

ACLU **magazine**

FOR PASSIONATE GUARDIANS OF CIVIL LIBERTIES

GENERATION ACTIVIST

Tendo Lumala learned how to become an activist with the ACLU.
Now he's fighting for a brighter future for all of us.



INSIDE

**HOW
STATES ARE
RESISTING
FEDERAL ABUSE
OF POWER**

**VICTORIES FOR
REPRODUCTIVE
FREEDOM**

**KNOW YOUR
RIGHTS
AT A PROTEST**

Do You Have the Will to Protect Freedom for Future Generations?

If the freedom to learn weren't so important, we wouldn't see so many efforts to censor the lessons we teach in our classrooms and to rewrite the history in our textbooks.



The future belongs to:

Include a gift to the ACLU in your will to protect our children's freedom to learn from the past, make sense of the present, and prepare for the future.

It's simple. Here are three steps you can take today so that we can make this a nation we're proud to leave to the next generation:

- Review your current estate plan or start planning today.
- Call an attorney and ask to include a gift to the ACLU in your will or other estate plan.
- Let us know about your gift so we can honor the impact you want to make.

Request more information about leaving a gift to the ACLU in your will or beneficiary designation. If you've already included a gift to the ACLU, please let us know.

Visit aclu.org/mylegacy | Return the enclosed reply envelope | Contact us directly at legacy@aclu.org



Scan This QR Code

- Open your camera app.
- Center the QR code and tap the link.

ACLU



10

CONTRIBUTORS



Elise Craig is a freelance writer and editor based in San Francisco. She has written for *The New York Times Magazine*, *The California Sunday Magazine*, *Marie Claire*, *Wired*, *The Guardian*, and others.



Ryan Pfluger is a photographer in Los Angeles. Their latest body of work, *Holding Space*, featuring 100 photographs of interracial, queer couples, was published in 2022 by Princeton Architectural Press.

10

Generation Activist

At the ACLU's National Advocacy Institute, tomorrow's advocates learn how to become drivers of change today.

By Elise Craig

18

The Freedom Agenda

ACLU affiliates are working with state and local governments to fight back against the Trump administration's authoritarian tactics.

By Jay A. Fernandez

24

Freedom to Be

As the Supreme Court considers a historic ACLU case, transgender people seek the freedom to live joyfully and without discrimination.

By the ACLU

On the cover: Student activist Tendo Lumala, pictured at Pomona College, in Claremont, California. Photograph by Ryan Pfluger

02 In Brief

Executive Director Anthony D. Romero on the ACLU's plan to defend our freedoms.

03 Letters to the Editor

Readers from around the country respond to articles in the magazine.

FRONT LINE

04 Priorities

The ACLU championed the expansion of abortion rights this election.

06 Case Study

See how ballot measures, a key part of direct democracy, land before voters.

07 Know Your Rights

Do you know what to do to protect yourself from police overreach at a protest?

08 National Report

The ACLU is using powerful research to achieve lasting criminal legal reform.

09 Friend of the Court

ACLU President Deborah N. Archer answers your most urgent questions.

VOICES

30 Immigrants Welcome

Protesters joined the ACLU of Texas to defend immigrants.

32 In Good Company

Businesses teamed up with the ACLU to prepare voters for Election Day.

33 Free Forum

Artist Gracey Zhang illustrates the fight for abortion rights post-Roe.

34 Activist Spotlight

Jenna Damron led an unforgettable LGBTQ rally at the Idaho State Capitol.

35 My Stand

When her school wouldn't let her wear a tux, Larissa Hubbard fought back.

36 ACLU Moment

In 1977, a group of students from Long Island, New York, sued their school board over library censorship.



34

As we wrapped this issue of *ACLU Magazine* last fall, we were forced to reckon with the harsh reality of a second Trump administration. We are clear-eyed that President Trump is a danger to our most fundamental freedoms—and we have a plan. The ACLU has been preparing for this potential outcome for years, and we are ready to tackle every threat to our civil liberties.

As we did in 2016, we immediately put President Trump on notice that we will fight his administration’s anti-civil rights actions in the courts, in the statehouses, and in the streets. Among the 434 legal actions we brought against the first Trump administration, the ACLU won landmark lawsuits on family

separation, the U.S. Census, and immigrants’ rights. In preparation for his new term, through our 501(c)(4) arm, we prepared seven Trump Memos, detailing our legal and policy response plans, and a 98-page *Firewall for Freedom* playbook comprising 40-plus policy proposals to advance with state and local actors such as governors, attorneys general, and mayors. You can read more about *Firewall for Freedom* in this issue (see “The Freedom Agenda,” p. 18).

“We are ready to tackle every threat to our civil liberties.”

Despite the very real challenges ahead, I am confident that we can still make progress in defending and advancing rights and liberties, particularly in the states. For example, last year, in collaboration with our state-based partners, the ACLU’s 501(c)(4) arm played a major part in securing reproductive rights in Montana, Arizona, and Missouri, increasing abortion access for millions of people in those states (see *Priorities*, p. 5). The ACLU Voter Education Fund Super PAC informed and mobilized millions of voters on the civil liberties records of candidates for state supreme court and legislative seats. These efforts show us that progress is possible in the states, which can play a critical role in obstructing and mitigating the worst of the Trump administration’s overreach.

As you’ll read in this issue, our efforts to strengthen civil liberties are unceasing. “Generation Activist” (p. 10) features students from our National Advocacy Institute, a summer program that prepares youth activists to challenge injustices through grassroots organizing, professional advocacy, and legal activism. In “Freedom to Be” (p. 24), we spotlight the joyful stories of four transgender people and their families as we continue to fight state bans on health care for transgender youth, most recently at the U.S. Supreme Court.

The ACLU has thrived and endured for 105 years, and we have never been more prepared than we are now. No matter how long it takes, we will never stop fighting to make ours a more perfect union.



Anthony D. Romero
Executive Director



ACLU

125 Broad Street, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10004
212-549-2500
aclu.org/contact-us

Editorial Director
Marie-Adele Moniot

Managing Director
Genie Cortez

Editorial Manager
Tom Vellner

Editorial Adviser
William Eisenman

Creative Direction and Design
Pentagram

Production and Printing
**MSPC, a division of
MSP Communications**

ACLU Magazine (ISSN 2640-3560) is a publication for members and supporters of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Send changes of address and questions about your ACLU membership to membership@aclu.org; mail them to ACLU, 125 Broad Street, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10004; or call 212-549-2500. Send editorial correspondence specific to the publication to ACLU Magazine, ACLU, 125 Broad Street, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10004, or email to ACLUmagazine@aclu.org. This is not a subscription publication, and we do not accept unsolicited manuscripts or advertisements. ©2025 American Civil Liberties Union Foundation. All rights reserved. Contents may not be reproduced without the express written consent of the ACLU. Requests for reprints should be directed to permissions@aclu.org. Published by ACLU, 125 Broad Street, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10004. Printed in the USA. The ACLU comprises two separate corporate entities, the American Civil Liberties Union and the ACLU Foundation. Although both the American Civil Liberties Union and the ACLU Foundation are part of the same overall organization, it is necessary that the ACLU has two separate organizations in order to do a broad range of work in protecting civil liberties. This magazine collectively refers to the two organizations under the name "ACLU."

Exchanging Mailing Lists: The ACLU defrays the cost of our new-member recruitment by renting or exchanging our list with other nonprofit organizations and publications, but never to partisan political groups or to groups whose programs are incompatible with ACLU policies. All lists are rented or exchanged according to strict privacy standards. We never give our list directly to any organization; instead, we send the list to a letter shop that prepares the mailing for the organization that is participating in the rental or exchange. That organization never sees our list and never knows what names are on it unless an individual responds to the organization's mailing. The ACLU always honors a member's request not to make their name available. If you do not wish to receive materials from other organizations, write to the ACLU Membership Department, and we will omit your name from list rental and exchange. Thank you for your understanding.

Connect with us.
Instagram: @aclu_nationwide
Threads: @aclu_nationwide
Facebook: facebook.com/aclu



The Fall 2024 issue of ACLU Magazine features the ACLU's litigation to keep reproductive health care accessible in Alabama.

Re: "Call the Midwives"
From June 2005 through May 2007, I served as the Region III Representative of the American College of Nurse-Midwives. Among other Southern states, this included Alabama. The tragedy is that Alabama then and today has one of the smallest populations of midwives in the nation and the poorest statistics for maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality, ranking below other poor-performing Southern states. The statistics for Black mothers and babies specifically are even more dismal. More power to Drs. Robinson and Skanes for their push for birth centers and midwives in Alabama! Let's hope that the ACLU's Reproductive Freedom Project [continues to] support their efforts and is successful in turning the tide for women in Alabama and the rest of the South.

