

# RESISTING THE RISE OF AUTHORITARIANISM

Dear Friends,

We are sliding further down the path towards authoritarianism, and we must come together to defy, disrupt, and resist this path. Let me be clear: **none of this is normal, and it doesn't have to be permanent.**

While each day under the Trump administration takes us farther down the road toward authoritarianism, **we can collectively turn it around if enough of us act.** There is no person coming to save us—not a judge, not a politician, not a hero on the horizon. **We the people must unite, organize, and push back together.** That means building a movement that is broad, durable, and capable of bringing in new people, institutions, and organizations to join the push for civil rights and liberties.

**First, we slow it.** Our job is to throw sand in the gears of authoritarianism. With each lawsuit to challenge unlawful policies, rally and march to remind the Trump administration that they cannot silence dissent, and local organizing effort to block federal overreach, we are holding our ground and building collective power.

**Second, we shut it down.** Research shows that when about 3.5 percent of a population mobilize consistently, authoritarian governments fall. That measures up to about 12 million people in the United States and about 125,000 in Connecticut. On October 18, **roughly 7 million people across the country and tens of thousands of people across the state mobilized** for a mass action to defy and condemn the Trump administration's egregious behavior—**we are well on our way.**

**Third, we reverse the damage.** Authoritarianism thrives in the cracks of inequality and exclusion. Those who did not see the inequities in our democracy are seeing them clearly now because the Trump administration has made them impossible to ignore. Now more than ever, the window of opportunity is open, **and Connecticut has a special role to play.**

These are not easy times. The fear and confusion are real, and **so is the opportunity for change.** We must rebuild society in a way that works equitably for everyone. We can start by, together, defying the Trump administration and its authoritarian agenda, resisting the federal government's overreach and abuses of power, and disrupting the harm that is impacting our communities.

**This is work that we cannot do without you—and we would not want to.**

In solidarity,

**David McGuire**

*Executive Director  
ACLU of Connecticut*



# LEGAL HIGHLIGHTS

This year, the ACLU network, including ACLU Nationwide and affiliates across the country, have filed **more than 208 legal actions** against the Trump Administration in response to the federal government's egregious overreach and abuses of power.

With your support, the ACLU is fighting for, and winning on, issues such as protecting immigrants' rights and due process, challenging censorship in the classroom, safeguarding our right to free speech, defending against attacks on LGBTQIA+ youth and transgender people, and more.

**Here in Connecticut**, the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut has grown and adapted to be able to respond to ongoing civil rights threats with new staff and additional litigation. Read more about these cases and others on our legal docket at [www.acluct.org/cases](http://www.acluct.org/cases).

## *Protecting Protestors' Rights –*

In *Quinn v. Eucalitto*, we represent Erin Quinn and Robert Marra, two protestors involved in the Visibility Brigade who have turned to the streets to encourage fellow Connecticut residents to take action. We are suing to force the defendants to **abide by the First Amendment and stop threatening or prosecuting overpass demonstrators**.

*"Rights are only real if people can use them. Peacefully holding a protest sign on a sidewalk is as fundamental as it gets. If the government can shut that down, then none of our freedoms are safe. No one is going to save our democracy but us—it's our responsibility to protect it."* - Dan Barrett, Legal Director

## *Protecting the Rights of Immigrant Students –*

Earlier this year, we filed *Du v. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)* after DHS unlawfully terminated university students' status records. After winning a preliminary injunction that **stops the government from changing students' status in the state without the court's permission**, we await class certification.

*"The impact on these students' lives has been profound, and this action by the court means more stability for them moving forward. The federal government cannot just arbitrarily decide a student's fate with no notice, warning, or due process. We are glad to see the Constitution prevail."* - Jaclyn Blickley, Staff Attorney



Engaged with  
communities more than

48

hours at town halls,  
trainings, and other events

Provided more than

192

hours of technical  
assistance to partners

Filed more than

793

pages of court filings  
and litigation

# Safety or Surveillance?

## The Truth About License Plate Reader Data Use

Late this year, we learned that **automatic license plate reader (ALPR) technology** is being used across Connecticut to monitor and track our movements, with systems like Flock Safety feeding **data into a nationwide network that allows law enforcement in other states to access it and target vulnerable communities.**



Experts like Ken Barone of the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy are sounding the alarm about the risks this surveillance infrastructure poses, including enabling out-of-state—and in some cases federal—agencies to follow people seeking reproductive or gender-affirming care or to monitor immigrant communities in our state.

This means that law enforcement in states that criminalize abortion and gender-affirming care, and enforce unlawful and inhumane immigration operations could access our data—**this is dangerous and requires us to stay vigilant.**

As the map shows, dozens of municipalities across Connecticut—not including those under state police—have installed ALPR systems, underscoring the widespread collection of driver location data across our communities. **This is the kind of unchecked monitoring that has a chilling impact on people exercising their rights**, whether that looks like visiting a health clinic, attending a protest, or going to worship.

