

APRIL 2024

IMPACT REPORT

ACLU Illinois

VOTING OUR VALUES AND FIXING OUR DEMOCRACY



A note from ACLU of Illinois Executive Director, Colleen Connell (she/her)

The challenges of 2024 – particularly the November elections – demand our attention and our action. Although the ACLU is a non-partisan organization,

that status does not require us to ignore the pressing threats to our democracy.

We cannot disregard the reality that the presumptive presidential nominee of one major political party boasts of his desire to be a presidential strongman, unfettered by the Constitution. His political party promises to enact “The Life at Conception Act,” banning abortion, in vitro fertilization and hormonal contraception.

We cannot overlook the fact that this same political party has politicized the judicial nomination process and, with intentional nominations, packed the Supreme Court of the United States with justices who have directed a hard rightward turn. The Court has stripped away abortion rights, limited voting rights, dismantled affirmative action and is threatening LGBTQ rights.

Although the Court’s Majority claims its rulings are guided by the “original” intent of the Constitution, nothing could be further from the truth. The majority’s originalism distorts both history and the actual text of the Constitution. The Majority’s rulings in several recent religion cases crystalize the way this Court weaponizes “originalism.” This Supreme Court increasingly finds a First Amendment violation when the religiously inclined are not allowed to impose their religious beliefs on others – such as coerced prayer at a public-school football game or when state constitutions explicitly prohibit the appropriation of state money to

churches and religious schools. In so doing, the Court disregards the express language of the First Amendment, which prohibits government from making any laws that establish a religion or impede its free exercise.

This Court also disregards the history behind the First Amendment. The men who wrote our Constitution were only a few generations removed from the religious wars of Europe. Those wars were led by kings who thought themselves divinely ordained to exercise absolute power. The Framers wrote the First Amendment to protect against a favored religion from being rewarded by government and to protect all of us from being punished for our religious belief or lack thereof. The Supreme Court’s recent rulings mock this constitutional concept and, in so doing, weaken the public’s regard for the Court and our respect for the rule of law.

Given the Court’s recent rulings, do we have any doubt that this Supreme Court would uphold a federal “The Life at Conception Act” were Congress to enact it in 2025? Or that this Court would uphold a federal law restricting gender affirming care? That is why we must vote our values in 2024 and elect candidates who will protect the constitutional rights we hold dear.

We must vote in 2024 in every race and at every level. Some people say that voting does not matter because nothing changes no matter who wins an election. That is absolutely not true. Elections do matter!

Forty years ago, when I started at the ACLU, Illinois acted like Texas does today. Illinois lawmakers enacted abortion restrictions every year. And, every year I went to court and successfully blocked these toxic laws from going into effect.

Over time, with the concerted work of Illinois voters and countless organizations, we changed the composition of the Illinois General Assembly. Today, our state is a champion of reproductive freedom.

The lessons that we learned are that elections do matter, and that to win elections each of us must lean in and work to win. We must share the stakes of the 2024 elections with our friends, our families, and our communities. It is up to us to identify the real threats we face in this election and in the years ahead. In this critical election year, I suggest you also consider dedicating your time. Although voter suppression may not be a problem in Illinois, consider becoming an election judge in your community. Or, consider volunteering to be a poll watcher in surrounding states where there are concerns about voter intimidation and suppression.

We each have important work to do to improve our democracy. The fundamental rights that are at the core of the ACLU's mission cannot survive – let alone thrive – without a robust democracy. Let's dedicate the next five months to devoting our collective efforts to fighting for our democracy.

UPDATE ON THE FIGHT FOR RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

CHALLENGING CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT MASS ARREST POLICY

We recently took action in federal court to challenge a new Chicago Police Department (CPD) policy that seeks to facilitate mass arrests. There is urgency in correcting this policy – and the training of officers on the policy – in advance of the upcoming Democratic National Convention (DNC) in August 2024. The policy fails to protect protesters' First Amendment rights and violates numerous provisions of the federal court order that governs CPD (known as the [Consent Decree](#)). The policy also threatens to roll back important protections for protesters that the ACLU of Illinois and our Coalition partners obtained to prevent a repeat of CPD's violent and unconstitutional response to the George Floyd protests. We filed this action in our role representing the Communities United plaintiffs – Communities United, Community Renewal Society, Next Steps, and ONE Northside – in the Coalition that enforces the Consent Decree. We will continue to hold CPD accountable and to fight against unconstitutional and repressive policing.

