

IMPACT REPORT

ACLU Illinois



Photo Credit Justin Barbin/ACLU

THE FIGHT TO PRESERVE OUR DEMOCRACY

A note from ACLU of Illinois Executive Director,
Colleen Connell



Please consider this an invitation – perhaps an imperative – to engage in the preservation of our democracy.

A year removed from January 6, 2021 the threat that insurrection poses to our democracy remains

undiminished. To be clear, without functioning democratic institutions, including courts, fair and transparent electoral procedures and elections, and a commitment by elected officials and the public to peaceful transfers of power to those who win elections, in short – a continued commitment to the rule of law, the other aspects of our democracy exist in name only.

Without our continued vigilance, we will lose our democracy and with its demise, we will forfeit the cherished liberties we have fought together for so long to secure. What does that continued vigilance look like in 2022? We must use 2022 as an opportunity to deepen our collective engagement – with the ACLU and with each other – and:

- Protect voting rights and the integrity of the independent system for recording and counting votes, as well as the system for certifying the results to reflect the will of the people.
- Buttress protections for fundamental rights, using all the tools available to us, including working to pass local city ordinances and state legislative measures that protect and advance fundamental rights.
- Celebrate – and implement – our hard-won victories, including recent litigation and legislative victories to assure more accountable policing, repeal of the Parental Notice of Abortion Act, changes to Illinois law to enable people born in Illinois to correct the gender marker on

their birth certificates, changes to help assure a stable transition to new health care providers for children in foster care, to name but a few.

- Commit to changing the distorted narratives that have taken hold in large segments of our society, including:
 - The false claim that protecting the rights of women, people of color, and LGBTQ folks will diminish the rights of white Americans;
 - The dangerous assertion that the First Amendment's protection of speech broadly covers the use of violent force to attack those who disagree with speakers; or
 - The nihilistic contentions that a person's individual rights empower them to do whatever they please in a public setting and to other people, regardless of the dangerous – or perhaps deadly – impact on others.
- Hold our elected officials accountable for their words and their actions.
 - If they run for office on a platform of reform, hold them accountable, recognizing that real reform may take more than one term – but action not just words is required.
 - If they say one thing in private . . . I condemn violence but the cost of speaking out is too high. . . commit to supporting them for standing up.
 - Thank them – and support them – for doing the right thing.

To be sure, no one (including the ACLU) has all the answers. Rebuilding our democracy will be neither quick nor easy. Our fragile democracy demands our attention and our action. As Mahatma Gandhi wisely observed: “You may never know what results come of your actions, but if you do nothing, there will be no results.” Together, we will take action to protect our democracy – thank you for your partnership.

UPDATE ON THE FIGHT FOR RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

2021 IN REVIEW

As 2022 begins, we would like to reflect on the collective work that went into protecting our civil rights and liberties last year. In 2021, because of the commitment of supporters and activists like you, the courage of our clients, and the strength of our partnerships the ACLU of Illinois continued to protect and expand civil rights and liberties.

TOGETHER WE:

- Fought to repeal the Parental Notice of Abortion Act to ensure that every person can make their own reproductive health care decisions and continued to operate the Judicial Bypass Coordination Project.
- Attained accountability for Jaylan Butler, a Black college student, who was wrongly identified and held at gunpoint by police.
- Won a landmark federal court ruling requiring improved quality health care and appropriate housing for transgender people being detained by the state.
- Defeated an unconstitutional state law prohibiting panhandling in public streets and medians.
- Advocated for updated sexual health education standards to be more comprehensive and inclusive.



THE FIGHT AHEAD

We must continue our work in Illinois and nationwide to fight for a country where democracy and equality are promises fulfilled for all.

THE ONGOING WORK IN ILLINOIS INCLUDES:

- Protecting the rights of youth in the foster system and advocating for youth to receive mental, behavioral and other adequate healthcare they need.
- Advancing the work to change policing in communities including by partnering with communities to end biased policing and excessive force through enforcement of the federal consent decree governing the Chicago Police Department and partnering with communities across the state to reimagine community public safety, including through alternative public safety structures and local-level policing reform.
- Implementing the Reproductive Health Act and Youth Health and Safety Act and ensuring that the right to reproductive decision-making is equally accessible.
- Continuing our lawsuit against Clearview AI to bring an end to the company's privacy-destroying surveillance activities and use of facial recognition technology and challenging attempts to roll back protections guaranteed by the Illinois Biometric Information Privacy Act.
- Pushing for the elimination of outdated restrictions in Illinois' name change law that keep transgender people from having a legal name that reflects their authentic selves.

AND, THE ACLU'S WORK NATIONWIDE INCLUDES:

- Advancing voting rights, fighting gerrymandering and voter suppression, defending election integrity, and preserving freedom of speech and association.
- Defending access to abortion as state legislators continue to unleash a wave of devastating restrictions and we await decisions from the Supreme Court on a direct challenge to Roe v. Wade.
- Pushing back against anti-trans discrimination.
- Demanding action on immigrants' rights and continuing to reunify separated families.
- Continuing to protect civil rights and advance racial equality in the South, a region with a unique history of racial oppression and violence alongside a deep history of antiracist organizing and advocacy.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Get to know members of the ACLU of Illinois Community who are advancing justice and fighting for fundamental freedoms.

The repeal of the Parental Notice of Abortion Act would not have been possible without an entire movement of people that included our sponsors and co-sponsors, witnesses who testified in committee, our coalition partners, staff, volunteers, and on the ground advocates. Highlighted in this section are two members of the ACLU of Illinois staff who played a critical role, as well as organizations fighting to protect reproductive access across the state.



