

# Never-Regular But Ever-True News from ACLU



of Champaign County

[aclu-cu.org](http://aclu-cu.org)

FEBRUARY 2025

Dear Members and Friends,

It's been hard to write this newsletter because so many things keep happening here in Illinois, everywhere in the world, and all at once! That's why we are down to the wire for getting it out in February. But here goes...

First of all, thanks to everyone who responded to our requests for witness slips for state legislation in Springfield. These do make a difference. And thanks to everyone who joined the ACLU of Illinois or sent a donation.

For a national perspective, listen to Anthony Romero, Executive Director of the ACLU on the New Yorker Radio Hour:

<https://www.newyorker.com/podcast/the-new-yorker-radio-hour>

**LOCALLY**, in order to be effective on numerous fronts, we meet with local officials and law enforcement and work with and back up our local allies here in Urbana-Champaign. We recently attended a meeting with Congresswoman Nikki Budzinski organized by Bend the Arc and expressed our concerns about immigrants' rights.

We also met with Urbana City Council member Maryalice Wu to discuss the surveillance technology ordinance we support. This ordinance would ensure the public has a say when the Urbana Police Department wants to acquire new surveillance technology. If you

live in Urbana and support having a say over future surveillance technology the UPD may want to lease and what the tech company can do with your personal data, tell your council member you support the surveillance ordinance at [CityCouncil@UrbanaIL.Gov](mailto:CityCouncil@UrbanaIL.Gov).

## Book Banning

On Thursday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, ACLU Illinois Legal Director Kevin Fee visited University Laboratory High School (Uni High) in Urbana to speak to 8<sup>th</sup> grade Language and Literature students as part of a panel on banned books. The panel also featured school librarians from Champaign and Mahomet, and the Urbana Free Library. Every winter, at Uni, students spend several weeks in teacher Kathy Rodems's class reading a banned book and researching the book challenge. Fee shared with students how the ACLU of Illinois supports teachers, librarians, and students throughout the state experiencing book challenges.

## Immigrant Rights

Here in C-U, we are working to back up our allies who work with local immigrant communities. These advocates know their communities best and are best placed to provide the kinds of support they need. We provide printed materials and other things to hand out at Know Your Rights workshops. These workshops are not advertised publicly or on social media in order to keep everyone safe. At the workshops, they role play various scenarios and how best to respond. Advocates also help people make a family plan and fill out guardianship letters in case someone in the family should be deported. The workshops also provide reassurance and that all-important feeling of being surrounded by a supportive community. We are fortunate to live in Urbana-Champaign where our newer neighbors are valued and supported by so many local people and organizations.

## Reproductive Justice

For the last two years, [Urbana-Champaign Reproductive Justice](#) (UCRJ) has been committed to educating our community on the Reproductive Justice (RJ) framework, lifting up the work of local activists and organizations, and offering community members opportunities to act. The Reproductive Justice framework requires us to view the demand for the right to bodily autonomy within the broader fight for social justice. Decisions about whether to carry a pregnancy, for example, are inextricably linked with an individual's socio-economic status, access to affordable food and housing, racial inequities, and more. To better understand the liberatory vision of RJ and its founding by Black women in Chicago, read the [Visioning New Futures for Reproductive Justice Declaration](#) convened by [SisterSong](#) in 2023.

Earlier this month, UCRJ organized a [Reproductive Justice Summit](#) in collaboration with the University of Illinois School of Social Work. The event was designed to bring together activists and practitioners working in reproductive justice to think about how their work

fits into the RJ framework, share information about their organizations/work, and discuss how to improve the network of care in Downstate Illinois. Though we started planning prior to the November election, the timing of the summit could not have been timelier as threats to bodily autonomy and efforts to undermine access to reproductive justice have increased dramatically under the current administration.

Seventy people representing over twenty-five organizations attended the summit. Organizations represented included staff from CUPHD, RACES, the School of Social Work, multiple counseling services, and abortion clinics in Granite City and Carbondale. Dr. Gaylon Alcaraz, Executive Director of Grandmothers for Reproductive Rights, delivered the keynote: “Reproductive Justice: What Now?” Her address and the Q&A following can be viewed on the [UCRJ YouTube](#) page. The afternoon of the summit consisted of three concurrent workshops focused on networks of care in birth justice, bodily autonomy, and mental health. While the day focused on difficult issues in the face of many unknowns, the opportunity to network and learn together offered people a sense of solidarity and hope.

The **3rd annual UCRJ Week** is just six weeks away (**April 7-13, 2025**). We already have several exciting events on the [calendar](#), including online workshops, legal panels, and a half-day health resources fair. Our hope is to reach more people across our community and beyond in a year when this work has become even more important. We invite anyone to host or collaborate with us on an **event**. If you have a related event already planned during UCRJ Week, or if you would like to propose an idea for **collaboration**, please use [this form](#) to share your information. We also invite organizations across the healthcare spectrum to table at the “Health Fair at Lincoln Square!” on Saturday, April 12 from 8am-noon. Email Julie Laut at [julie@ucrj.org](mailto:julie@ucrj.org) to reserve a spot. There is no cost to participate.

**Financial co-sponsorships** and direct donations are also welcome to support UCRJ Week. All co-sponsors will be highlighted on our [website](#), in our [newsletter](#), and on [social media](#). Sponsorships can be made directly through our [donation page](#) or by contacting Julie Laut at [julie@ucrj.org](mailto:julie@ucrj.org) for more information. You can keep track of on-going [UCRJ projects](#) on our website, or by joining the UCRJ newsletter [list](#).

## Medical Aid in Dying Legislation

Friday, February 20, 2025, the Illinois Senate Executive Committee hosted a subject matter hearing on Senate Bill 9, the End-of-Life Options for Terminally Ill Patients Act. This bill is an initiative of the ACLU of Illinois and Compassion in Choices.

SB9 authorizes medical aid in dying in Illinois, bringing us in line with 10 other states and the District of Columbia. 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. This bill would allow adults in Illinois who are mentally capable and

have a terminal illness – and a prognosis of less than 6 months or less to live – to obtain a prescription medication they may decide to take so they can die peacefully and end their suffering.

Despite claims of opponents to the law, not a single substantiated case of abuse or coercion has been found in the more than 25 years since the first medical aid in dying law went into effect in Oregon. The legislation contains a number of protections to guard against abuse.

You can read more about the bill and the protections [here](#). We expect SB 9 to be sent to the Executive Committee for a vote in the coming weeks. Big shout out to all who submitted witness slips for the hearing!

**VIRTUAL EVENT:** Please join the ACLU of Illinois and Compassion & Choices Action Network on **Monday, March 17 at 4:00 PM CT** for a virtual advocacy training to learn more about medical aid in dying, [Senate Bill 9](#), and receive training on how to take action in support of this critical legislation.

Medical aid in dying is supported by an overwhelming number (71%) of Illinoisans, including two-thirds of physicians. To ensure that this compassionate end-of-life option is available, lawmakers in Springfield need to hear from us. Illinois can make history by becoming the first Midwestern state to authorize medical aid in dying - but only if we come together to make it happen. We hope you can join us on March 17 to learn more and take action!

REGISTER: <https://www.aclu-il.org/en/events/end-life-options-virtual-advocacy-training-0>

**The annual ACLU LUNCH is April 4 in Chicago! The keynote speaker is the amazing Sherrilyn Ifill! Coming with us?**

<https://www.aclu-il.org/en/events/2025-aclu-lunch>

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