2024 LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

The ACLU of Illinois and our partners are working on important [legislation](#) in Springfield to protect and advance our civil rights and civil liberties. We need your help to make sure these critical initiatives pass before the 2024 Legislative session adjourns at the end of May! Please find information on our initiatives and ways to take action below:

- **[Protect Health Data Privacy Act:](#)**
HB 4093 aims to safeguard private health care information by assuring that individuals have more control over their data before it is collected, stored, shared or sold to others.
Take Action: [Send an email](#) | Call 1-217-292-6858
- **[Kindship in Demand Act \(The KIND Act\):](#)**
HB 4781 provides equitable support for kinship care and guardianship benefits to improve outcomes for Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)-involved youth who are in relative care, as well as increase the capacity of relatives to become caregivers delivering permanency for more youth.
Take Action: [Send an email](#) | Call 1-217-861-4815
- **[End of Life Options for Terminally Ill Patients Act:](#)**
SB 3499 will allow a mentally capable, terminally ill adult with a prognosis of six months or less the option to obtain a prescription medication they may decide to take so they can die peacefully and end their suffering.
Take Action: [Send an email](#) | Call 1-217-262-9230
- **[Protect Youth Access to Health Care Act:](#)**
HB 5548 ensures that parents are not at risk of being punished or losing their rights when they support their child's access to lawful health care.
Take Action: [Send an email](#) | Call 1-217-262-9391

We encourage you to learn more about the ACLU of Illinois' affirmative legislative agenda for 2024, and ways to take action at:

www.aclu-il.org/legislation-2024

UPDATE ON TRAFFIC STOPS IN CHICAGO

Body-worn camera footage of the traffic stop and shooting of Dexter Reed in Chicago last month was recently released. Reed was tragically killed after a tactical unit of police officers chased and stopped his vehicle, allegedly for driving without a seatbelt. Chicago Police Department's mass traffic stop program discriminatorily targets Black and Latino drivers. These stops are conducted not to enhance road safety – only a handful of the stops result in a citation of any type – but are conducted under the mistaken belief that increasing traffic stops will lead to a reduction in gun violence and other serious crimes. Instead, these stops drive a wedge between the police and the community they serve, adding nothing to public safety. We filed a lawsuit last year on behalf of five Chicago residents challenging the program.

IMPORTANT VICTORY FOR TRANSGENDER CLIENT OVER DENIAL OF HEALTH CARE COVERAGE

In early March, the Springfield City Council voted to approve a settlement in a complaint filed in



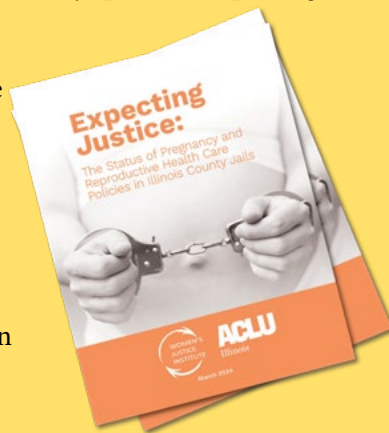
2020 over the denial of gender-affirming health care to a former City employee, Kate Holt. The resolution comes after the Illinois Human Rights Commission unanimously ruled for Holt in

February 2022 that discrimination in health care coverage for employees who are transgender can violate state law.

The decision is the first time that excluding gender-affirming care from employee insurance plans was declared to violate Illinois' civil rights law, including protections for sex and gender identity. In October of the same year, Springfield changed its health insurance plan for employees to cover gender-affirming care. As we continue to see an onslaught of attacks against transgender people nationwide, this case sends a clear signal that discriminatory health insurance plans in Illinois must be changed immediately.

NEW REPORT ON PREGNANCY AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE POLICIES IN COUNTY JAILS

The ACLU of Illinois and Women's Justice Institute (WJI) recently released our joint report Expecting Justice: The Status of Pregnancy and Reproductive Health Care Policies in Illinois County Jails that surveys policies impacting access to reproductive health care and the treatment of those who are pregnant or postpartum in jails across Illinois. Our report found that jails across Illinois are vastly inconsistent when it comes to their written policies about the provision of reproductive health care and the treatment of pregnant and postpartum individuals. Read the full report here, including first-person accounts from women who were pregnant in county jails across Illinois.



