacle Community Baptist Church after the city of East Point denied the request. The city has since repealed the ordinance and churches are now allowed to occupy buildings that were previously used for commercial purposes.

The ACLU of Delaware (2007) prevailed in a lawsuit brought on behalf of Christians, pagans, and Wiccans, alleging that a department store violated a Delaware public accommodations law by canceling community courses after individuals complained about the religious beliefs that were being taught in the centers.

The ACLU of Missouri (2007) [represented](#) Shirley L. Phelps-Roper, a member of the Westboro Baptist Church, whose religious beliefs led her to condemn homosexuality as a sin and insist that God is punishing the United States. The protests in which she has been involved have been confrontational and have involved funerals of soldiers killed in Iraq. While the ACLU does not endorse her message, it does believe that she has both religious and free-speech rights to express her viewpoint criticizing homosexuality. The Supreme Court recently refused to overturn a court of appeals decision in Phelps-Roper's favor.

The ACLU of North Carolina (2007) assisted with the naturalization of a Jehovah's Witness who was originally denied citizenship based on his conscientious refusal to swear an oath that he would be willing to bear arms on behalf of the country.

The ACLU of Rhode Island (2007) [prevailed](#) in its arguments on behalf of a Christian inmate, Wesley Spratt, who had been preaching in prison for over seven years before administrators told him to stop based on vague and unsubstantiated security concerns. After the ACLU prevailed in the Court of Appeals, the parties reached a settlement under which Mr. Spratt is free to preach again.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Southern California (2007) [filed suit](#) on behalf of Jameelah Medina, a Muslim woman who was forced by local deputies to remove her religious head covering while she was in custody in San Bernardino County's West Valley Detention Center. Despite her repeated requests to keep her head covered during her day-long incarceration, Medina was forced to remove her hijab in the presence of men she did not know and to remain uncovered for much of the day. In October 2008, the county agreed to adopt a policy

accommodating the right of Muslim women to wear headscarves in accordance with their religious beliefs.

The ACLU of North Carolina (2007) [won its lawsuit](#) against the state of North Carolina to permit witnesses at trial to take oaths on the religious scriptures of their own religious beliefs (in this case, Islam) rather than on those approved by the state.

The ACLU of Southern California (2007) [represents](#) Calvin Chee Keong Lee, a Buddhist-Taoist conscientious objector who enlisted in the U.S. Army shortly after arriving in the United States from Malaysia. Currently stationed in Ft. Irwin, California and scheduled for imminent deployment to Iraq, Lee sought discharge from the Army based on his religious beliefs, which compel him not to kill or cause injury to others. When he enlisted, Lee believed that he would be able to remain in his civilian construction job.

The ACLU (2007) [argued](#) that veterans and their families should be able to decide for themselves which religious symbol is placed on a deceased veteran's headstone at federal cemeteries. The ACLU challenged the constitutionality of a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs policy that had restricted religious symbols only to those that had been approved by government officials. The Department of Veterans Affairs settled the case by agreeing to allow a Wiccan symbol to be included on the plaintiffs' loved ones' military headstones.

The ACLU of West Virginia and the ACLU of the National Capital Area (2007) [represented](#) a Muslim Iranian-American couple, both of whom were terminated from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) because of their religion and without due process. The ACLU negotiated an agreement with NIOSH under which the husband and wife were reinstated to their previous positions with back pay, benefits, and damages.

[Slideshow](#)

The New York Civil Liberties Union (2007) [successfully brought suit](#) on behalf of a Muslim prison guard who was told that he had to remove his head covering (known as a kufi) while working, even though he had worn it while on duty for many years. A federal judge ordered the New York Department of Corrections to allow the guard to resume wearing his head covering on the job.

The ACLU of Michigan (2007) [came to the defense of](#) a devoted Muslim woman who was forbidden from riding a public bus in Grand Rapids because of her religious veil. After the ACLU met with county officials, the bus system repealed its no-face-covering rule and agreed to conduct diversity training.

The ACLU of Alabama (2007) represented Native American inmates in their successful lawsuit requiring the state of Alabama to permit sacred sweat lodge ceremonies at designated correctional facilities on holy days. After winning that case, the ACLU of Alabama represented some of the inmates again when the State attempted to transfer them to a correctional facility in Louisiana that does not allow such religious ceremonies.