*Karen Sadar Watt, CNM
Pittsburg, TX*

Re: "Your Guide to Students' Rights"
The concise, informative articles in the Fall 2024 *ACLU Magazine* addressing the students' rights and book censorship issues are the most insightful summaries I have seen of these major topics. Thank you for your efforts in these areas.

*Edward L. Koven
Highland Park, IL*

What a wonderful Fall 2024 issue! I have many friends in education who will be intensely interested in the articles on students' rights. It is possible that some of them are already supporters of the ACLU, and that others may be inspired to contribute. Speaking on behalf of all of them, thank you!

*Andrea Ickes-Dunbar
Retired Middle School Teacher
Marysville, CA*

We love your feedback! Let us know what you think about this issue: ACLUmagazine@aclu.org

A note from the chair of the ACLU National Board's 2025 Nominating Committee: Please be advised that ACLU members may submit nominations to the National Board for consideration by the Nominating Committee for the 2025 slate. Please send your recommendation to ACLU Nominating Committee, 125 Broad Street, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10004. ACLU members may also make nominations to the National Board by submitting a petition with the names and signatures of 50 ACLU members to the address above.



FREEDOM TO DECIDE



ArizonaForAbortionAccess.org

Paid for by Arizona For Abortion Access. Not authorized by any candidate or party. See Arizona Code of Judicial Administration, Article 10, Section 10.1, and Arizona Code of Judicial Administration, Article 10, Section 10.2.

Last fall, voters in Arizona approved Proposition 139 to enshrine abortion rights in the state constitution.



FRONT LINE

PRIORITIES

Abortion Rights Restored

The ACLU is protecting and advancing reproductive freedom state by state.

In a cascade of victories for reproductive freedom this November, voters in Missouri, Arizona, Montana, and four other states passed pro-abortion rights ballot measures. As a result, nearly 50 million people have had abortion access restored or protected. At the same time, voters across the country elected an array of pro-abortion rights candidates to state supreme courts and state legislatures, where they can safeguard these fundamental rights and block efforts to undermine them. Through deep investments in strategic electoral work during the 2024 election cycle, the ACLU, its affiliates, and the ACLU Voter Education Fund played a major role in expanding abortion rights at the ballot box. This

MATT YORK/AP PHOTO

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

state-level progress is critical in the face of a federal administration hostile to reproductive rights.

The ACLU of Missouri and its partners worked with Missourians for Constitutional Freedom to help pass Amendment 3, ending the state’s total abortion ban and ensuring that personal decisions about reproductive health care, including birth control and miscarriage care, can be made without government interference. This achievement overcame relentless attacks on the ballot process itself in the months before the election: The ACLU of Missouri blocked the Missouri secretary of state’s effort to decertify the ballot measure, and several attempts to raise the voting threshold for passing constitutional amendments failed. The ACLU and the ACLU of Arizona also supported Arizona for Abortion Access to pass Proposition 139, ending Arizona’s ban and establishing a fundamental right to abortion. Once these measures passed, the ACLU immediately filed lawsuits to challenge the abortion restrictions on the books in those states.

Montanans Securing Reproductive Rights secured passage of CI-128 to enshrine reproductive rights in the Montana state constitution with support from the ACLU and ACLU of Montana, and pro-abortion care measures passed in Colorado and Nevada with the support of ACLU affiliates.

In the lead-up to the election, the ACLU Voter Education Fund and the ACLU’s 501(c)(4) arm were instrumental in raising awareness among millions of voters about the abortion rights positions of candidates in key statewide down-ballot races. These electoral efforts led to pro-civil rights majorities on the state supreme courts of Michigan and Montana, which can act as a powerful backstop against the attacks of radical anti-abortion minorities.

The ACLU’s targeted voter education about state legislative races in Michigan, Wisconsin, Montana, North Carolina, and Georgia resulted in the election of new abortion rights champions to state governing bodies. Pro-civil rights majorities in state legislatures are critical to protecting our freedoms, particularly on issues of democracy, abortion, and LGBTQ rights. The ACLU Voter Education Fund also successfully engaged in the U.S. Senate race in Wisconsin, which resulted in the victory of the pro-abortion rights candidate.

Through its vigorous electoral work, the ACLU is building power across all its entities to ensure that people retain the right to make reproductive health care decisions free from government intrusion.

—JAY A. FERNANDEZ

Direct Democracy at Work

Through ballot measures, voters have a direct impact on the issues that affect them most.

In 2024, voters in Arizona, Missouri, Montana, and beyond showed up at the polls and approved landmark ballot initiatives that protect the right to abortion in their states. Since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned in 2022, ballot initiatives have had a major influence in preserving access to abortion. So what is a ballot initiative, and how does one eventually end up in front of voters? Below, see how these initiatives demonstrate direct democracy at work.

To get involved in your state, visit aclu.org/peoplepower.



I Ballot initiatives, also called measures or referendums, allow voters in more than 20 states to have a direct impact on democracy by proposing and passing new laws.



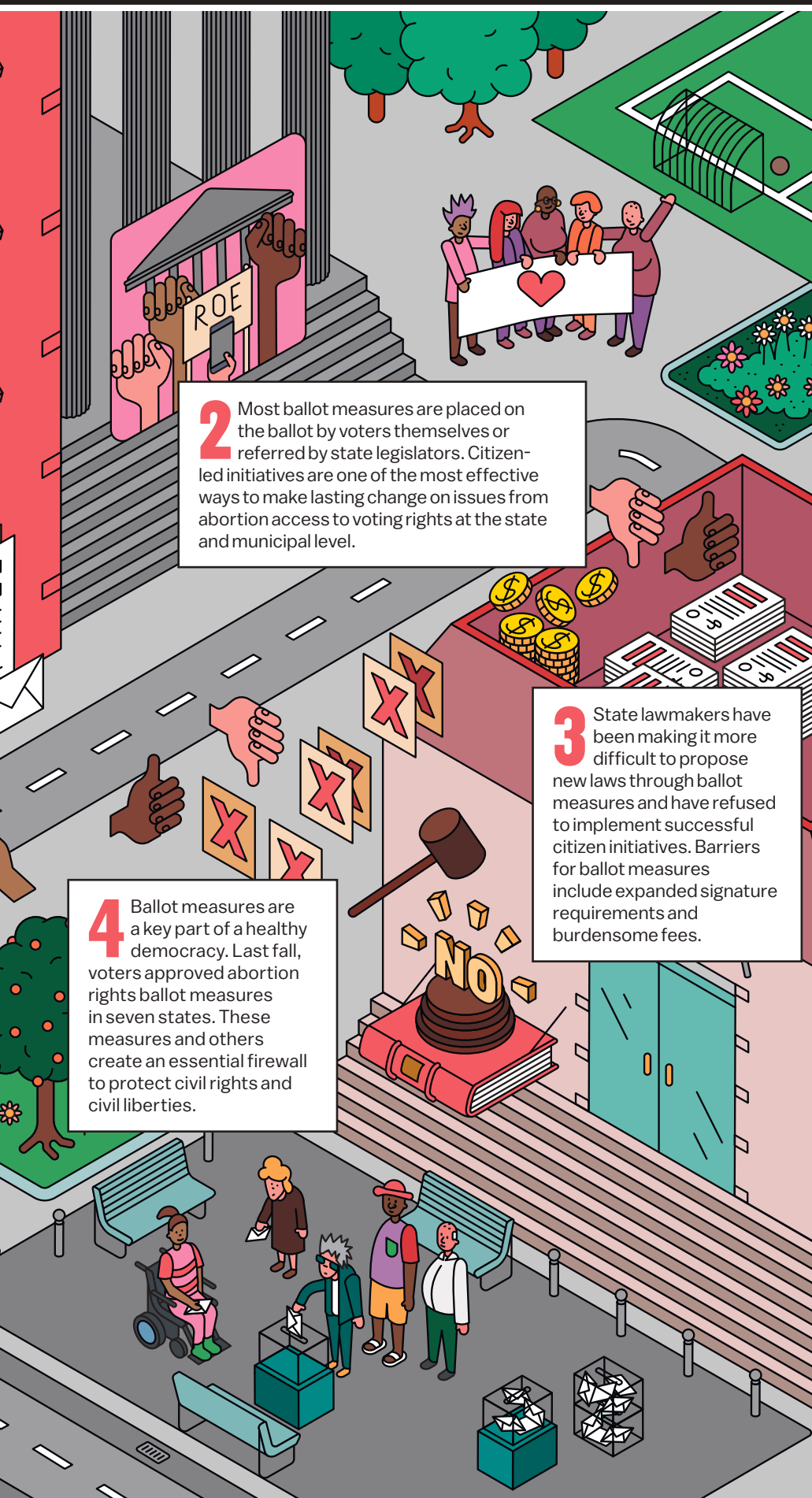
Protests and the Police

Heading to a protest? Knowing your rights ahead of time—especially when it comes to interacting with law enforcement—can help keep you safe. Here's what to know to protect yourself.