WHO YOU SHOULD KNOW:

The Women's Justice Institute (WJI) is a dynamic, national "think and do tank," based in Chicago, that collaborates with a wide range of stakeholders in innovative ways to address women's mass incarceration; reduce harm to impacted women, their children, families, and communities; and improve health, well-being, and outcomes among them. The WJI's team of experts, co-led by currently and formerly incarcerated women, works across sectors to confront the false narratives that fuel the mass incarceration of women and build transformative solutions. The WJI is also home to the Reclamation Project, the first arts, advocacy, mutual support and technical assistance center led by/for formerly incarcerated women, and leads the Statewide Alliance for Criminalized Survivors, which engages gender-based violence advocates in a coalition to help end the criminalization of gender-based violence among survivors through freedom campaigns and transformative policy. Learn more about WJI and their ongoing initiatives here.

ENGAGING AROUND THE STATE

2024 ACLU LUNCH: FIGHTING FOR A MORE PERFECT UNION

On March 1, 2024, more than 1,000 members of the ACLU of Illinois community gathered in person and virtually to celebrate the work of the past year, raise funds critical to our work, and recommit to the ongoing fight for civil rights and liberties. Thank you to everyone who supported the 2024 ACLU Lunch! We left the event motivated and energized by the words of so many members of the ACLU of Illinois community including keynote speaker and ACLU Artist Ambassador for Reproductive Freedom Busy Philipps. We encourage you to watch the event recording [here](#). Please save the date for the 2025 ACLU Lunch which will be held on Friday, April 4, 2025!



Credit: Shin Lim
ACLU Artist Ambassador for Reproductive Freedom Busy Philipps giving the keynote speech at the ACLU Lunch.

including keynote speaker and ACLU Artist Ambassador for Reproductive Freedom



Credit: Shin Lim

END-OF-LIFE-OPTIONS VIRTUAL ADVOCACY TRAINING

On Tuesday, March 26, 2024 the ACLU of Illinois and our partners in the End-of-Life Options Coalition hosted a virtual advocacy training on how to advocate for [Senate Bill 3499](#): The Illinois End of Life Options for Terminally Ill Patients Act. You can [watch the recording of the event here](#). We encourage you to send an email to your state legislators in support of this bill [by clicking here](#).

ACLU OF ILLINOIS RECEIVES AWARD FOR LEGAL ADVOCACY AND DEDICATION IN CAMPOS V. CITY OF CHICAGO

In January, the ACLU of Illinois received an award from the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) recognizing our legal advocacy in Campos v. City of Chicago in partnership with CCH and Arnold & Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP. As shared previously, Ms. Campos reached a favorable [settlement with the City of Chicago](#) after police physically assaulted, falsely arrested, and unlawfully detained her in June 2020. Ms. Campos obtained substantial monetary damages as part of the settlement. Shortly after the filing of Ms. Campos' suit, the officer primarily responsible for violating her constitutional rights separated from the Chicago Police Department.



Attorneys from the ACLU of Illinois, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, and Porter Wright pose with Julie Campos and her son.

RECENT ACLU OF ILLINOIS CHAPTER ACTIVITIES:

- On Tuesday, February 27, the [Central Illinois Chapter](#) of the ACLU of Illinois hosted Digital Privacy and Our Civil Liberties, a thought-provoking discussion on the evolving landscape of digital privacy featuring Dmitry Zhdanov, Director of the Center for Cybersecurity Research and Education at Illinois State University, and Stephen Ragan, Policy and Advocacy Strategist: Privacy, Technology and Surveillance at the ACLU of Illinois.
- On Thursday, April 25, the [Peoria Chapter](#) of the ACLU of Illinois hosted Harmony for Justice: Elevating Voices, Inspiring Change, their 63rd Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner. The event featured Professor Peter Cole from Western Illinois University who spoke on the Chicago Race Riot of 1919 Commemoration Project, which is aimed at igniting conversations about racism in Chicago and the US. The program also included the election of officers and directors, and the presentation of annual awards.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

