

IMPACT REPORT

ACLU Illinois

MOOURNING OUR LADY LIBERTY



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

The ACLU of Illinois lost its own “Lady Liberty” in November. Harriet Hausman, our long-time and still active Board member, died just a few months shy of her 100th birthday. We lost a courageous and unstinting voice for liberty and for humanity. Harriet’s support for the ACLU has been clear for decades, having first joined the organization as a high school student. As we head into an election year that holds grave importance for the future of our country, I—and I hope you—will continue to find inspiration in Harriet’s courageous lifetime of advocacy.

Harriet, and her late husband Marty, are legendary in the ACLU for their defense of the First Amendment. Nearly 50 years ago, when the ACLU represented the Nazis in their effort to march in suburban Skokie, Harriet and Marty travelled across the area to synagogues and other groups arguing for the need to protect free expression in our country.



Harriet’s advocacy was not limited to the First Amendment. In her nearly 40 years on the Board of the ACLU of Illinois, Harriet was a vigorous advocate for racial justice, voting rights, reproductive rights, religious liberty, immigrant rights, and the rights of those involved in the criminal legal system. If the Constitution did not protect all of us, Harriet knew that it really protected none of us.

Harriet thought that democratic societies had a special responsibility to young people. She strongly supported the ACLU’s long-term efforts to reform Illinois’ family regulation system. Her last column for the Weekly Journal of Oak Park and River Forest, published posthumously, called for the revitalization of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Harriet’s commitment to young people reflected her underlying wisdom about the need to invest in future generations – not only as a human rights matter but also was an investment in the future of our democracy. One of her many unheralded acts of generosity was her decision to fund the ACLU of Illinois’ high school education work. Harriet understood that real civic virtue depended on educating the next generation of voters about democracy, civil liberties, and human rights.

Therein lies inspiration for all of us who care about preserving our democracy, which is essential to preserving our liberty. Harriet understood that democracy is NOT a spectator sport. For our democracy to remain vital in its protection of individual rights and liberties – the foundation of the ACLU’s advocacy – each of us must participate; each of us must advocate for individual rights and liberties for all.

The 2024 elections will have a momentous impact on this country. It is up to “we the people,” to once again save our democracy from those who would corrupt its Constitution, replacing liberty with suppression, and substituting political persecution with even-handed justice. The ACLU and its members have a critically important role in the months ahead: we must speak vigorously about the ways in which autocratic candidates threaten our constitutional democracy; we must insist that the constitution protects all of us – people of color, women, immigrants, people of different faiths or none at all; and we must vote. Our future depends on it.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

ALTHEA WALTON (she/her)



Althea joined the ACLU of Illinois in 1994 and has served as Director of Finance since 2003. Althea is set to retire early next year. During her 29 years at the ACLU of Illinois, Althea was responsible for managing all aspects of financial administration including accounting, reporting, banking and investment management, budgeting, supporting the board's finance committee, audit and tax compliance, risk management, and HR support.

What brought you to the ACLU?

I had an early introduction to the ACLU, probably in middle school, and have long known of the ACLU's strong defense of the freedom of speech, assembly, association, and academic and religious freedom. Over time, I came to understand the ACLU as a crucial fourth "check and balance" in our democratic system of governance. Quite naturally I jumped at the chance to join the staff at the ACLU. It is a dream job for many who do.

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

A quote by ACLU founder Roger Baldwin, featured prominently on our reception area wall, sums it up... "So long as we have enough people in this country willing to fight for their rights, we'll be called a democracy." In my view, the ACLU serves as the "Lawyer for the People" and our work is crucial to creating and maintaining a fair and just society and ensuring democracy. There isn't a fight the ACLU has engaged in that does not advance democracy and improve or affect most people's lives, including my own. Some cases that stand out for me are the [Scopes](#) trial which strengthened free speech, academic freedom and separation of church and state; [Loving v. Virginia](#) is personal to me as the daughter of an interracial marriage; and of course, [Roe v. Wade](#) is top among so many other greats. And because history shows us that the work is never done, and victories don't stay won by themselves - they must be defended, continually.

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

I am most concerned with fighting autocracy and the protection and strengthening of democracy for all people, including an equal right and ability to vote and have one's vote counted. Also top of mind are women's and reproductive rights, racial justice initiatives, fair and nondiscriminatory treatment by law enforcement and other government agencies, and - always - the protection of freedom of speech, religion and association.