- If you are stopped by police at a protest, you have the right to remain silent and decline to answer questions. You do not have to consent to a search of yourself or your belongings.
- As long as you do not interfere with what officers are doing, you have the right to record events that are plainly visible in public spaces where you are legally present.
- Officers may not confiscate your photographs or video without a warrant, nor may they view or delete data. Remind the officer that recording is your First Amendment right.
- If your rights have been violated, capture badge numbers and get contact information from witnesses. You can file a written complaint with the appropriate agency.

To learn more, visit [aclu.org/kyr](https://www.aclu.org/kyr).

ILLUSTRATION BY ALLIE SULLBERG



2 Most ballot measures are placed on the ballot by voters themselves or referred by state legislators. Citizen-led initiatives are one of the most effective ways to make lasting change on issues from abortion access to voting rights at the state and municipal level.

3 State lawmakers have been making it more difficult to propose new laws through ballot measures and have refused to implement successful citizen initiatives. Barriers for ballot measures include expanded signature requirements and burdensome fees.

4 Ballot measures are a key part of a healthy democracy. Last fall, voters approved abortion rights ballot measures in seven states. These measures and others create an essential firewall to protect civil rights and civil liberties.

Prevention Over Punishment

Backed by powerful research, the ACLU is advancing meaningful criminal law reform.

In the November elections, candidates of all stripes predictably leaned into tough-on-crime stances when it came to public safety issues. The ACLU is at the forefront of the movement to change the narrative about public safety, advocating in the courts and in the public sphere for criminal legal reforms that support affirmative solutions instead of fear-based proposals that trample civil liberties.

Last year, the ACLU and its partners conducted a series of surveys of voters from across the political spectrum in eight battleground districts across five states, and the clear result was that people want inspiring plans that tackle the root causes of crime rather than harsh policies that incarcerate more people. The surveys showed that while

the public's perception of the prevalence of crime remains distorted, its opinions about how to decrease it are overwhelmingly focused on the positive, not the punitive.

When voters were asked which proposals would help most in improving safety in their communities, they preferred proven solutions to preventing crime such as increasing access to mental health care, addressing economic despair, and expanding employment opportunities for young people. They said they want to fully fund efforts that improve quality of life—good schools, a living wage, affordable housing—and provide mental health and addiction treatment.

Putting more police on the streets and imposing stricter jail and prison

sentences are deeply unpopular with most voters. Eighty-four percent of respondents support protecting the First Step Act, which reduced mandatory minimum sentences, to bring down the federal prison population. And nearly two-thirds believe that mass incarceration causes many of the problems—homelessness, poverty, drug and mental health challenges—that lead to unsafe communities.

A majority surveyed also support sending behavioral health workers as first responders instead of police to handle issues related to mental health, homelessness, and substance use. The ACLU has two active lawsuits—*Disability Rights Oregon v. Washington County* and *Bread for the City v. District of Columbia*—asserting that a medical response to most mental health emergencies is legally required under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act. Wins in these cases could encourage policy changes in other jurisdictions. —JAY A. FERNANDEZ

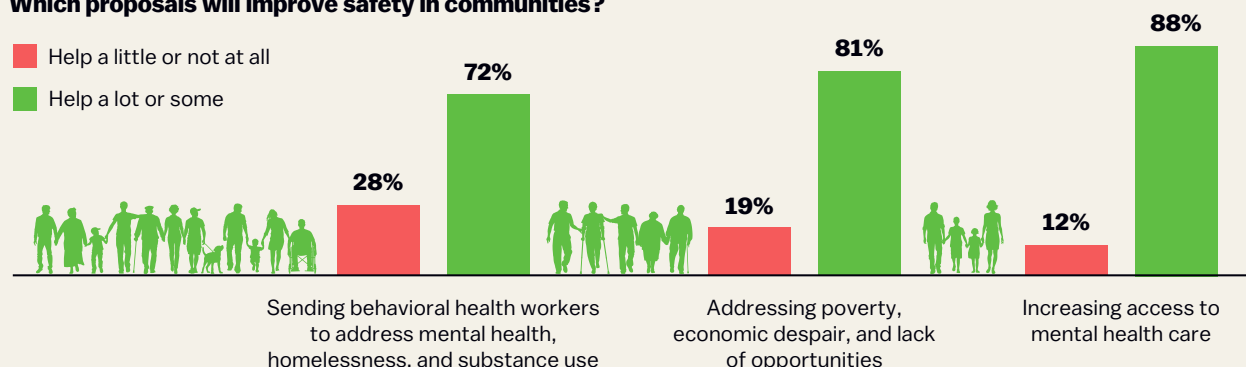
See the full survey results at aclu.org/battleground-polling.

A MAJORITY OF VOTERS in battleground states support positive, proven solutions that prevent crime before it happens.

0% 50% 100%

Which proposals will improve safety in communities?

- Help a little or not at all
- Help a lot or some



Defending the Right to Learn

ACLU President Deborah N. Archer addresses book bans, classroom censorship, and the rights of students with disabilities.

Q:

I'm deeply alarmed by recent incidents of book banning across the country. How are schools legally justifying these actions?

Over the past year, more than 4,000 books have been banned in schools across the country. These books disproportionately feature stories about LGBTQ communities, people of color, and others who have been marginalized. Book bans to this effect are not only discriminatory—they are a violation of students' First Amendment right to access information.

However, it's important to distinguish between schools that are banning books from their libraries, making them inaccessible to students, and those that are dropping books from their school curriculum. The law is different in those situations. The courts have said that schools can't remove books, especially ones targeted for their viewpoints, from school libraries. It's a pillar of democracy for young people to be able to engage in intellectual ideological exploration.

On the other hand, schools and state legislatures have a lot more control over what is taught in the classroom than they do over what's on library bookshelves. Since January 2021, 18 states have

passed classroom censorship laws that restrict discussions about race, gender, and sexual orientation in schools. The ACLU is fighting back against classroom censorship and book bans through lawsuits and education. But while our teams push exhaustively in the courts and the streets, public support also makes a huge difference in the fight. To get involved, visit aclu.org/righttolearn.

I very much enjoyed the Fall 2024 article in *ACLU Magazine* on students' rights. What rights do students with disabilities have in public schools?

Public schools are prohibited by federal law from discriminating against students with disabilities. They cannot deny them equal access to academic courses, field

trips, extracurricular activities, school technology, and health services. Furthermore, educators must make necessary academic and medical accommodations. This includes ensuring equal access to educational activities and opportunities and responding to harassment and bullying. Students with disabilities—along with Black and Brown students—are disproportionately subjected to referrals to law enforcement that remove them from the classroom. The ACLU and our affiliates around the country are challenging disciplinary policies that disparately target students with disabilities and infringe on their right to a safe learning environment.

Please send your questions to ACLUmagazine@aclu.org.



At the ACLU's National Advocacy Institute, tomorrow's advocates learn how to become drivers of change today.

BY ELISE CRAIG

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RYAN PFLUGER

GENERATION ACTIVIST

Tendo Lumala's activism started in high school, spurred by the nationwide reckoning over race in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder and his lifelong experience of understanding his own race. Tendo's school at the time decided to revamp its English cur-

riculum to be more inclusive of Black stories and voices.

In one of the first classes with the new curriculum, his classmates' reaction to a passage of poetry shocked him. "The first thing that they said was that these Black characters, these Black experiences, were essentially violent and crude," he says. "It was as if [the

characters'] experiences were outside of the norm in a way that was unacceptable [to them]."

The classroom discussions taught him a very important lesson about advocacy. "The worst part [at school] were the times when I was silent," he says. "Now, as an advocate, I think as much as I can about trying to speak up

Tendo Lumala is
a first-year student at
Pomona College.



for those who don't have a voice. I was put into a position to steer the class in a positive direction. That's how I look at advocacy. And it's also how I look at the challenges of advocacy—beginning with that experience—because it was not easy.”

Later when he was attending a different high school in Bellevue, Washington, he was still thinking about the same question: How could he advocate for and amplify Black voices and stories in a way that would effect real change?

In the summer of 2023, between his junior and senior year of high school, Tendo headed to Washington, D.C., to attend the ACLU's National Advocacy Institute (NAI), a weeklong program for 15-to-18-year-old social justice advocates led by ACLU lawyers, lobbyists, community activists, and other experts working to defend civil rights and civil liberties. And there, he discovered the tools he needed to be a more effective driver of change.

The ACLU launched the NAI in 2016 to prepare high school and college-aged youth for lifelong engagement on political topics, grassroots organizing, professional advocacy, and legal activism. Students travel to Washington, stay in dorm-style housing, and attend daily seminars on topics like how to lead a protest, what to do if you're arrested, and how to join a political campaign. They also hear from well-known



**Student activist
Lyana Scroggins pictured at
Virginia State University.**

"CULTIVATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ACTIVISTS IS IN THE ACLU'S DNA."