NEXT GENERATION SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP DRIVE AND SPIN HAPPY HOUR

Our annual Next Generation Society Membership Drive kicks off next week and runs through the month of May! The Next Generation Society of the ACLU is a vibrant and diverse membership group for activists, artists, emerging leaders, and engaged community members committed to supporting the essential work of the ACLU and safeguarding civil liberties for future generations. Throughout the month, we'll be sending emails and sharing social media posts highlighting the impactful work of the ACLU and the Next Generation Society. If you know someone who might be interested in getting more involved with the ACLU, please encourage them to [connect with us](#).

Don't miss our Next Generation Society Happy Hour on Wednesday, May 22nd from 5 – 8pm at SPIN Ping Pong Club, where you can gather with like-minded individuals, celebrate our collective efforts, and recommit to the fight ahead. Enjoy food, craft beer, wine, and, of course, plenty of ping pong! For more information and tickets, [click here](#). We are excited to share that for a limited time, the purchase of a Next Generation Society membership includes a ticket to the Happy Hour.

2024 PRIDE PARADE

Join the ACLU of Illinois at the 2024 Chicago Pride Parade on Sunday, June 30th at 11:00 AM. We are excited to join together to show support for the LGBTQ+ community—we would love to have you and your community march with us! We will have t-shirts, stickers, posters, and more available at the parade on a first come, first served basis. As well as swag for you to pass out during the parade. [Sign up here to march with us](#).

2024 ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN PREVIEW

Starting this summer and continuing through November, the ACLU of Illinois will be hosting a public engagement campaign to connect with supporters around the state. This campaign will be an opportunity to hear directly from supporters about what is happening in communities throughout Illinois, to share about the work of the ACLU, and to inspire each of us to vote for our values in the election. A combination of in-person and virtual events will take place around the state. Please keep an eye out for more details – we might be coming to a city near you and look forward to connecting!

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

JILL METZ (she/her)



Jill is a retired lawyer who joined the ACLU of Illinois board in 1999 and became the board president in 2006. Jill practiced law for 42 years, primarily in the interest of moving forward the protections and rights for LGBT clients.

Jill's interest in the ACLU arose when she asked the ACLU to work with her in the case of a mother who lost visitation rights with her daughter when an Illinois judge denied visitation if any other women were present in the home.

Why is the work of the ACLU important to you and what has kept you engaged in this fight over the years?

I feel the ACLU's work is important because I believe all of us need to work towards inclusivity and protections for people who don't have a voice. Working with the great people at the ACLU and providing the promises set forth in the Constitution and the amendments meets my goals. I continue to stay engaged because I watch the excitement and creativity on a daily basis of the staff and great board working on this goal.

What current work of the ACLU is on the top of your mind right now?

The strength of the ACLU is that each state has an organization that works locally to pass laws, enforce laws and communicate about the importance of the work. The racial justice and reproductive health agenda is particularly engaging right now.

What is giving you hope right now when you think about the future of this work?

Hope for me comes when I am doing something to make life better – and getting together at our lunch event with over 1,000 like-minded people makes me know that we can continue to make progress.

What are you currently reading, watching, or listening to?

I am reading Rachel Maddow's book, "Prequel". The book covers fascism that was in this country as World War II was breaking out. History always reminds me that most of the things that are happening now have happened to some degree in the past, and we have overcome those by working hard and staying with our beliefs.

ASK AN EXPERT

The following question was answered by Edwin Yohnka (he/him), ACLU of Illinois Director of Communications and Public Policy

Q: How is the ACLU of Illinois preparing to protect First Amendment activity during the upcoming Democratic National Convention in Chicago?

A: Obviously, a national political Convention draws thousands of people to the meeting site wishing to protest or demonstrate around a range of issues. In recent months we have seen protests in Chicago around both foreign policy matters as well as domestic matters. Many of these same demonstrators will want to raise these matters during the convention which draws delegates and visitors from across the country and media from around the world. The goal of the ACLU of Illinois as we prepare for August's events is to ensure that everyone gets the opportunity to advocate to the fullest degree possible during the days of the convention.