Are there particular cases or moments at the ACLU that have been most meaningful to you over the past 29 years at the organization?

Being able to make the ACLU my life's work for the past 29+ years has been an honor and a great privilege. I have appreciated the opportunity to grow and advance during my tenure and have my perspective sought and valued by management and colleagues. One highlight is having been a plaintiff in [Black v. McGuffage](#), which challenged discriminatory voting systems and led to the implementation of a uniform voting system in Illinois. And I am grateful to have made some very special and dear friends for life.

What gives you hope when you think about the future of this work?

Staying hopeful in these times is challenging. But I am encouraged by our really smart, highly capable, creative, committed, and diverse cadre of colleagues in Illinois and across the country who make the work of the ACLU their life's work. For me, working at the ACLU is a mission, something you commit yourself and your life to. The return for that investment and dedication is helping to create a more perfect union and securing the future of this great American experiment.

UPDATE ON THE FIGHT FOR RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

END OF MONEY BOND AND THE ROAD AHEAD

On September 18, 2023, the Pretrial Fairness Act (PFA) went into effect and Illinois became the first state in the country to completely [end the use of money bail](#). This historic reform is the result of more than six years of organizing by members of the [Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice](#), which includes the ACLU of Illinois. Since the campaign began in Cook County in 2016, tens of thousands of people across our state took action to secure this victory and end one of the most blatant racial and economic injustices in our criminal legal system. Under the previous money bond system, a person's access to wealth was the primary factor in determining who is jailed while awaiting trial – not public safety. The PFA restored the presumption of innocence by ensuring that an accused person can only be jailed pretrial if a judge finds they would pose a threat to someone else or a high risk of willful flight if released.



Advocates and elected officials at a press conference celebrating the end of money bond.

[The early days of implementation have been very successful](#), as the number of people incarcerated pretrial dropped significantly across several counties. The Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice will remain vigilant to ensure the law is implemented appropriately throughout our state. The Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice recently conducted a round of community court watching where volunteers from across the state observed pretrial hearings under the

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2023, because of the commitment of supporters and activists like you, the courage of our clients, the efforts of our partners, and the work of our dedicated staff, the ACLU of Illinois continued to protect and expand civil rights and liberties. Together we:

- + Ended the use of [money bond](#), allowing Illinois to become the first state to abolish the practice of jailing someone simply because they cannot afford the price of bond.
- + Removed one of the most restrictive [name change laws](#) in the country.
- + Reinforced the protections for health care professionals and patients [seeking abortion and gender affirming health care](#) in Illinois.
- + Challenged the discriminatory practice of targeting predominately Black and Latine drivers in Chicago for [pretextual traffic stops](#).
- + Fought back against efforts to [limit free speech and free expression by local governments](#) across the state.

We encourage you to read more about these accomplishments and ways to support our work.

new system to ensure the law is properly implemented. Learn more about the [Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice](#); and their [Know Your Rights guide](#).

CHALLENGES TO DISCRIMINATORY EVICTION SCREENING POLICIES

In July, the ACLU of Illinois joined Legal Aid Chicago and HOPE Fair Housing Center (HOPE) in [two housing discrimination lawsuits](#) that aim to challenge discriminatory “No-Evictions” policies that shut out families from housing opportunities for having any prior connection to an eviction case, even when the case was dismissed or filed years ago. These policies have a disproportionately discriminatory effect on Black renters, particularly Black women, and are in violation of the 1968 Fair Housing Act. In our case with Legal Aid Chicago, we have filed a lawsuit against Hunter Properties arguing that the “No-Evictions” policy has a disparate impact based on race, as well as race and sex. In our case with HOPE, we filed a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) against Oak Park Apartments, one of the largest operators of rental housing in Oak Park, Illinois. These cases are both ongoing.

“SANCTUARY CITY FOR THE UNBORN” ORDINANCE REJECTED IN QUINCY

After hearing from nearly 50 residents, the [Quincy City Council](#) [rejected a proposed ordinance](#) in October that would have declared the community a “sanctuary city for the unborn.” This ordinance would have enforced local penalties for providing or helping someone access legal reproductive health care. This proposed ordinance was promoted by a Texas-based anti-abortion advocate who led a similar effort in Danville this year. The [Illinois Reproductive Health Act](#) makes clear that no matter where in Illinois you live, you have the fundamental right to make decisions about your own reproductive health care, including abortion care. The vote by the Council highlights the broad support to ensure that abortion remains safe, legal, and available in Illinois.