—ACLU Executive Director Anthony D. Romero

speakers, like the actress Kerry Washington, who advocates for voter turnout; Tommie Smith, who famously raised his fist in protest at the 1968 Olympics; and whistleblower Edward Snowden. The curriculum culminates in a day of action. One summer, the cohort headed to the Capitol grounds for a rally on trans rights; in other years, they've lobbied members of Congress, phone banked, and written letters to the editor.

For Iyana Scroggins, now a first-year student at Virginia State University, attending the NAI exposed her to issues she'd never considered. When she attended, she was already a tested advocate who had been working with an organization called Rise for Youth since she was about 15, fighting against juvenile incarceration issues, such as a Virginia law that required parents of young people in juvenile detention to pay child support to the system. Still, so much of what the NAI taught her was new. "It opened my eyes to a lot of other advocacy issues," she says. "I learned about disability rights, which I didn't know anything about."

Her experience is a common one, says Luke Sampson-Doyle, the NAI's program manager. "The best thing that always comes out of it from the students' perspective is the network of activists they meet from throughout the country," he says. "They're usually the only person in their high school who feels this way, and they're suddenly around other advocates."

One of the most impactful moments for Amy Zhou, in her first year at

Harvard University, was when the Supreme Court struck down affirmative action just before she went to the NAI in June 2023. In her AAPI affinity group, some students were cheering on the decision as good news for AAPI students. "But after hearing from Black and Brown students, they opened up much more," she says. "They were much more willing to consider different opinions and perspectives. They looked at the overturning as a much more nuanced situation."

Amy took the lesson on the importance of learning from a diverse group of peers back to her district's Students of Color Coalition, which ran workshops for middle schoolers on recognizing microaggressions and responding to them. "We started having more time for larger group discussions," she says. "Affinity groups and mixed conversation groups are both really important."

Tendo, meanwhile, took a seminar on data at the NAI that inspired him to analyze the results of a survey in his school district to drive change. He discovered that 80 percent of students reported hearing racist language within the school environment without seeing another student, teacher, or administrator step in to stop it. Using that quantitative data, he was able to advocate for an assembly and for procedures to educate students about racist language within his school and school district. "I'm not the first person who has had concerns in my district," he says. "But knowledge of how systems work allows you to be more effective. The knowledge

that I gained in the NAI research seminar informed what I could engage with and how I could contextualize issues of racial discrimination."

Lessons like these are why the NAI is much more than a summer elective; it's an investment by the ACLU in the next generation of social justice advocates. Since its founding in 1920, through litigation and advocacy, the ACLU has recognized the essential role of youth activism in fighting for constitutional rights and freedom for all (see sidebar).

"Every year, when I stand in front of those students and address them, I am optimistic about America's future," says Sampson-Doyle. "They are so hungry for change."

In the eight years since the NAI was launched, the program has evolved from a modest inaugural cohort to an alumni network of 5,000 people. Though COVID disrupted the program, it restarted in person in 2023; last year, 350 students traveled to Washington to participate. Next year, the number will double. But still, the ACLU wanted to do more: This year, it launched the privately funded ACLU Scholarship for Emerging Advocates, offering four-year college scholarships for an inaugural class of 25 students.

"Cultivating the next generation of activists is in the ACLU's DNA," says Anthony D. Romero, ACLU's executive director. "So many star ACLU staff and alumni got their start as volunteers and interns. It's important to cement

THEN AND NOW: STUDENT SPEECH

Mary Beth Tinker
in 2019.



In 1965, 13-year-old Mary Beth Tinker, her brother John, and several classmates wore black armbands to school in Des Moines, Iowa, to protest the Vietnam War. Tinker and her brother and three other students were suspended, and with the help of the ACLU, their parents sued the district. Four years later, in 1969, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 7-2 that students do not “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.”

Tendo Lumala, a recipient of the ACLU’s Emerging Advocates scholarship and a student at Pomona College, sat down with Tinker to talk about how the case has shaped her life, school censorship today, and her advice for young advocates.

Tendo Lumala: You were only 13 when you put on your black armband. What advice do you have for youth activists who hope to make a positive change in their community but fear the possibility of repercussions?

Mary Beth Tinker: As a teenager who has spoken up about things yourself, you know what a challenge it can be but also how important and energizing it can be. And

that’s how it was for us. It was difficult, especially when people came after us and threw red paint at our house and called us communists. But on the other hand, we were so sad about the war, and it gave us a chance to express that. And as a nurse, I’ve come to believe that expressing yourself is really good for your health.

Tendo: I definitely believe that expressing yourself

is a way to cope in really challenging times. Your father was a Methodist minister, and your parents were activists. Can you speak to the example that they played in your decision to protest?

Mary Beth: This really was a family story. My parents believed that you should put your faith and values into action. My older sister was a very strong role model for me, too. At 16, she won an NAACP essay contest, and her award was traveling to the March on Washington in 1963. Our action grew out of having strong feelings and an example of people who do something about those feelings. And that’s a very powerful combination.

Tendo: How did the ACLU come to be involved in the case?

Mary Beth: The school newspaper wrote about the plan to protest, and the school made a rule against wearing armbands. My father had a feeling that we were going to get suspended. He and the other parents contacted the ACLU to let them know. And a woman named Louise Noun made it her mission to have the ACLU of Iowa represent us in court. We had a wonderful young lawyer, Dan Johnston, who was a great mind and came up with the argument against viewpoint discrimination.

Tendo: When youth advocates engage in acts of protest, they come up against systems that try to push their voices down, and that can affect their education and their safety. How did you find the courage to speak up?

Mary Beth: You wouldn’t believe how many people have told me I was so courageous. I wasn’t. But I have learned that even a little bit, you can make a big difference.

Tendo: What lessons should activists take from your case?

Mary Beth: The problem now is that so many adults don’t respect the message of *Tinker*, which is that students should have a right to express themselves in public school, even on controversial issues. I was speaking at a conference for school board lawyers in Arizona, and after my talk, some of the lawyers came up and said, “That’s all well and good, Mary Beth, but the problem is the school board doesn’t care if the rule they pass is constitutional or not. And a lot of the legislators don’t care either.” Some times are more intense than others—a student I was talking to called them “mighty times.” The 1960s were mighty times. And so are the times we’re living in now. Do you feel like that?

Tendo: Absolutely. They’re playing out at my school currently. This past week, a dozen students at my school were suspended for protesting. It’s an ongoing issue. Figuring out how you advocate within those spaces in a sustainable way is a challenge.

Mary Beth: I’m so glad you said that because sustainability is really a big part of it. I think we all probably know people who have gotten so discouraged they just decided to stop. And we know how important it is to keep going.

"PROMOTING GENERAL GOOD AND SERVICE, THAT'S SOMETHING MY LIFE WILL NOT BE COMPLETE WITHOUT."

—National Advocacy Institute Alum Amy Zhou

A portrait of Amy Zhou, a young woman with long dark hair and round glasses, wearing a white lace top. She is smiling slightly and looking off-camera to the right. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green and yellow foliage.

Amy Zhou is a first-year student at Harvard University.

our commitment to emerging advocates, including those who may pursue careers in impact litigation or political advocacy in the years ahead."

For Leticia Alvarado-Franco, a student at the University of California at Berkeley, the scholarship has been life-changing. She grew up in Orange County, California, the oldest child of a single mother. She was able to apply to a tech-focused high school, but it came with a commute that could stretch as long as two hours. With two younger siblings to watch while her mom was at work, staying after school for extra help or enrichment activities was nearly impossible. "Oftentimes, I'd get home at 6:30 or 7 and I'd have to cook for my siblings," she says. "That was a barrier."

Meanwhile, she was all too aware of educational disparities between different schools in her area. "Our district is very big," she says. "Ten minutes down the road, some students were able to take 15 AP classes. We didn't have those resources. I had to fight to get into every AP class."

She started advocating for more resources at her own school and flew to Washington to the NAI for the summer between her junior and senior year. There she learned about an organization called Encode Justice, a youth movement for safe, equitable artificial intelligence. She ended up working there throughout her senior year of high school and even gave a presentation on how students can ethically use AI in learning in front of 800 people at

To learn more about the NAI and how to apply to the 2025 session, visit aclu.org/institute.



Leticia Alvarado-Franco, here at UC Berkeley, plans to pursue law school after graduation.

the AI K12 Deeper Learning Summit in Anaheim. “That was one of the bigger things I did,” she says. “I would not have been able to do it if not for the work and things I was exposed to at the NAI.”

Leticia found it so valuable that she actually attended the NAI a second time, this time with two friends from her school in tow. Subsequently, she was awarded an Emerging Advocates scholarship.

“It was such a huge weight off my back,” she says. “I have my undergraduate studies paid for. I have two younger siblings, and college couldn’t have been possible without the scholarship.”

