

# The **ACLU** News

## **ACLU Centennial**

2020 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the ACLU. The initial impulse was to respond to war-time and post-war violations of First Amendment freedoms of expression, especially those targeting anti-war sentiments. The ACLU emerged as a reorganization of the wartime National Civil Liberties Bureau, after Attorney General Palmer's Red Scare raids and three 1919 Supreme Court decisions up-holding the convictions of Debs, Abrams and Schenk for expressions of opposition to American military involvement.

These issues set the standard for the ACLU's almost exclusive emphasis on free speech in the 1920s, particularly for labor organizers, broadening over time to embrace the defense of all constitutionally protected rights.

The founding committee included Jane Addams, Helen Keller, IWW labor leader and feminist Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, lawyer and later Supreme Court justice Felix Frankfurter, lawyer Crystal Eastman (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom), the first ACLU executive director Roger Baldwin and others. The goal was "to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to every person in this country by the Constitution and laws of the United States."

Although the founders were decidedly leftwing, the group was always constituted as non-partisan and has managed to offend all sides at one time or another.

## **Going Paperless?**

The Champaign County ACLU chapter will continue to distribute the newsletter and other material by regular mail for all who prefer this option, but we are exploring the electronic distribution. If you would be interested in going paperless in our contact with you, please let us know by emailing [in-fo@aclu-cu.org](mailto:in-fo@aclu-cu.org), and simply putting "paperless" in the heading so that we can gauge interest.

If you would like to continue to receive the paper mailings, you might still want to know about upcoming events and issues that we circulate on the local listserv (about once a month). If so, you can sign up for it by going to the local chapter webpage <http://www.aclu-cu.org/index.shtml> and click on the hyper-link "join member listserv" in the left hand column. You can also sign up for state legislative alerts that are disseminated only when your involvement is needed. With one click, you can send a message to your legislator supporting (or opposing) a bill. Go to [aclu-il.org](http://aclu-il.org), select "issues" and scroll down to the bottom of the page to sign up.

**Inside: Bail Reform Initiative, Fair Housing in Champaign City, racial disparities in Champaign school district Unit 4**

## **SAVE THE DATE!**

### **WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR FACE**

**Speaker: Peter Hanna, Legal Advisor on Privacy and Technology for ACLU of Illinois.**

**Topic: Biometric Privacy Rights**

ACLU Champaign County Annual Meeting Sunday March 29, 2-4PM

Hays Recreation Center

1311 W. Church Street, Champaign

We'll have refreshments, a chance to mingle, and a short annual business meeting that starts at 2:30 before the program. Free and open to the public

Chapter service awards will be presented to outgoing officers Carol Spindel and Richard Schnuer. This year's Chalmers award for community service will be presented to the Champaign County Bailout Coalition

## STEERING COMMITTEE CONTACT INFORMATION

The local ACLU Steering Committee meets on the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm. Check the website for the meeting place.

### OFFICERS

President:  
Carol Spindel  
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Vice-President:  
Carol Leff  
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### STEERING COMMITTEE

Tony Allegretti  
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Bob Illyes  
Barbara Jones  
Robert Kugel  
Carol Leff  
Ben Mueller  
Esther Patt  
Leslie Reagan  
Melissa Schoeplein  
Richard Schnuer  
Carol Spindel  
Marsha Woodbury  
Karl Weingartner  
Ruth Wyman

EMERITI  
Susan Cohen  
Harry Hilton

**Join the Steering Committee! -- You don't have to be a lawyer.** Most members of the ACLU chapter steering committee are not experts. We're just people who want to help educate the community, recruit new ACLU members and engage people as citizen lobbyists to help pass civil liberties legislation. New steering committee members are needed. We meet once a month. Interested? Contact us at [info@aclu-cu.org](mailto:info@aclu-cu.org).

### **Donate to Champaign County ACLU**

Our fall fundraiser at the 25 O'Clock Brewing Company raised several thousand dollars, especially thanks to an arts and crafts auction "curated" by Stephen Kaufman and Carol Spindel, and to the local artists who contributed their work for the cause. The brewery participates in the History on Tap program with a talk this spring on Women, Alcohol and the Vote.

If you can't attend an event, a gift of any amount is always appreciated. Please send your check to: **Champaign County ACLU, P.O. Box 2651, Champaign IL 61825.**

### **2019 in the State Legislature:**

This past year through mid-January the following components of the ACLU legislative agenda were signed into law:

- "License to work" Act, which stops the suspension of drivers licenses for non-moving violations like parking tickets, allowing citizens to get to work;
- an act mandating voting rights information be provided to prisoners in Illinois jails;
- an act removing the sunset provisions on the collection of data on pedestrian and traffic stops;
- an act that amends Illinois legislation to take into account the US Supreme Court ruling in *Carpenter v. United States (2018)* that cell phone users have a reasonable expectation of privacy under the Fourth Amendment in historical cell site location data.
- Also passed is the Reproductive Health Act, which provides for individual rights to make their own decisions about reproductive health care, requires insurance companies to cover abortions; and re-peals both the Partial-Birth Abortion law and 1975 state law that if enforced would criminalize abortion should Roe v Wade be overturned.

### **Fair Housing Victory for People with Conviction Records**

After two years of gathering petition signatures and lobbying city council members, the local Fair Housing Coalition has won a partial but significant victory on behalf of people with felony convictions. For 25 years, Champaign's Human Rights Ordinance has included an exception allowing landlords to deny housing to anyone with a felony conviction until that person has lived outside of jail or prison for at least 5 years without another conviction.