We are currently exploring, for example, how the City of Chicago is dealing with permit requests from groups wishing to march during the convention. A number of groups were denied permits altogether or offered alternative routes that would keep demonstrators far away from convention delegates and participants. We have raised concerns about a new City ordinance that sets forth so-called "security zones" around the United Center and McCormick Place – near where the convention and delegate activities will take place. The ACLU wants to be certain that protestors near these locations will have the opportunity to ensure that their messages are seen and heard by delegates.

And, finally, we are working to make certain that protestors can access iconic Chicago locations – think about the Daley Plaza or Grant Park – which people watching convention coverage from across the globe will associate with Chicago.

The ACLU of Illinois will be using our expertise and experience to guarantee the most vigorous First Amendment activity during this critical event. There is lots of work to do in the coming months to accomplish that goal.



Credit: Joshua Lott

ADVOCACY 101 AND PRETRIAL FAIRNESS ACT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The ACLU of Illinois provides a range of tailored trainings – from advocacy basics to specialized issue areas, and we are eager to host them for you, your co-workers, and your communities! In our Advocacy 101 training, we provide an interactive presentation where participants learn about how a bill becomes a law in Illinois, how to advocate to elected and appointed officials, and a quick overview of the current ACLU of Illinois legislative initiatives and how you can get involved. This training can be done across the state in person or virtually.

One specialized presentation we offer is a Know Your Rights Training on the Pretrial Fairness Act (PFA). This presentation covers what the PFA is and why it is so important to our civil liberties work. Additionally, individuals learn about how their rights in the pretrial system have shifted with the passage of the Pretrial Fairness Act. If you or someone in your network is interested in hosting a training, please contact advocacy@aclu-il.org.



NATIONWIDE INSIGHTS

ADVANCING REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND ACCESS NATIONWIDE

The Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* unleashed a whirlwind of attacks across the nation to limit, ban, or even criminalize abortion. The ACLU is confronting these challenges at every level. On the federal level, the ACLU filed an amicus brief and the Supreme Court recently heard arguments in *Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine v. FDA*, which could have serious effects on people's ability to access abortion and miscarriage care nationwide. The anti-abortion activists who brought the case are seeking to overturn the FDA's decisions regarding mifepristone to push the medication – which is used in most abortions in this country today – out of reach in every state. The ACLU and the ACLU of Idaho also recently filed an amicus brief in *Idaho and Moyle, et al. v. United States*, a case about whether politicians can force doctors to turn away patients suffering emergency pregnancy complications. Rulings are expected on both cases this summer.



It is critical to remember that these cases are only one part of a much larger effort to not only ban abortion nationwide, but also to take away our power to make decisions for ourselves about birth control, IVF, and other reproductive health care. And, it comes as no surprise that the states that have banned or severely restricted abortion track closely with those that are attempting to restrict voting rights and dilute voters' political power. The ACLU is actively supporting ballot initiatives to protect abortion rights in many of these states by educating voters and filing lawsuits to stop politicians from undermining the ballot measure process. In recent years, we have seen voters continue to overwhelmingly approve landmark ballot measures – including in Kentucky and Michigan – for abortion access and to elect candidates who champion these issues. In this election year and beyond, it is critical that each of us votes our values and continues to be an active participant in our democracy.

THE FIGHT FOR GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE AT THE SUPREME COURT

Hundreds of anti-LGBTQ bills continue to be introduced, debated, and passed in state legislatures nationwide, attempting to restrict health care, athletics, public accommodations, expression, and educational materials for trans people – especially trans youth. As this unprecedented surge in attacks on the trans community rages on, the ACLU continues to fight back nationwide. We are currently awaiting a ruling in *Poe v. Labrador*, in which we're calling on the Supreme Court to uphold lower court rulings blocking an unconstitutional ban on medical care for trans youth in Idaho. While the case is waiting to be heard, the Supreme Court issued a partial stay against a statewide preliminary injunction blocking enforcement of Idaho's ban on gender-affirming medical care for transgender youth, allowing the law to be enforced against families and medical providers not party to a legal challenge against the law while that case proceeds in the District Court. We will continue this fight in court, but it's also crucial that legislation like this never becomes law in the first place.