Now, Leticia is a double major in English and computer science, with plans to go to law school after graduation. Ultimately, she wants to craft policy and laws that shape more equitable technology.

Fellow scholarship recipient Iyana Scroggins plans to go into cybersecurity. Last year, Tendo Lumala wrote a new curriculum about the first African American in the Washington State Legislature for fourth graders in his district, and he plans to continue to lift up people who have been traditionally marginalized in the education system. Amy Zhou is teaching civics in Boston Public Schools through Harvard and is considering a career in everything from education to law.

“Taking care of your community and promoting general good and service, that’s something my life will not be complete without,” says Amy. “The ACLU is an essential part of that.” ■

From one legacy to the next



Back in 1965, I was a 13-year-old student upset about the Vietnam War. A group of us decided to wear black armbands in protest and were suspended. With the ACLU, we challenged those suspensions and won.

In a landmark victory for students' rights, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969) that students do not “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.”

Now, history is repeating itself. Many states have passed classroom censorship bills restricting student speech, including TRIPLING the number of banned books.

I am so thankful that the ACLU is still here, fighting back on behalf of all students.

I see myself in these students and am proud and excited to see this new generation of young activists fight for their freedom to say, think, read and write, and to simply be themselves.

I believe one of the most important ways you can support students and their future is by leaving a gift to the ACLU in your will, trust, or beneficiary designation. Your legacy can shape their reality.

A future gift to the ACLU says to the next generation that you care about their freedom to learn and pursue their dreams. It ensures they will always have the ACLU in their corner—just as I did.

—*Mary Beth Tinker*

A Gift in Your Will Says to the Next Generation: *You Matter*

Learn more about how to include a gift in your will or other estate plan.

Visit aclu.org/mylegacy | Return the enclosed reply envelope | Contact us directly at legacy@aclu.org



Scan This QR Code

- Open your camera app.
- Center the QR code and tap the link.

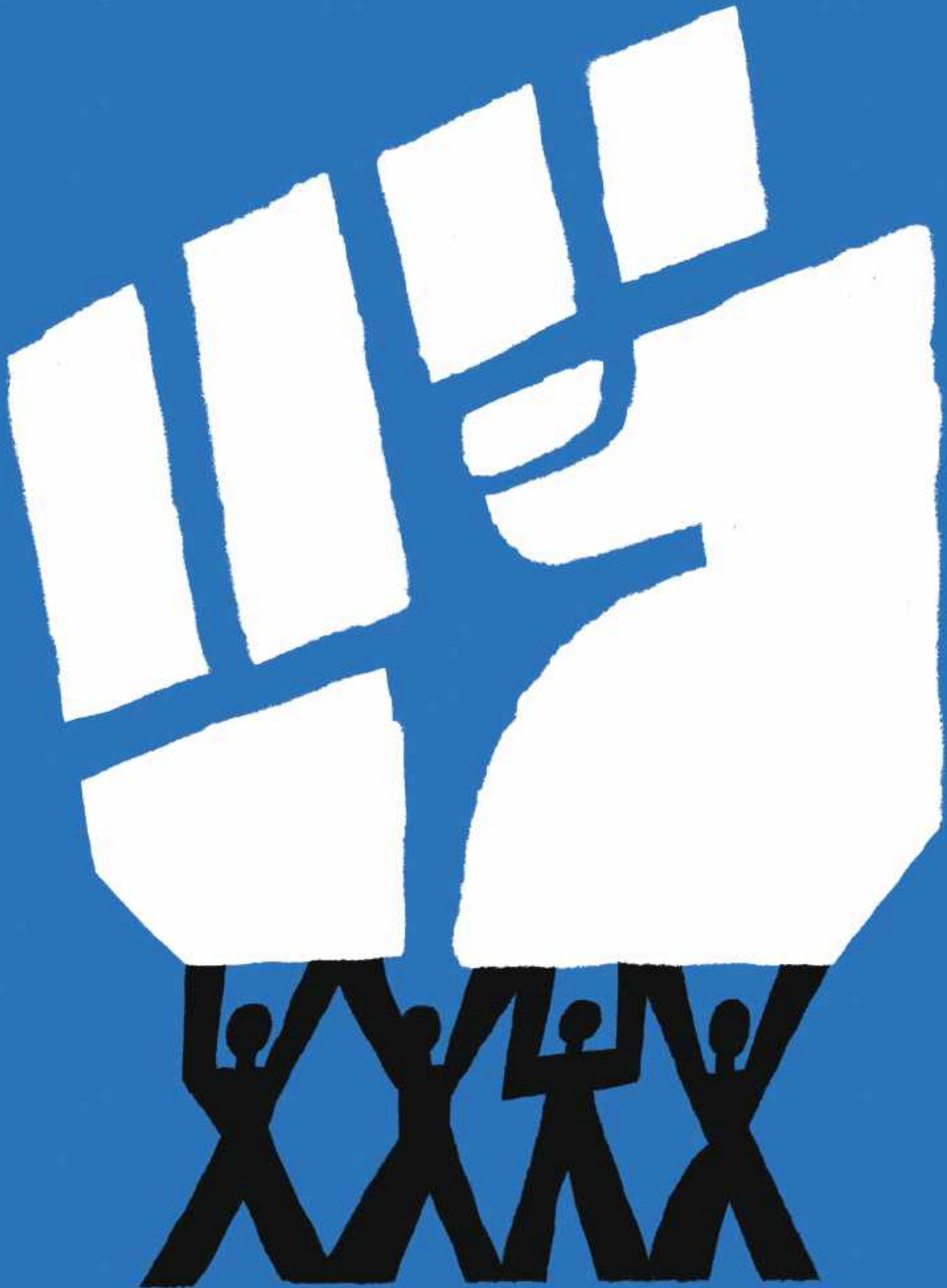
ACLU

THE FREEDOM --- ACENDA

ACLU AFFILIATES ARE WORKING WITH STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO ENACT **FIREWALLS** AND FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S AUTHORITARIAN TACTICS.

BY JAY A. FERNANDEZ

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BEN HICKEY





When Donald Trump was officially declared the winner of the presidential election in November, guardians of liberty were justifiably anxious about the repercussions for civil rights and civil liberties. The first time he took the oath of office, in 2017, the ACLU was on the scene within hours of his first action, the notorious Muslim ban, and remained defiant throughout his first term. This time is no different.

Long before the election, the ACLU recognized the need to build out specific legal and advocacy strategies that would reduce the legal, logistical, and political opportunities a second Trump administration would have to damage civil rights and civil liberties. To achieve this, the ACLU and its affiliates produced *Firewall for Freedom*, two critical playbooks articulating proactive, detailed policy actions that states and cities can take to prevent, delay, or mitigate the civil liberties violations of an authoritarian federal government.

“When Trump was elected [in 2016], the ACLU sprang into action,” says Nahal Zamani, director of state campaigns for the ACLU’s National Political Advocacy Department. “A lot of that work was brilliantly crafted lawsuits that occurred across jurisdictions. This time, we wanted to be

proactively prepared to be in the strongest position in states regardless of the election outcome.”

Beyond the acute dangers of a second Trump administration, civil rights and liberties are already being attacked in many states. In the past few years, protections for voting rights and abortion rights have been severely eroded or ripped away. In June, the ACLU of Illinois and the ACLU’s National Political Advocacy Department hosted a strategy meeting in Chicago with affiliate representatives from 16 pro-civil rights states to brainstorm ways in which they could best prepare for upholding civil liberties after a change in the White House. This critical input from the affiliates shaped the playbooks, which were ultimately distributed across ACLU affiliates in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. A number of affiliates then fine-tuned the policy playbooks further to prioritize the specific advocacy interventions most needed in their state.

Firewall for Freedom’s state-level playbook outlines 47 actions to protect free speech, immigrants’ rights, LGBTQ rights, reproductive freedom, and voting rights, among other issues. During the first Trump administration, the ACLU learned how powerful collective action by the states could be: When groups of governors and

attorneys general acted in concert, they spurred other state officials to take strong countermeasures and changed the public debate. In the months leading up to the 2024 election, ACLU state affiliates fostered relationships with well-positioned state-level officials and staff in 23 pro-civil rights states and built networks between them to prepare potential policy efforts for new state legislative sessions. Since the election, the ACLU briefed hundreds of external partners, from governor and attorney general associations to major civil rights groups and other organizations, on the playbooks’ potential.

“These are no-nonsense protective and proactive measures that enshrine the type of basic rights that have been eroded by Supreme Court decisions and the work of the first Trump administration,” says Zamani. “The playbook contains ideas that should elevate the floor of our rights for every state so that irrespective of who serves in the White House and who has a lifetime job on the Supreme Court, states can be the backbone of people’s rights. We’re going to continue pushing our federal government to do the right thing, but we know that local governments and state governments are on the front lines.”