We encourage you to contact the ACLU of Illinois if you are seeing any attempts to limit reproductive rights in your communities, attend public meetings to show your support, contact your local officials, and encourage people to take action along with you. [Learn more about “sanctuary for the unborn ordinances” and ways to fight against them here.](#)

MARRIAGE EQUALITY IN ILLINOIS – CELEBRATING 10 YEARS!

This November marked the 10th anniversary of the passage of the Marriage Equality Act in Illinois. This hard-won victory was the result of many years of work by activists, legislators, public officials, and organizations across our state. The true champions of this movement were the couples who bravely came forward to share their stories and demand that Illinois recognize their relationships. The ACLU of Illinois’ clients not only signed on to the legal challenge, but also joined the fight in the legislature. [We encourage you to read about this important moment in the fight for equality.](#)



ACLU of Illinois marchers at the 2013 Pride Parade, led by our clients.

ASK AN EXPERT

The following question was answered by Liza Roberson-Young (she/her), ACLU of Illinois Senior Supervising Policy Counsel

Q: We have seen an increase in Illinois of attempts to pass “sanctuary city for the unborn” ordinances. Why are these ordinances harmful and why are they illegal under Illinois law? And, what can people do to combat these ordinances in their communities?

A: Illinois law guarantees every person’s ability to make reproductive health care decisions without governmental interference. This law applies across the state, in all communities. Some Illinois cities have considered ordinances declaring the community a “sanctuary city for the unborn” or seeking to enforce local penalties for providing or helping someone access reproductive health care. Among other things, these ordinances can try to restrict access to abortion for residents and people in surrounding communities, attempt to restrict availability of medication necessary for abortion care, create special regulations aimed at blocking abortion clinics from functioning in the community, or try to establish special rights for the “unborn.”

These restrictions are clearly illegal under Illinois law. Illinois lawmakers passed the Illinois Reproductive Health Act to be clear that, no matter where in Illinois you live, you have the fundamental right to make decisions about your own reproductive health care, including abortion. Every community in Illinois is bound by this state law; local governments cannot create exemptions for themselves to enforce policies that are counter to state law.

If a “sanctuary city for the unborn” ordinance is introduced in your community, you can show your support of reproductive rights by attending a public meeting, contacting your local officials, or writing an op-ed or letter to the editor in your local paper. You can also contact the ACLU of Illinois – we may be able to help you and others you fight back against any efforts to infringe on reproductive rights.

LOOK AHEAD TO 2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The Illinois General Assembly reconvened in the late Fall for a brief time, known as the Veto Session. During this time, members of the ACLU of Illinois' Advocacy Team met with legislators, bill sponsors, and coalition partners to continue to advance our policy priorities. The 2024 Legislative Session will begin on January 16 and we will continue our advocacy efforts, including our efforts to [protect health data privacy](#) and [assure legal counsel to youth in DCFS](#).

We will also be filing a new legislative initiative in coalition with Compassion & Choices and Final Options Illinois – the Illinois End of Life Options for Terminal Adult Patients Act. This proposed legislation 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. Medical aid in dying is a trusted and time-tested medical practice that is part of the full spectrum of end-of-life care options, including hospice and palliative care. Medical aid in dying is authorized in 10 states and Washington, D.C. In the 26 years since the first medical aid-in-dying law went into effect in 1997 in Oregon, there have been no substantiated cases of abuse or coercion. While we will be filing the legislation in the Spring 2024 session, the ACLU of Illinois has been working towards a legislative path for expanding end of life choices for terminally ill adults in Illinois since the mid 90's.

For more information on all our legislative initiatives, ways you can support the work, and ways to engage with your elected officials, we encourage you to visit our [ACLU of Illinois Action Center](#).

ENGAGING AROUND THE STATE

2023 NEXT GENERATION SOCIETY FALL FUNDRAISER

The [Next Generation Society of the ACLU](#) hosted their 9th Annual Fall Fundraiser on Thursday, October 25 at the Walden Chicago. At the event, there was a poetry performance by Chima "Naira" Ikoro from Young Chicago Authors, our client José Manuel Almanza shared his story, ACLU Next Generation Society Staff Attorney Josh Levin spoke about our policing work, and Next Generation Society Board Members shared

NEW ILLINOIS LAWS YOU SHOULD KNOW!