While we did not achieve total repeal, the city council has tentatively agreed to make three changes to the ordinance. The restriction will only apply to convictions for forcible felonies or for sale, manufacture or distribution of drugs (but not mere possession); it will only apply to people who served time in state or federal prison, and people excluded by the exception will regain fair housing rights 2 years after release instead of 5. Our ACLU chapter was one of a dozen local organizations that formed the Fair Housing Coalition to pursue the housing-related recommendations of the Champaign County Racial Justice Task Force. Thanks to Esther Patt for her longtime work on this issue.

## WHAT WE ARE ENGAGED IN LOCALLY

### Racial Disparity in Champaign Unit 4 Schools

More than twenty years ago, a group of African American citizens in Champaign sued the Champaign School District, Unit 4, for racial discrimination. In 2009, the consent decree ended. Yet, racial inequities in the Champaign schools persisted and have even gotten worse.

The Champaign County ACLU and NAACP Champaign County Branch sent a joint letter to the Unit 4 School District superintendent and board expressing our deep concern over widening racial disparities in educational outcomes. We are calling on Unit 4 to address these concerns.

We point to a wide gap in proficiency in English language and math among White and Black students. Data provided by the Illinois State Board of Education show that proficiency rates for Black children are roughly half the rate for Black children statewide, with a performance gap of some forty percentage points between Black and White children in both language and math.

These racial disparities also show up in disciplinary action in Unit 4 schools. Ten years ago, with federal oversight of schools still in place, Black students were 5.5 times more likely to be suspended than White students. This year, according to data from the Education Equity Excellence Committee, that gap has grown to 8.7 times.

Local media reported the devastating data in our letter, and ACLU and NAACP presidents Carol Spindel and Minnie Pearson presented it to the school board at its January 2020 meeting, where community members stood up to speak of their experiences of racism in the schools as students and alumni. Parents, leaders of the teachers' union, PTA members, and others rose to support the ACLU/NAACP's request that "effective measures" to improve racial equity be "implemented without delay."

Ten years ago, when federal oversight of Unit 4 was lifted, the then-Superintendent noted that a "diverse community requires many strategies for true inclusion, and we continue to seek community connections." The letter makes clear that Unit 4 must recommit itself to this aspiration. The ACLU and NAACP continue to meet with community members (teachers, parents, citizens) and Unit 4.

A copy of the letter can be found on our website: [http://aclu-cu.org/ACLU\\_NAACP.pdf](http://aclu-cu.org/ACLU_NAACP.pdf)

### Ending Money Bail

In January, Governor Pritzker announced that he would be giving priority to developing a program to end cash bond. Pre-trial incarceration based solely on the ability to pay has serious social costs in lost jobs, family disruptions, loss of public benefits like Medicaid, and the worsening of racial and class disparities. All this despite the fact that payment of money bond has not been shown to increase court appearance.

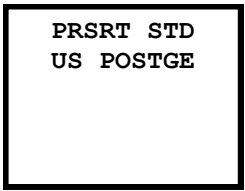
The governor's initiative coincides with an existing ACLU Illinois engagement with the Coalition to End Money Bond. Our local liaison with the initiative is steering committee member and lawyer Bob Kugel, who works with the Champaign County Bailout Coalition. He reports:

The local Bailout Coalition operates a revolving bail fund that uses grassroots fundraising to help pay the bond of folks locked in pretrial detention in the Champaign County jail because they're unable to afford their court-imposed bail amount. When someone who cannot afford to pay their bond contacts us for support, we put the funds donated by the local community toward their bail. When the individual's trial concludes, the donated money revolves back into the fund to be put toward the bail amount of another person incarcerated in Champaign County.

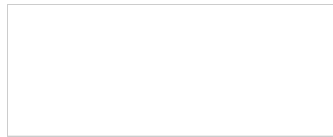
Since May 2019, the Coalition has paid for the release of 18 individuals and through collaboration with the Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice and the National Bail Fund Network is also active in state-wide efforts to abolish pretrial and wealth-based detention in Illinois, which advocate for the establishment of mandatory non-monetary release for as many people as possible and support for those awaiting trial. To learn more, go to a CCBC meeting (5:00 PM on the second and fourth Monday of every month at the IMC in Urbana). You can also see the website ([champaigncountybailoutcoalition.wordpress.com](http://champaigncountybailoutcoalition.wordpress.com)) or our Facebook page for more information. Donations to the revolving fund can be made at the following link: <https://champaigncountybailoutcoalition.wordpress.com/donate/>

**American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois  
Champaign County Chapter**

P.O. Box 2651, Station A  
Champaign, IL 61825-2651



OR CURRENT RESIDENT



**Annual Meeting  
Sunday March 29**

## **ACLU Legislative Issues In Illinois**

ACLU Illinois sets a legislative agenda each year and reports on its progress at <https://www.aclu-il.org/en/LEGISLATION>. In some cases, the legislation we support is actually drafted with help from the Chicago legislative team, and in all cases the Chicago team led by Khadine Bennett lobbies in Springfield for our agenda.

Ongoing components on the agenda for the coming year include

- the drug defelonization act for small-scale drug use,
- repealing the forced parental involvement act on abortion rights for minors,
- raising the dollar amount of the felony threshold for retail theft (Illinois has one of the lowest thresholds in the country),
- net neutrality in Illinois
- banning the checkoff box on college applications regarding an applicant's criminal record.

A new initiative is the Healthy Youth Act, which would update the Illinois sex education statute, and broaden the information base, especially to be inclusive rather than stigmatizing of non-traditional gender identity groups