The ACLU and the ACLU of Georgia (2007) wrote a letter to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on behalf of a Sikh physician. The doctor had been instructed that he must, contrary to his religious beliefs, shave his beard and remove his turban in order to work at the Public Health Commissioned Corporation of CDC. After receiving the ACLU's letter, the CDC implemented a new, individualized process for requests for religious exemptions that creates a general presumption in favor of religious accommodation.

The ACLU of West Virginia (2007) brought suit challenging a company's refusal to permit one of its employees to wear a skirt to work. The employee's religious beliefs prohibited her from wearing trousers. The employer refused to accommodate these beliefs despite the employee's offer to pay for a uniform skirt with her own funds.

The ACLU of Missouri (2007) sent a letter to the Kansas City Water Department demanding that a Muslim employee be permitted to attend Friday prayers. The Department responded by extending the employee's Friday lunch to accommodate her religious observance.

The ACLU of Nevada (2007) [appeared before](#) the Nevada Equal Rights Commission and the EEOC on behalf of a Jewish Orthodox employee of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department whose request to wear a trim beard and yarmulke while at his non-uniform desk job was denied. When the Department still refused to grant the employee a religious accommodation, the ACLU brought a successful suit in federal court.

The ACLU of Virginia (2007) filed a complaint under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act challenging a Virginia Department of Corrections policy requiring inmates to be clean-shaven and to keep their hair short. The policy infringed on the beliefs of Muslim and Rastafarian inmates who have religious objections to cutting their hair.

The ACLU of New Jersey (2007) [filed a religious discrimination case](#) on behalf of a Muslim student who had to choose between following his religious beliefs that forbid him from entering buildings with foreign religious symbols and attending his public high school graduation that was scheduled to be held in a church. The ACLU argued that the school's decision unlawfully forced the student to choose between attending his graduation and violating his faith.

The ACLU of Louisiana (2007) [filed a Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act lawsuit](#) in federal court after the David Wade Correctional Facility refused to permit a Muslim inmate to receive a religious newspaper.

The ACLU of Southern California (2007) [filed claims](#) under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, the First Amendment, and several state law provisions on behalf of Souhair Khatib, a practicing Muslim woman who was forced to remove her hijab, a religious headscarf, when taken into custody at an Orange County courthouse holding facility. In accordance with her religious beliefs, Mrs. Khatib wears her headscarf whenever she is in public or in the presence of men who are not part of her immediate family, and she does not permit any physical contact with men who are not her immediate relatives.



## 2006

The ACLU of Louisiana (2006) [reached a favorable settlement](#) after filing a federal lawsuit against the Department of Corrections on behalf of an inmate who was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon). The inmate, Norman Sanders, was denied access to religious services and religious texts, including *The Book of Mormon*.

The ACLU of Louisiana (2006) [prevailed](#) in its lawsuit defending the right of a Christian man to exercise his religious and speech rights by protesting against homosexuality in front of a Wal-Mart store with a sign that read: "Christians: Wal-Mart Supports Gay Marriage and Gay Lifestyles. Don't Shop There."

The ACLU of Nevada (2006) defended the free-exercise and free-speech rights of evangelical Christians to preach on the sidewalks of Las Vegas. When the county government refused to change its unconstitutional policy, the ACLU filed suit in federal court.

The ACLU of Southern California (2006) [filed suit](#) on behalf of a Vietnamese Buddhist Temple (Quan Am Temple) against the City of Garden Grove and its officials for violating the congregation's First Amendment rights to free religious exercise and the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act. The lawsuit challenges the constitutionality of the city's zoning codes, as well as the city's application of the zoning codes to Quan Am Temple. A federal judge issued a preliminary ruling requiring the city to allow "the Temple, the Abbot, and his congregation [to] peaceably practice their Buddhist faith at the Chapwood Property immediately."

The ACLU of Massachusetts (2006) helped a Rastafarian baggage screener wear his hair in accordance with his religion. The screener had been employed for three years by the Logan Airport for the Transportation Security Administration. The ACLU filed a complaint before the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission defending his religious rights.

The ACLU of Michigan (2006) called the U.S. attorney on behalf of a Muslim woman who was being pressured to have her photograph taken without her headscarf by the FBI. While she was willing to be photographed, it would have been a violation of her faith for men who were not members of her family to see her without her religious head covering. The U.S. attorney directed the FBI to accommodate the woman's religion.

The New York Civil Liberties Union (2006) [filed a federal lawsuit](#) in Manhattan defending the right of people wearing religious head coverings not to have them removed for identity photos. The case was brought against a Coast Guard regulation denying merchant marine licenses to those who would not remove the coverings for photographs.