The ACLU of Illinois worked with our partners to pass three bills in 2023:

- + **HB 1596 | Public Act 103-0022: Gender Inclusive Child Welfare Statute**
Amends various child welfare and juvenile court statutes to reflect gender-inclusive language to promote equality and respect for all individuals. The law takes a first step in responding to an Illinois Auditor General report from 2021 that urges the Department of Children & Family Services to affirm hundreds of young people in their care.
- + **HB 2542 | Public Act 102-1133: Remove the Bar for Name Changes***
Removes the ten-year waiting period for people with felony convictions and the lifetime ban for people with identity theft convictions to change their names. It also protects communities who face identity-based discrimination by adding a judicial discretion exception for people seeking a name change due to gender-related identity, marriage, religion and status as a human trafficking survivor.
*This law will go into effect on January 1, 2024.
- + **HB 3425 | Public Act 103-0047: Amendment to Anti-Bullying Law**
Expands protected categories in the anti-bullying law to include "pregnancy, parenting, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, homelessness," requires school administrators to notify parents or guardians within 24 hours of a report of bullying and provides grants to schools for anti-bullying programming.



Next Generation Society Board President, Aaron Salamonson, and Vice-President Ashley Hurley at the event.

remarks on their commitment to fight to preserve civil rights and liberties and the continued work ahead. Thank you to everyone who supported the Fall Fundraiser and helped make the event a success! To find out more about the Next Generation Society and how to get involved, please email us at nextgenerationsociety@aclu-il.org.

RIGHT TO LEARN CAMPAIGN AND BANNED BOOKS WEEK

This Fall, the ACLU of Illinois engaged with supporters across the state with our public engagement campaign: [Right to Learn – Fighting Book Bans and Censorship](#). We held a series of events during Banned Books Week in Champaign-Urbana, Carbondale, O’Fallon, Peoria, Bloomington-Normal, and Naperville where members of the community heard from ACLU experts on the landscape of censorship, received [resources on how to advocate at local meetings](#), and read from their favorite banned books.



Panel of experts at Defending Your Right to Learn event in Urbana-Champaign.

Following Banned Books Week, we partnered with ACLU affiliate offices in Indiana, Missouri, Nebraska, and Wisconsin to host a virtual conversation on the landscape of censorship and how the ACLU is responding to this moment. [You can watch the recording of that conversation here](#). The campaign concluded with the Next Generation Society’s Book Talk featuring Jessamine Chan, author of “The School for Good Mothers,” on November 9th, but these critical conversations on censorship, the role of government, and democracy will continue into 2024. To request a training for how to advocate at local meetings, [please fill out our speaker request form](#).

Learn more about how to protect free speech in your local community:

www.aclu-il.org/FirstAmend

ANNUAL LEGISLATOR AWARDS

This month, the ACLU of Illinois will host our first Legislator Awards event since 2019. We will be highlighting ten ACLU-led and co-led victories in the Illinois General Assembly, honoring the lawmakers who sponsored these initiatives, and recognizing retired legislators who have been champions of civil rights and civil liberties during their tenure.

SAVE THE DATE AND JOIN US: 2024 ACLU LUNCH!

We are excited to share that the [ACLU Lunch: Fighting for a More Perfect Union](#) will be held on Friday, March 1, 2024 at the Hilton Chicago and streamed virtually. We look forward to gathering with members of the ACLU community from across Illinois to celebrate this past year’s achievements, raise funds critical to our work, and recommit to the essential fight for civil rights and civil liberties. We hope you can join us on March 1. [Sponsorships and tickets are available for purchase today!](#)

NATIONWIDE INSIGHTS

MAJOR SETTLEMENT IN FAMILY SEPARATION

In October, the ACLU secured a major settlement in our years-long family separation lawsuit. We [filed this case](#) in 2018 on behalf of thousands of children and parents who were forcibly torn from each other under the Trump administration’s illegal zero-tolerance practice of separating families at the border. The lawsuit was first announced in Chicago with the story of [Ms. L](#), an asylum-seeking mother and her 7-year-old daughter who were detained separately 2,000 miles apart after fleeing violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We estimate that 4,500-5,000 children and their parents will be covered under this settlement, which ensures that the government will continue to identify and reunify families in the U.S.; provide assistance with housing, legal representation, work authorization, and medical care; create a pathway to seek asylum; and commit not to reenact a similar policy in the future.