Attacks on abortion rights, suppression of the right to protest, and the implementation of a program to do mass arrests, detention, and deportations of immigrants are three immediate areas of threat. “Our focus is to marshal all our resources to fight back and disrupt those things as much as possible,” says Anu Joshi, the ACLU’s national campaign director for immigration.

As soon as Trump was declared the winner, governors and state attorneys general in pro-civil liberties states issued a range of state-level executive actions suggested by the state playbook, with the idea that strong actions would inspire other state leaders to follow. “What we’re focused on are the best policy measures that we think have the most breadth to protect the most communities and enshrine rights that decouple the Trump administration from being effective,” says Zamani.



C

entering cities, not only states, in this fight is essential. Nearly all states have cities that are better positioned

to pass strong pro-civil liberties protections than their state government or the federal government. *Firewall for Freedom's* cities playbook outlines 24 municipal-level policy strategies across issue areas such as immigrants' rights, racial justice, reproductive freedom, trans justice, and voting rights. These actions empower affiliates to achieve not just substantive preventive measures but genuine progress on longer-term priority goals. For affiliates in states with anti-civil rights leadership, municipal advocacy often represents the best opportunity for making progress on these issues, and multiple cities can collaborate in fighting back against the authoritarian tendencies of state governments.

The municipal playbook includes model legislation, policies, and executive orders that affiliates can tailor for the advocacy interventions best suited to specific needs. "To be able to use this amazing resource to its maximum benefit, you need to take the national guidance and filter it through a local lens," says Chad Marlow, an ACLU senior policy counsel on privacy, surveillance, and technology. "Every municipality is going to have its own unique circumstances, and only the affiliates with their local expertise are going to know the perfect way for an individual city to go about enacting these policies. Our models are a starting point, not the end point."

These local strategies allow cities to defend their residents, signal their values, and help set up organizing moments in a bigger national fight for true equality and freedom. Even as the Trump campaign and Project 2025 brought threats to civil liberties into especially stark focus, the *Firewall for Freedom* playbooks offer concrete opportunities for members, volunteers, and activists to get involved with their local affiliate and make major progress



“TO PROTECT CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES, WE HAVE TO BE ENGAGED AND ACTIVE AT EVERY LEVEL.”

on the issues they care about right where they live.

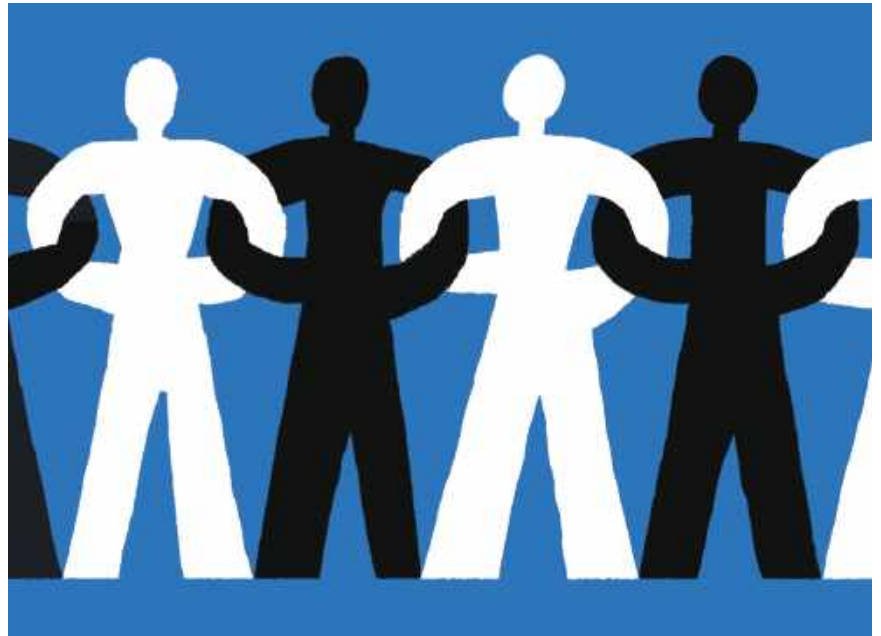
“If a person calls and says, ‘I care about privacy, I care about immigration, I care about LGBTQ issues and want to do something locally,’” says Marlow, “the affiliate can literally turn to those sections of the playbook and see not only the immediate

options they have but also actual models that they can be like, ‘Got it, let’s go.’”

City council offices and county boards often have limited time and issue expertise. That means that advocates who come with not just ideas but concrete models to effectuate them have a powerful advantage in advancing local bills

and policy proposals. “We want city and state officials to have a Signal messaging chain to ACLU affiliates,” says Naureen Shah, the ACLU’s deputy director of government affairs. “And this playbook is a tool for affiliates to get to that place in those relationships. It’s an extra nudge to governors and big city mayors to see their ACLU affiliates as a resource with a playbook of ideas for when bad stuff happens.”

As an added benefit, city- and county-level advocacy builds grassroots muscle as volunteers learn how to work with politicians and other officials and see how their voices can make change happen in their communities. Then those relationships deepen and expand when local officials move on to the state or federal level.



HOW STATES CAN DEFEND OUR RIGHTS

State and local elected officials wield significant power when it comes to protecting civil rights and civil liberties. Here’s what the ACLU is calling for:

DO NOT VOLUNTEER PRIVATE INFORMATION

We are calling on state and local governments to enact policies now that make clear they will not voluntarily share their resources—including personnel and our data—with federal law enforcement seeking to violate the civil rights and civil liberties of our communities. From mass deportations to attempts to criminalize reproductive health care and gender-affirming care, the stakes are immense. State and local agencies should just say no and refuse to voluntarily cooperate with incursions into civil rights and civil liberties, wherever possible.

PREPARE FOR MASS DEPORTATIONS

The Trump administration is planning large-scale deportation raids that will devastate our communities—disappearing people from their neighborhoods overnight. Children will be left without their parents, families will lose their breadwinners, and fear will ripple through our schools, places of worship, and workplaces. We are urging state and local governments

to prepare: Convene public and private leaders now and create a protocol for how to respond to these raids—including setting up a hotline, providing pro bono legal assistance, preparing educators and faith leaders to provide support, and surging resources to families left behind. Governors and legislatures should protect immigrant communities through legal assistance funds, pardon processes, and, where possible, passing laws limiting collaborating with federal immigration authorities.

FUND ABORTION CARE AND TRAVEL

Low-income people have consistently borne the brunt of restrictions on abortion care, even when *Roe v. Wade* was in place. However, the *Dobbs* decision that overturned *Roe* immeasurably magnified this problem. Now even more people must travel

“WE ARE PREPARED TO DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO CREATE THE COUNTRY WE KNOW WE DESERVE.”

“To protect civil rights and civil liberties, we have to be engaged and active at every level, from the federal government to the state level, to counties, cities, and our local neighborhoods,” says Joshi. “Through the work that our affiliates are doing, through our community partners,

we are trying to be as effective as possible in using *all* levers at our disposal.”

“I want supporters to be reassured that the ACLU is not wringing its hands,” says Shah. “We are acting on a plan to protect civil rights and civil liberties. We are not only leading this

fight on behalf of the ACLU’s supporters, we’re also helping lead a movement around the country that will catalyze resistance more broadly. Part of the reason it’s important to get these ideas in front of people is to shake them out of their state of fear, to get them into a mode of readiness to act.”

“We know the threat that Trump poses to our democracy and to our civil rights and civil liberties, and despair is not the answer,” adds Joshi. “We are prepared to fight back and do everything we can to create the country that we know we deserve. We can’t give up, because there are so many people counting on us.” ■

To learn more about the *Firewall for Freedom* playbooks, please visit aclu.org/firewall.

long distances to obtain an abortion, often having to take time off work and secure child care. State and municipal funding for abortion care and support services like travel and lodging—including, where possible, by localities in states that restrict the right to abortion—is essential for ensuring abortion seekers are able to access the care they need.

PROTECT OUR KIDS

We are urging state legislatures, state attorneys general, state education agencies, city governments, and school boards to anticipate the Trump administration’s attacks on our children, including trans kids and children of undocumented parents. They must safeguard student data, stop collecting information that could be weaponized against our communities, and enact policies to ensure our kids are safe and do not suffer from discrimination and harassment at school.

KEEP THE MILITARY OUT OF DOMESTIC LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Trump administration has threatened to turn the powers of our government against the “enemy within”—including by using federal troops to suppress protest or aid in mass deportation. Our nation’s foundational principles separate the military from domestic law enforcement, and these kinds of actions would be abuses of power. We are urging state governors and legislatures to make clear that their state National Guard units will not voluntarily participate in the administration’s

plans. Our state leaders can refuse to let the National Guard troops under their command and control suppress peaceful protest, or turbocharge immigration raids and detention. State governments can also decline to assist federal troops and federal law enforcement in the commission of rights violations, in certain circumstances.



Jari Jones is an actor, model, and joyful advocate for the trans community.