The ACLU of Virginia (2006) filed a friend-of-the-court brief supporting an inmate's allegation that the Virginia Department of Corrections violated the Religious Land Use and



Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) by refusing to provide him with meals consistent with his religious beliefs.

The ACLU of Nebraska (2006) brought a free-exercise claim on behalf of followers of the Church of Scientology, who alleged that Nebraska's mandatory testing of newborn infants for metabolic diseases violated their religious liberty by preventing them, as new parents, from exercising their belief that a newborn should be kept quiet and serene during the first days of life.

## **2005**

The ACLU of Michigan (2005) [filed a friend-of-the-court brief](#) on behalf of a Sikh student at Wayne State University, who was charged with violating a Detroit knife ordinance for carrying a ceremonial sword called a Kirpan as required by his faith.

The ACLU of Florida (2005) [represented](#) Christian and Jewish cemetery plot owners in a challenge to the city of Boca Raton's restrictions prohibiting vertical grave markers, memorials, monuments, and other structures, including Christian crosses and Stars of David.

The ACLU of Iowa (2005) [defended](#) the rights of two teenage girls who were threatened with punishment by school officials after seeking to wear, for religious reasons, anti-abortion t-shirts to school.

The ACLU of New Mexico (2005) [helped release](#) a street preacher who had been incarcerated in Roosevelt County jail for 109 days. The case was brought to the ACLU by the preacher's wife and was supported by the American Family Association.

The ACLU of Michigan (2005) [filed a federal lawsuit](#) on behalf of Joseph Hanas, a Roman Catholic who was punished for not completing a drug rehabilitation program run by a Pentecostal group whose religious beliefs he did not share. Part of the program required reading the Bible for seven hours a day, proclaiming one's salvation at the altar, and being tested on Pentecostal principles. The staff confiscated Mr. Hanas's rosary beads and told him Catholicism was witchcraft.

The ACLU of Southern California (2005) defended an evangelical scholar who monitored the fundraising practices of several ministries and their leaders after a defamation suit was brought against him in order to silence him.

The ACLU of Michigan (2005) [wrote a letter](#) on behalf of a small Pentecostal church which was issued an eviction notice by the city of Ypsilanti. Under the city's zoning ordinance, secular groups are permitted to meet downtown but religious groups must meet outside the downtown area. After the ACLU's letter, the city reversed its position, allowing the church to remain.

The ACLU of Pennsylvania (2004-2005) won two cases on behalf of predominantly African-American churches that were denied permits to worship in churches previously occupied by white congregations. In 2005, the ACLU of Pennsylvania settled a case against Turtle Creek

Borough brought on behalf of the Ekklesia Church. After the ACLU's advocacy, the Borough of West Mifflin granted Second Baptist Church of Homestead an occupancy permit in 2002 and, in 2004, agreed to pay it damages and compensate it for its losses.

#### [Article](#)

The New York Civil Liberties Union (2005) [filed a federal lawsuit](#) to stop the Department of Homeland Security from enforcing a policy of detaining, interrogating, fingerprinting, and photographing American citizens at the border solely because they attended Islamic conferences.

The ACLU of Michigan (2005) [came to the defense](#) of a Muslim 7th-grader who was told that she could not swim in clothing that covered her body in accordance with her faith. After negotiations with the ACLU, the county adopted a model policy that does not deny access to individuals because of their religious garb.

The ACLU of Washington (2005) [represented](#) The Islamic Education Center of Seattle, a small Muslim nonprofit organization that holds prayer services, education programs, and cultural activities, after the city of Mountlake Terrace denied the Center a conditional land use permit. The City denied the Center permission to operate even though it granted an allowance to a Christian church next door to the Center. With the aid of the ACLU, the Center eventually received its permit from the City.

The ACLU of New Jersey (2005) [settled a lawsuit](#) with the New Jersey Department of Corrections on behalf of Patrick Pantusco, an inmate who was denied religious books and other items while in prison. Although it permitted persons of other religions to obtain materials for their religious practices, it denied Mr. Pantusco's requests because it did not recognize Wicca as a legitimate religion. In the settlement, the state agreed to permit Mr. Pantusco access to all requested items and pay damages.