As we continue to face extreme, discriminatory legislation in states across the country – including in our neighboring state of Indiana when the 7th U.S. Circuit Court allowed a ban on gender-affirming care to take effect – it proves that our fight to uphold and defend trans rights has to continue at every level. Access to gender-affirming care is lifesaving and trans people have the right to live their lives free of discrimination.

PROTECTING OUR VOTING RIGHTS

Since 1965, the Voting Rights Act (VRA) has been integral to protecting people of color at the polls. But in recent decades, the strength of the VRA has been diminished by decisions like *Shelby County v. Holder* in 2013, and the subsequent barrage of voter restrictions imposed by states. As we look toward the November elections, one of our top priorities must be ensuring that every single eligible voter has the resources they need to cast a meaningful ballot at the polls. We continue to fight for voting rights nationwide, including:

- The Montana Supreme Court recently ruled in favor of a group of Native American organizations and tribes – represented by the Native American Rights Fund, American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU of Montana, and Harvard Law School's Election Law Clinic – holding that two state laws that hinder participation by Indigenous people in state elections violate the fundamental right to vote. This resounding win for tribes in Montana is another strike against the unconstitutional burden placed on Native American voters in Montana and across the country.

- In South Carolina, a three-judge district court issued an order allowing South Carolina's racially gerrymandered congressional map to remain in place for 2024 elections. This order comes in response to defendants' delayed request to keep the unconstitutional map in place pending their appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. The district court had blocked elections from proceeding in South Carolina's racially gerrymandered congressional map, however, with the legislature's deliberate inaction in crafting a new map, the court reconsidered its stance. In light of the court's modification to the injunction, we will continue to fight for fairer and equal maps, and we await a decision from the Supreme Court in this case.
- And, in a significant legal victory, a federal district court issued summary judgment in favor of voting and immigrants' rights advocates – including the ACLU and the ACLU of Florida – challenging Florida SB 7050, which bars any noncitizen from working or volunteering for third-party voter registration organizations who register eligible Floridians. The court found that the “citizenship requirement” provision violates plaintiffs' 14th Amendment right to equal protection under the law – underscoring the importance of protecting the fundamental right to encourage eligible voters to participate in their democracy and to do so free from discrimination.

As we approach for the 2024 election, we will continue to keep you up to date on our voting rights work in Illinois and nationwide.

EXTREME TEXAS ANTI-IMMIGRATION BILL

Texas Senate Bill 4, one of the most extreme anti-immigrant laws recently passed, is blocked from going into effect while the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals considers its legality. Texas Senate Bill 4 would permit local and state law enforcement to arrest, detain, and remove people they suspect to have entered Texas from another country without federal authorization. The law's implementation would lead to racial profiling, separate families, and harm Black and Brown communities across the state. The ACLU and ACLU of Texas filed a lawsuit arguing that Senate Bill 4 violates the U.S. Constitution.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals' decision comes after days of legal whiplash, during which the Supreme Court allowed the law to go into effect for a few hours before the temporary block. We will continue to show up to court and fight against this racist and extreme law. Listen to our recent episode of the At Liberty Podcast “The Most Extreme Anti-Immigration Bill We've Seen” to learn more.

GET MORE INFORMATION:

ADVOCATE

- Message Congress: Say 'NO' to Discriminatory Land Laws
- Message Congress: Defend Reproductive Freedom Now
- Message your Senators: Protect Families Seeking Asylum
- Tell the Secretary of Homeland Security: Justice for People Seeking Asylum: Stop Life-Threatening Tactics Now

LISTEN

- ACLU At Liberty Podcast: The Most Extreme Anti-Immigration Bill We've Seen
- ACLU At Liberty Podcast: Special Edition: Abortion Is Back at the Supreme Court
- ACLU At Liberty Podcast: This Economic Policy Could Break the Poverty Cycle

READ

- ACLU of Illinois: Reproductive Rights Detained
- ACLU of Illinois: What to Know about the Abortion Case in the Supreme Court
- ACLU National: One Year Later, Hope for Humanity in Arizona Prisons
- ACLU National: How We're Fighting for Gender Equity Nationwide
- ACLU National: Fighting Back Against Discriminatory Laws that Impact People Living with HIV

WATCH

- We Need to Restore and Strengthen Voting Rights Protections (5:25)
- Why Diversity Matters in the Military (1:49)

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