VICTORY IN LOUISIANA JUVENILE DETENTION

The ACLU of Louisiana secured an important win in September, stopping Louisiana from housing children – mostly Black male youth – in abusive conditions in the former death row of Louisiana State Penitentiary, known as Angola, where children are routinely held in solitary confinement. Since 2022, 70-80 children, have been housed in Angola, where they were subjected to abusive conditions, including solitary confinement, excessive force, and the routine use of handcuffs, restraints, and chemical agents. State officials also deprived these children of their right to an education and rehabilitative services and their right to see their family members. The judge [issued a ruling](#) ordering Louisiana officials to stop housing children at Angola and to remove children currently housed there. And, the state [finally moved children out of Angola](#) after more than a year of national and local advocacy.

ACLU DRAG DEFENSE FUND

As announced on the season finale of RuPaul’s Drag Race

and in partnership with production company World of Wonder, MTV, and RuPaul's Drag Race, the [ACLU's Drag Defense Fund](#) is an initiative that will support the ACLU's work defending LGBTQ rights nationwide, including censorship of drag performers themselves. Drag performance is a First Amendment right and an important form of artistic expression and joy. Yet, in 2023, dozens of bills have been introduced in states across the country that restrict how and where drag queens can perform – censoring a fundamental human right to freedom of expression and attempting to remove LGBTQ people from public life. These attacks against the free expression of drag performers is part of a larger movement that includes the anti-trans legislation across the country – a movement aimed at preventing people from expressing themselves authentically and restricting the right to bodily autonomy and self-determination. The ACLU, along with our partners, will continue to show up and defend our LGBTQ community.

GEORGIA REDISTRICTING VICTORY

In October, a [federal court](#) ruled that Georgia's state legislative district maps discriminate against Black voters and must be redrawn. Following an eight-day trial in a lawsuit brought on by the ACLU, ACLU of Georgia, and WilmerHale on behalf of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, the Sixth District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and several Georgia voters, the court found that the maps deny Black Georgians an equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect candidates of choice, in violation of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The 2020 census showed a large growth in Georgia's Black population over the last decade, yet lawmakers enacted legislative maps with district lines that denied the state's demographic shift. This hampered the Black Georgians' voting power, especially in Metro Atlanta, where Black population had increased by hundreds of thousands. The court ruled that the state's failure to draw two new Black opportunity districts in the state Senate and five new Black opportunity districts in the state House violated the Voting Rights Act and ordered the Georgia General Assembly to draw new maps no later than December 8, 2023.

WHO ELSE YOU SHOULD KNOW:

We have continually worked in partnership with organizations across the country in the fight to protect and expand civil rights and liberties. Below are a few of our partners that we have highlighted in the Impact Report over the past year. Please take a moment to learn more about them and support their work:

- [Equip for Equality](#)
- [Onward Neighborhood House](#)
- [Transformative Justice Law Project](#)

GET MORE INFORMATION:

ADVOCATE

- Message Congress: [Say 'NO' to Discriminatory Land Laws](#)
- Message Congress: [Defend Reproductive Freedom Now](#)
- Message your Senators: [End Racist Sentencing Disparities](#)
- Tell the Secretary of Homeland Security: [Justice for People Seeking Asylum: Stop Life-Threatening Tactics Now](#)

LISTEN

- ACLU At Liberty Podcast: [We're Winning Big at the Polls](#)
- ACLU At Liberty Podcast: [The Resurgence of Labor Strikes and Union Power](#)

READ

- ACLU of Illinois: [Talking Points for the Dinner Table](#)
- ACLU of Illinois: [10 Years Since Marriage Equality](#)
- ACLU of Illinois: [What We Know About CPD Social Media Technology and Monitoring](#)
- ACLU National: [2023 at the ACLU: Our Stories in Review](#)
- ACLU National: [The Latest Must-Pass Bill Barreling Through Congress is an Attack on Gender-Affirming Care](#)
- ACLU National: [Why We Must Reject Efforts to Restrict Constitutionally Protected Speech on College Campuses](#)

WATCH

- [Tom Morello Reads Banned Books](#) (3:52)
- [Family Separation Policy was "Government-Sanctioned Child Abuse"](#) (5:07)
- [The Fight for Free Speech and Racial Justice – We Show Up](#) (2:45)

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