The ACLU of Northern California (2005) [filed a lawsuit](#) in federal court challenging restrictions on an asylum seeker's right to wear a religious head covering. The plaintiff, Harpal Singh Cheema, a devout Sikh, had been imprisoned since 1997, while awaiting a decision on his asylum application. The Sikh faith requires men to cover their heads at all times, but Yuba County jail authorities would not allow Mr. Cheema to leave his bed with his head covered.

The ACLU of Wisconsin (2005) [filed suit](#) on behalf of a Muslim woman who had been required to remove her headscarf in front of male prison guards in order to visit her husband at the Columbia Correctional Institution. Ms. Rhouni offered to be searched by a female guard, but the prison would not accommodate her request and respect her religious belief that her head should not be uncovered in the presence of unrelated males.

The ACLU of Pennsylvania (2005) [sued](#) on behalf of a devout Muslim firefighter, Curtis DeVeaux, who was suspended for refusing, for religious reasons, to shave his beard as required by city regulations.

In response to a [lawsuit filed](#) by the ACLU of Colorado (2005), the Department of Corrections agreed to resume providing kosher meals to Timothy Sheline, an Orthodox Jewish inmate, whose kosher diet was revoked for one year as punishment for allegedly violating a dining hall rule.

The ACLU of Nebraska (2005) [settled a lawsuit](#) against the city of Omaha on behalf of Lubna Hussein, a practicing Muslim woman who wore a headscarf and long sleeves for religious reasons. Hussein was twice denied entry to Deer Ridge pool property to watch her children swim because she refused to wear a swimsuit. The city changed its policy to allow for medical and religious exceptions.

#### [Article](#)

The ACLU of Southern California (2005) [represented](#) a Native American inmate who refused, for religious reasons, to cut his hair. Prison officials punished the inmate by revoking his visitation rights and extending his time in prison. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit held that the prison ban on long hair violated the prisoner's religious freedom and ordered the prisoner released immediately.

The ACLU (2005) [filed an amicus brief](#) in the U.S. Supreme Court supporting a group of Ohio prisoners who were denied religious items and literature, as well as time to worship, in violation of federal law. The Supreme Court decided in favor of the prisoners, upholding the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 (RLUIPA).

The ACLU of Southern California (2005) supported Jewish residents of Orange County after a special election was scheduled on the first day of the Jewish holiday Rosh Hashanah. The ACLU called on the county to make accommodations for Jewish residents who wished to vote early in the election.

The ACLU of Virginia (2005) [filed suit](#) on behalf of Cynthia Simpson, a Wiccan woman whom county leaders refused to include in a list of religious leaders invited to give invocations at meetings of the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors. The Board's reason for refusing to add her to the list was that "Chesterfield's non-sectarian invocations are traditionally made to a divinity that is consistent with the Judeo-Christian tradition."

The ACLU of Louisiana (2005) [successfully represented](#) a Rastafarian mother and her fourth grade son before the Lafayette Parish School Board. The Board seized the child's books and suspended him for having dreadlocks. The nine-year-old child was allowed to return to school.

## **2004**

The ACLU of New Jersey (2004) [appeared as a friend of the court](#) to argue that a prosecutor violated the New Jersey Constitution by striking individuals from a jury pool after deciding that they were "demonstrative about their religion." One potential juror was a missionary; the other was wearing Muslim religious garb, including a skull cap. The ACLU-NJ also argued that

permitting strikes based on jurors' display of their religion would often amount to discrimination against identifiable religious minorities.

The ACLU of Nebraska (2004) [defended](#) the Church of the Awesome God, a Presbyterian church, from forced eviction under the City of Lincoln's zoning laws. The ACLU of Nebraska also challenged city ordinances requiring religious organizations to meet safety standards not imposed on non-religious groups.

The ACLU of Pennsylvania (2004) [prevailed](#) in its arguments that the government had to allow Amish drivers to use highly reflective gray tape on their buggies instead of orange triangles, to which the drivers objected for religious reasons.

The ACLU of Virginia (2004) [threatened to file suit](#) against the Fredericksburg-Stafford Park Authority after the Park Authority enacted an unconstitutional policy prohibiting religious activity in the park and the Park Manager stopped a Cornerstone Baptist Church minister from conducting baptisms in the park. Under pressure from the ACLU, the Park Authority revoked the prohibition and allowed baptisms in the park.

The ACLU of Michigan (2004) wrote a letter on behalf of a student at Central Michigan University whose Hanukkah candles were seized from his dorm room by campus officials. Although the university allowed students to smoke in the same dorm, it claimed that the candles posed a fire hazard. After the letter was sent, the university changed its policy.