As the Supreme Court considers a historic case, transgender people and their families seek the freedom to live joyfully and without discrimination. BY THE ACLU

PHOTOGRAPHS BY AUNDRE LARROW

FREEDOM TO BE

In December, the ACLU and Lambda Legal appeared before the U.S. Supreme Court to argue a landmark case, *U.S. v. Skrametti*, challenging the state of Tennessee's ban on hormone therapy for transgender youth. In 2023, the ACLU and its partners sued Tennessee to block SB 1, which prohibits medical providers from prescribing treatment to transgender youth.

In arguing against transgender families, states with bans like Tennessee's have relied heavily on the Supreme Court's opinion overturning *Roe v. Wade* to justify government sex discrimination. With a decision expected by June, the court's ruling in *Skrametti* could open the door to further bans on health care. This could include limiting access to abortion, IVF, and birth control.

Since 2021, 24 states have banned hormone therapy for transgender youth even as leading medical experts and organizations, including the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, oppose these restrictions.

Health care bans are part of a larger, coordinated effort to criminalize and strip transgender people of their dignity and autonomy.

"As we continue to fight in courts and statehouses, we also know transgender people will not find safety or justice in the courts alone," says Chase Strangio, co-director of the ACLU's LGBTQ & HIV Project, who argued *Skrametti* on behalf of Tennessee families. "Our national culture still encounters trans people as a question to be answered or a problem to be solved. What trans people know is that our experience is not defined by the people trying to erase us but by the promise we represent for a greater ideal of freedom and liberation."

In September, the ACLU launched Freedom to Be, a storytelling campaign about transgender people from across the country who are finding joy and community, grounded in the basic principle that we all deserve the freedom to control our own bodies and lives. In the excerpts below, learn how transgender people, their families, and friends are advocating for their freedom to be.

FREEDOM TO BE: PROTECTED

Jari Jones
Pronouns: she/her
Location: New York, NY

As a Black trans woman, Jari Jones knows how meaningful it is to be loved and supported by the trans community. "Everybody, I think, has benefited from a Black trans woman at one point in time," she says.

Uplifting and celebrating the stories and images of Black trans women has been the driving force of Jones' work as a writer, model, actor, and activist. In 2019, she became the first Black trans woman to produce a film, *Port Authority*, competing at the Cannes Film Festival. She has modeled for fashion brands such as Calvin Klein and Chromat and appeared in Netflix's *Tales of the City* series. Writing for *Out Magazine*, *The New York Times*, and others, Jones has called for increased visibility and positive representation for girls like her, and for queer people more broadly, in media.

Jones is a powerful advocate for the trans community, but ultimately, she is sustained by the support and care she

receives from others. The freedom to be truly herself, she says, "looks like being held by many. It looks like being protected without hesitation. It looks like going the extra mile for myself, but also for Black trans women in general."

She adds: "We're at the front of the lines of protest. We're trying to make change—and usually that happens out of survival."

From her early childhood in New Jersey, Jones found unconditional love from her mother, Sherise, who encouraged her to be who she was meant to be, not what society or others had in mind. Her mother's support created a model of how Jones would show up for her community as an adult and how she deserved to receive that love in return.

"My mom taught me about rest," says Jones. "She taught me about delicate strength, one that doesn't require me to have to do it by myself, that I can rely on people to protect me."

FREEDOM TO BE: TOGETHER

Daniel Trujillo
Pronouns: he/him
Location: Tucson, AZ

Beyond being a tight-knit family, Lizette and Jose Trujillo and their son, Daniel, think of themselves as a team—they even call themselves the Three Musketeers.

Lizette and Jose describe teenage Daniel as a funny and charismatic self-starter. “He can make friends anywhere,” says Lizette. “People always just end up falling in love with Daniel

because he’s so thoughtful and sweet and wants to know people.”

“Having affirming parents completely altered my experience as a trans person,” says Daniel. “I feel like my life could’ve been so different. It allowed me to focus on school without nervousness and anxiousness, and to be myself fully.”

In 2023, when Daniel wanted to fight back against anti-trans legislation in his home state of Arizona, including a ban on gender-affirming care, there was no question that his parents would stand beside him.

“It’s frustrating seeing [politicians] use our kids as political pawns,” says Lizette. “I have a right to love my child, and my kid has a right to access public spaces without the government infringing on him.”

After sitting through an anti-trans bill hearing in Phoenix, Daniel, along with his friend Libby Gonzalez, decided to take action. Instead of organizing a protest, they set out to create a space where trans people could be who they are.

“I want people to see us being joyful and living fully,” Daniel says.

In May 2023, Daniel teamed up with three other trans teens to organize the country’s first trans prom, held near the Capitol Reflecting Pool in Washington, D.C. “We wanted to make a place where you could celebrate who you were instead of having to be fearful,” he says.

With the help of parents, community members, other trans activists, and the ACLU, Daniel and his co-organizers were able to bring more than 50 trans and nonbinary young people to the Capitol for an event that was both celebration and protest. Most importantly, the trans prom was a chance to allow kids the freedom to be exactly who they are. It’s what Lizette and Jose have wanted for Daniel his whole life.

“All you want is for your child to love who they are fully,” Lizette says. “The trans prom was Daniel saying he loved himself fully and wanted to give that to other kids.”

**“I want people
to see us being
joyful and
living fully.”**



FREEDOM TO BE: AUTHENTIC

Rey Resendez
Pronouns: they/he/she
Location: Queens, NY

“In a world where trans bodies face relentless scrutiny, I refuse to back down.”

Movement is how Rey Resendez exercises bodily autonomy. As a transgender, Two-Spirit activist, educator, and community organizer, they are all too familiar with the ways that non-conforming bodies like theirs are policed in society at large. But to anyone who would police their trans body, they say, “I appreciate the concern, but it is my body and ultimately my choice.”

After beginning their career as a program coordinator at Gay Men’s Health Crisis, today Rey is a facilitator and consultant for workplace inclusion at various companies and nonprofits. It’s a labor of love and advocacy that can be mentally and spiritually taxing. Rey relies on movement and meditation as forms of self-care.

Rey first discovered meditation through their partner, who taught them the importance of slowing down. “It was important for me to learn

self-care because throughout my work I would feel very burned out,” they explain. “Without taking care of myself, I won’t be able to pour into my community.”

That commitment to the trans community carries Rey even during the most difficult times. Especially in the face of increasing anti-trans legislation and discrimination across the country, Rey advises: “Listen to your body, take breaks when needed, say no to certain things, and be okay with saying no.”

But for Rey, saying no doesn’t mean giving up. “In a world where trans bodies face relentless scrutiny and harmful legislation, I refuse to back down,” they say. “My identity isn’t up for debate or legislation, period.”

Ultimately, the freedom to be authentic allows Rey to give back to their community and always show up for friends and family.





Sage Dolan-Sandrino has been an outspoken voice for trans rights for most of her young life, starting with the first op-ed she wrote for *Teen Vogue* at 16. Back then, she says, her primary aim was to be visible as an Afro-Cuban queer woman. “I wanted the freedom to step outside and to be trans and to not be afraid,” she says.

Raised in Washington, D.C., by politically engaged parents, Dolan-Sandrino is the founder of TEAM Mag, a creative studio and digital zine, and was featured in the Disney+ docuseries *Growing Up*. Previously she served as a fellow for the National Black Justice Coalition and an ambassador for the White House Initiative for Educational Excellence for African Americans during the Obama administration, advocating for Title IX protections for transgender students.

Most recently, her dreams have expanded beyond merely being seen.

“I have so much pride about being trans and about being queer,” she says. “But I also have a desire to be seen for everything else outside of that, and who I am doesn’t end there.”

For her, the freedom to be includes taking risks, documenting her own life, and laughing with her friends, loved ones, and family. “I want the freedom to make memories that are grounded in joy.”

Most importantly, Dolan-Sandrino’s freedom rests in the power to tell her own story, to see people like her in television and literature, living full lives surrounded by love and acceptance, not just pain.

“It’s so important to tell the stories of love and happiness and laughter that I know to be true,” she says, “that I’ve experienced myself, but need to share with others so they can also believe themselves that being trans is not all teardrops but a lot of love and light.” ■

**FREEDOM
TO BE:
EXPRESSIVE**

Sage Dolan-Sandrino
Pronouns: she/her
Location: Brooklyn, NY

Support the freedom to be and stay up to date on the ACLU’s work at aclu.org/freedomtobe.





Protesters speak out against anti-immigrant legislation outside the Texas State Capitol in Austin.

VOICES

IMMIGRANTS WELCOME

Artists Rally for Immigrants' Rights

Protesters and 15-foot puppets joined the ACLU of Texas to defend immigrants.