EMILY WERTH

Emily Werth is a Staff Attorney at the ACLU of Illinois whose work focuses on women's and reproductive rights. She started working at the ACLU of Illinois in the fall of 2014.

What has your involvement been with the ACLU of Illinois' Judicial Bypass Coordination Project and the repeal of the Parental Notice of Abortion Act?

I ran the day-to-day operations of the Judicial Bypass Coordination Project for nearly four years, and personally worked with hundreds of young people who

were forced to go through the burdensome judicial bypass process in order to access abortion care. I shared my expertise about the parental notice law and my first-hand observations of the harms it imposed on our clients as part of the effort to repeal PNA.

What is giving you hope right now when you think about the future of this work to protect and expand reproductive rights and access?

The threats to reproductive rights coming from the Supreme Court and many states have emboldened a grassroots movement for abortion justice and access for all, without any barriers based on who you are, where you are from, or how much money you have.

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

I just finished watching the final season of Pen15.

WHO ELSE YOU SHOULD KNOW

We accomplish so much of our work in coalition with many partners who are doing critical work throughout the state. As we continue to see an onslaught of attacks on access to reproductive health care across the nation, supporting ongoing efforts in the courts, legislature, and on the ground is more important than ever. Please consider learning more about and donating, if you are able, to these organizations.

Chicago Abortion Fund (CAF):

[Learn more](#) | [Donate](#)

Chicago Volunteer Doulas (CVD):

[Learn more](#) | [Donate](#)

Chicago Women's Health Center (CWHC):

[Learn more](#) | [Donate](#)

Illinois Contraceptive Access Now (ICAN!):

[Learn more](#) | [Donate](#)

Midwest Access Coalition (MAC):

[Learn more](#) | [Donate](#)



Photo Credit: Molly Kaplan/ACLU

KHADINE BENNETT

Khadine Bennett is the Director of Advocacy and Intergovernmental Affairs at the ACLU of Illinois. She has been at the ACLU of Illinois since August 2008 (14 years this summer!). Khadine started as a legal fellow with the Women's and Reproductive Rights Project, and now she is the Advocacy and Intergovernmental Affairs Director.



What has your involvement been with the ACLU of Illinois' Judicial Bypass Coordination Project and the repeal of the Parental Notice of Abortion Act?

When I started as a fellow, my legal work focused on assisting with the ongoing litigation to prevent enforcement of the dangerous Parental Notice of Abortion Law. Once all of the litigation options were exhausted, I was part of the team that created the Judicial Bypass Coordination Project. My work there included:

- Led the creation of youth friendly materials including the youth guide, materials for the website, and other outreach materials for distribution to youth, youth serving agencies,

community based orgs, advocates, clinics, health care providers and other entities that youth may reach out to when seeking services.

- Created and conducted trainings geared towards youth and youth serving entities.
- Help to create training materials for Judicial Bypass Project volunteers.
- Conducted trainings for bypass attorneys and volunteers.
- Represented minors during the judicial bypass process in different parts of the state.
- Worked as a volunteer on the bypass hotline.

And, I led the legislative strategy and lobbying work to repeal PNA.

What is giving you hope right now when you think about the future of this work to protect and expand reproductive rights and access?

While issues related to access to affirming reproductive health care still exist, I'm thankful that in Illinois we have been able to pass legislation that increases access to reproductive health care, put affirmative protections in place and repeal dangerous and harmful restrictions to access.

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

I'm listening to CloutCast, a Daily Line podcast.



TAKE ACTION PARENTAL NOTICE OF ABORTION ACT

- [Thank your legislators](#) who supported repealing PNA.
- Thank Governor Pritzker for signing HB 370 by calling 1-866-971-9623.

“THE FUTURE OF REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND ACCESS”

On December 13, ACLU of Illinois issue experts held a discussion with Illinois State Senator Elgie Sims, Jr. and Alicia Hurtado from the Chicago Abortion Fund (CAF) focused on the ongoing work to protect reproductive rights and access, especially as *Roe v. Wade* faces direct challenges in the Supreme Court. **Missed the event? [Watch the event recording here!](#)**

To find out more on these topics, you can also watch:

- [Reproductive Health Act Implementation & Ensuring Access](#) (2:30 min)
- [Parental Notice of Abortion Act Repealed](#) (2:50 min)

ASK AN EXPERT!

Do you have a question about a topic pertaining to civil rights or civil liberties? We encourage you to reach out to us at engagement@aclu-il.org with your question and we may include the question and our answer in the next issue of the Impact Report.

GET MORE INFORMATION:

LISTEN

- Latest Episode of our Talking Liberties Podcast: [Banned From Changing Your Name](#)
- Latest Episode of ACLU At Liberty Podcast: [An Update on Our Biggest Stories of 2021](#)

READ

- [ACLU of Illinois Welcomes Governor's Approval of Measure to Repeal the Dangerous Parental Notice of Abortion Law](#)
- [Together We Fought Back](#)
- [Settlement Reached in Case Challenging Chicago Police Deployment](#)

ACT

- Find more ways to take action at: www.aclu-il.org/act

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Email us at ACLUofIllinois@aclu-il.org

SAVE THE DATE: THE 2022 ACLU VIRTUAL LUNCH FIGHTING FOR A MORE PERFECT UNION

On March 25, 2022 at 12:00 PM CT, the ACLU of Illinois will hold our Annual Lunch. Please join us for this virtual event, where we will come together to celebrate and support the ongoing work to defend civil rights and civil liberties in Illinois.

For questions regarding the event or more information, please contact us at [**lunch@aclu-il.org**](mailto:lunch@aclu-il.org).

**PURCHASE YOUR TICKETS AND
SPONSORSHIPS HERE!**