The ACLU of Washington (2004) [reached a favorable settlement](#) on behalf of Donald Ausderau, a Christian minister, who wanted to preach to the public and distribute leaflets on the sidewalks around a downtown bus station in Spokane, Washington.

With the help of the ACLU of Pennsylvania, Greater Pittsburgh Chapter (2004), an Episcopal social services group was able to keep its program of feeding the homeless running. The County Health Department reversed its decision that meals served to homeless people in a church must be cooked on the premises, as opposed to in individual homes. Had the decision not been reversed, the ministry would have been forced to cease the program.

The ACLU of Nevada (2004) represented a Mormon high school student, Kim Jacobs, whom school authorities suspended and then attempted to expel for wearing t-shirts with religious messages.

The ACLU of Michigan (2004) [represented Abby Moler](#), a student at Sterling Stevenson High School, whose yearbook entry, a Bible verse, was deleted because of its religious content. A settlement was reached under which the school placed a sticker with Moler's original entry in the yearbooks and agreed not to censor students' yearbook entries based on their religious or political viewpoints in the future.

The Indiana Civil Liberties Union (2004) [filed suit](#) on behalf of the Old Paths Baptist Church against the City of Scottsburg after the city repeatedly threatened to cite or arrest members who held demonstrations regarding various subjects dealing with their religious beliefs.

## **2003**

The ACLU of Massachusetts (2003) [intervened](#) on behalf of a group of students at Westfield High School who were suspended for distributing candy canes and a religious message in school. The ACLU succeeded in having the suspensions revoked and filed a friend-of-the-court brief in a lawsuit brought on behalf of the students against the school district.

The ACLU of Rhode Island (2003) interceded on behalf of an interdenominational group of carolers who were told they could not sing Christmas carols on Christmas Eve to inmates at the women's prison in Cranston, Rhode Island.

The ACLU of Michigan (2003) [defended](#) the right of a pastor to erect a large sign on the lawn of the Wesley Foundation in Mt. Pleasant stating, "We Value All Life; End the Cycle of Violence." The city claimed that the church had violated a city sign ordinance, but after the ACLU's involvement, the city allowed the sign to stay up and stated that the ordinance would be reviewed.

The ACLU of Florida (2003) [represented](#) a Muslim homemaker whose driver's license was revoked after she declined on religious grounds to remove her veil for a driver's license photo. Noting that the state allowed others to obtain driver's permits without photographs, the ACLU argued that the photograph requirement imposed a needless burden on the woman's exercise of her religion with no benefit to public safety.

## **2002**

The ACLU of Virginia (2002) and the late Rev. Jerry Falwell [prevailed in a lawsuit](#) arguing that a Virginia constitutional provision banning religious organizations from incorporating was unconstitutional.

The ACLU of Ohio (2002) [filed a brief](#) in support of a preacher who wanted to protest abortion at a parade, but was prohibited from doing so in an Akron suburb.

The Iowa Civil Liberties Union (2002) [filed a friend-of-the court brief](#) supporting a group of Christian students who sued Davenport Schools asserting their right to distribute religious literature during non-instructional time.

The ACLU of Nebraska (2002) [filed a friend-of-the-court brief](#) challenging a Nebraska Liquor Control Commission regulation that defined "church" in a manner that excluded all religious organizations that do not own property. The ACLU argued that the "definition of a church established by the Liquor Control Commission violated the rights of members of the House of Faith to the free exercise of their religion."

The ACLU of Massachusetts (2002) filed a brief supporting the right of the Church of the Good News to run ads criticizing the secularization of Christmas and promoting Christianity as the "one true religion." The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority had refused to allow the paid advertisements to be posted and refused to sell additional advertising space to the church.

The ACLU of Pennsylvania (2002) [supported](#) the members of Congregation Kol Ami in their fight to use a former Catholic convent as a synagogue. The ACLU of Pennsylvania argued that the Abington Township Board of Commissioners' opposition to the proposed use of the convent violated the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act.

## **2000 - 2001**

The ACLU and its affiliates (2000-2011) have been instrumental supporters of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), which gives religious organizations added protection in erecting religious buildings and enhances the religious freedom rights of prisoners and other institutionalized persons. The ACLU worked with a broad coalition of organizations to secure the law's passage in 2000. After the law was enacted, the ACLU (2005) defended its constitutionality in a friend-of-the-court brief before the United States Supreme Court and the ACLU of Virginia (2006) opposed a challenge to the law before the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.