The ACLU of Texas partnered with Houston street artist Kill Joy and Kitchen Table Puppets + Press in March 2024 to celebrate immigrant communities—in the face of discriminatory border policies like Senate Bill 4, the most extreme anti-immigration law passed by any state legislature. An ongoing ACLU lawsuit has halted SB 4, which, if enforced, would permit local and state law enforcement and magistrates to arrest, detain, and remove without due process people they suspect to have entered Texas from another country. Alongside 15-foot puppets depicting an immigrant mother and child, as well as giant hands representing the support Texans offer each other, hundreds of people from across the state rallied at the Capitol in Austin days before SB 4 was to go into effect, declaring, “Immigrants are welcome here!” —TOM VELLNER

CHRISTOPHER LEE

The Business of Voting

Companies teamed up with the ACLU to prepare voters ahead of Election Day.

With the help of corporate partners, the ACLU ensured voters knew their rights and made a plan to vote in the critical 2024 elections. A special part of this voter education plan was the ACLU's Know Your Rights bus tour, which traveled across Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Michigan last September. Each stop on the tour combined entertainment with essential information about fundamental freedoms. In Philadelphia, that included free Ben & Jerry's ice cream, La Colombe coffee, and a civil rights-themed game show hosted by award-winning producer, director, comedian and ACLU artist ambassador W. Kamau Bell.

Companies including Spencer's Gifts—which has ACLU voter resource displays at all 600 of its stores nationwide—Ben & Jerry's, La Colombe, Levi Strauss & Co., Universal Music Group, Saie Beauty, Goop, the Standard Hotels, and others all contributed to the ACLU's efforts to empower people at the polls last year too. Voters had the opportunity to elect candidates up and down the ballot—and the ACLU and key partners were there to provide the information they needed to do exactly that. —TOM VELLNER

KEVIN LOWERY



Drag queens Tiffany Uma Mascara (left) and VinChelle celebrate with La Colombe drinks at the ACLU's Know Your Rights event in Philadelphia.

Know Your Voting Rights

Learn more about your rights, how to exercise them, and what to do when they're violated at aclu.org/kyr.



Defending Ulysses

Published in book form in Paris in 1922 after initially being serialized, James Joyce's *Ulysses* was banned in the United States under obscenity laws due to its sexual content. Seeking to overturn the ban, in 1932, ACLU board member and general counsel Morris Ernst hatched a plan with Random House to have a single copy of the book shipped to New York City. U.S. Customs eventually seized the book, which allowed Ernst to officially file suit, sparking the landmark case *United States v. One Book Called Ulysses*. In 1933, federal District Judge John M. Woolsey ruled that *Ulysses* was not obscene, allowing Joyce's work to be published in the United States and setting a precedent for protecting literary expression—one that remains critical to the ACLU's current fight against a wave of book bans and classroom censorship nationwide. —T.V.

Every Body

Illustration and text by Gracey Zhang

In the years since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the friction and divide seem ever growing. The illustration depicts a line of people united to fight for abortion rights. One woman looks out at the viewer. Her gaze asks us to join and amplify the call to action, as the current reality has ripple effects on us all.





Advocating with Heart

Jenna Damron led an unforgettable event for LGBTQ people at the Idaho State Capitol.

NAME: Jenna Damron (she/they)

LOCATION: Boise, Idaho

FOCUS: LGBTQ Rights

Early in 2024, when Idaho state legislators began to debate a series of anti-LGBTQ bills, queer and transgender people showed up to public hearings in droves to talk about how such laws would harm them.

“We would sit there for three hours, and every single person

would be in opposition of that bill passing,” says Jenna Damron, an advocacy fellow at the ACLU of Idaho who first got into organizing around transgender justice through their work as a personal trainer, advocating for equal access to powerlifting and the adoption of gender-neutral restrooms in gyms.

Despite the public outcry, the bills would often still pass, like the one that redefines

gender to be synonymous with sex. Damron and other LGBTQ Idahoans decided that they needed a way to show they aren’t going anywhere, even in the face of these laws—and to do it with heart.

On March 4, they organized an event that was made to look like a press conference, with Damron talking to reporters. But high above where they stood in the rotunda of the Capitol building, their colleagues were waiting with 48,000 handmade paper hearts that had been gathered from people across the state. When the moment came, the hearts were dropped over the audience, one for each LGBTQ person in Idaho, according to the 2020 Census.

There was shock and commotion as the hearts fell, but it was Damron’s job to keep calm and keep talking. “Idahoans and their families want to make one thing clear,” they told the crowd. “We will always find a way.”

The next part was just as important: The organizers picked up every paper heart. “That was really a metaphor for community care, that we’re never going to leave anybody behind,” says Damron. “We’ll always take care of ourselves, no matter what happens in that building.” —WILLY BLACKMORE

Jenna Damron photographed outside the Idaho State Capitol in Boise.



LGBTQ Rights

Learn more about the ACLU’s fight for the LGBTQ community at [aclu.org/lgbtq](https://www.aclu.org/lgbtq).



Larissa Hubbard's high school removed her senior portrait from the yearbook because she wore a tuxedo.

Taking Pride in Who We Are

By Larissa Hubbard

A freshly pressed tuxedo shirt. A black bow tie and a crisp black tuxedo jacket, topped off by my curly red afro. I knew I looked good. I felt like myself. I was so excited to take my senior class portrait.

When I arrived at the studio, the photographer told me that if I wore my tuxedo, my senior portrait would not be included in the yearbook. I was told my school district required girls to wear

a drape—a black off-the-shoulder top that mimics the look of a formal gown. Only boys could wear tuxedos. I was devastated.

Throughout my time at Harrison Central High School in Mississippi, I wore traditionally masculine clothing. As a gay woman of color, wearing masculine clothing is a central part of the way I express my gender and sexual orientation. I could not believe that based on my sex, I would be forced to either wear a drape or have my senior portrait excluded from the yearbook.

My mom and I decided that I would not accept this unfair and sexist rule. I held firm and took my senior portrait in my tuxedo. When my mom contacted Harrison County Superintendent Mitchell King to ask for my portrait to be included in the yearbook, she got an outright rejection. But my mom kept fighting for my rights, and she bought a full-page yearbook ad and included my senior portrait in it.

When I received my yearbook, I discovered that the school district had deleted me from the graduating senior section entirely. Not only did they refuse to use my portrait, but they also refused to print my name, academic honors, sports, or activities. They deleted my portrait from the ad my mom paid for in the yearbook. It was as if my time at Harrison Central never happened.

I am committed to ensuring that the next student who shows up at the portrait studio is free to choose a tuxedo or a drape for their senior portrait based on who they are, not who the school thinks they should be. That's why I joined other Harrison County students in fighting back against the school district's discriminatory actions by filing a Title IX complaint with the U.S. Department of Education in May 2024.

Together with the ACLU and the community that supports my authentic self-expression, we won't let schools silence, exclude, or erase us for taking pride in who we are and daring to be ourselves.

Read more about Larissa's story at aclu.org/bio/larissa-hubbard.



Board of Education, Island Trees School District v. Pico

June 25, 1982

In 1977, a group of students from Long Island, New York, led by Steven Pico and represented by the ACLU, sued their school board (above) on First Amendment grounds for removing certain “objectionable books” from the school library. While acknowledging a school’s right to remove material that was “pervasively vulgar” or “educationally unsuitable,” the U.S. Supreme Court held that the students’ First Amendment “right to know” had been violated. A five-year-long battle, the case marked the first time that the court addressed the removal of books from libraries in public schools. Although the ruling favored the students, its vague language left the door open for future censorship attempts—ones that the ACLU continues to fight today so that students can read and learn freely.

—TOM VELLNER

Include freedom in your will.

Together, we can make this a nation we're proud to leave to the next generation.



The future belongs to:

A gift in your will is:

- A statement of what you value—freedom.
- A promise that a “more perfect union” will be a reality.
- An inspiration to others.
- A commitment to future generations.
- An action that will change lives.

Request more information
about how to include a gift in your will or other estate plan.

Visit aclu.org/mylegacy | Return the enclosed reply envelope | Contact us directly at legacy@aclu.org



Scan This QR Code

- Open your camera app.
- Center the QR code and tap the link.

ACLU

**American Civil Liberties Union
Foundation, Inc.**

125 Broad Street, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10004-2400

NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES
UNION FOUNDATION, INC.

- 1. Lifetime income**
- 2. Payment rates
up to 10.1%**
- 3. A nation we are proud
to leave to the next
generation**

With a charitable gift annuity funded with cash, appreciated stock, or a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA, you can receive income for life while funding a future where every person has the freedom to thrive.

Not an offer to issue annuities in Alabama, Hawaii, or Tennessee. Must be at least 60 years old for immediate payments.



**Request a free, no-obligation illustration of the benefits
you could receive with a charitable gift annuity.**

- Visit aclu.org/annuity
- Return the enclosed reply envelope



Scan This QR Code

- Open your camera app.
- Center the QR code and tap the link.

ACLU