After learning about this surveillance structure and its misuse in our communities, the ACLU of CT, CT Students for a Dream, Equality CT, Hartford Deportation Defense, Husky for Immigrants, and Reproductive Equity Now called for a moratorium on this technology and are demanding full transparency, strict limits on data access, and legislation to prevent this information from being misused, shared, or sold.

**We cannot and will not allow our data be shared, sold, or used against us, our friends, our families, and our neighbors.**

Scan the QR code to **learn more and take action.**



### Expanding Our Legal Team

*To meet this moment, we are expanding our legal team with the addition of another lawyer. Joe Gaylin (he/him) is the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut's new legal fellow!*

## Free Speech Updates –

- **Mustafa v. Byers:** We're working to vindicate the right right to access court records showing the moments when Justin Mustafa was injured by a prison guard, which the Department of Correction wants hidden from the public.
- **Friend v. Gasparino:** After a court ruled in 2024 that Stamford police employee Richard Gasparino was not entitled to qualified immunity for arresting our client Michael Friend for simply standing on a sidewalk and displaying a sign to passing traffic, the parties reached a settlement agreement. The City of Stamford paid Mr. Friend \$70,000 for its employee's bad acts.
- **Richardson v. Semple:** In October 2025, after intense advocacy by ACLU-CT and Stop Solitary CT, the Superior Court denied the Attorney General's Office's attempt to seal a court filing in which it included the sole visual record of how Mr. J'Allen Jones died inside Garner prison during a struggle with guards who Mr. Jones's estate accuses of killing him.



# WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

This is work that we could not do without you and your continued support—and we would not want to. There will be times that we call on you all to support us and our partners during the peaks of legislative session, heights of ongoing litigation, and moments of pressing major events. In the meantime, here are ten ways that you can help move this work forward.

# 1

## *Be Involved and Raise Awareness*

Sign up to attend protests, rallies, and marches in your area. You can see events on our website at [www.acluct.org/events](http://www.acluct.org/events) and on our socials.



# 2

## *Stay Informed and Educated*

Follow local news! Our communities need us to be informed about what is happening in our state and be engaged in addressing those issues. Sign up for emails from the ACLU of Connecticut to stay updated.

# 3

## *Show Up and Get Engaged Locally*

We have seen authoritarian policies impact our own towns and cities here in Connecticut. Stay vigilant and disrupt attacks on DEI, book bans, anti-LGBTQIA+ policies, and more in our schools, libraries, and other places. Consider what's happening in your community and attend meetings with your local school boards, city councils, etc.

# 4

## *Be Eyes and Ears on the Ground*

We need you all to help us by showing up to events, recording incidents, reporting concerns, etc. and informing us at [intake@acluct.org](mailto:intake@acluct.org) when you feel like you're witnessing a civil rights violation.

# 5

## *Organize Your Community*

Join a local activism or advocacy group. If you can't find one, consider starting one. Now more than ever, we need to connect and meaningfully be in community with one another.





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## *Pressure Elected Officials*

The federal abuse of power reaches into Connecticut, and we cannot let state leadership forget that they have a responsibility to protect Connecticut residents. Stay in contact with your elected officials to remind them of that.

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## *Get Involved and Volunteer*

Volunteering with us looks a little different from what you may be used to. You can sign up to be on our Ready-for-Action List to take direct action at [www.acluct.org/get-involved](http://www.acluct.org/get-involved).

Sign up to be put on our Ready-for-Action List. We will need you when the next legislative session begins—prepare for us to call on you all!

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## *Know Your Rights*

We are all directly impacted by the Trump administration's abuses of power. Whether you are someone who is preparing for a protest, has an immigration status, identifies as LGBTQIA+, or anything in between, it is critical that we know our rights. Learn about your rights at [www.acluct.org/know-your-rights-page](http://www.acluct.org/know-your-rights-page).

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## *Support Mutual Aid Initiatives*

Another aspect of community is being able to support our neighbors, especially when they are part of the communities that are most under threat right now. Consider supporting mutual aid initiatives as it is just one way to directly support one another.

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## *Invest in This Work*

Want to invest in the work that we do? You can become a monthly member or join our Impact Society with a gift of \$1,000 or more with the QR codes below.

Become a Monthly Member



OR

Join the Impact Society



# The ACLU of Connecticut in the Community

**Real change starts in the community—you all have showed us that.** In 2025, the ACLU of Connecticut has made every effort to accept your invitations and be with you at local events across the state to listen to, learn from, and stand with all people uniting for a more just and equitable Connecticut.

It is so important—perhaps now more than ever—to be in community with one another in ways that are intentional, sustainable, and meaningful.

## Civil Rights & Liberties Town Halls:

Following the presidential election, we worked swiftly to begin a **series of sold-out statewide town halls with thousands of participants** where we created a space for community and an opportunity to hear directly from you all the things you were most concerned about.

## Know Your Rights Info Sessions & Trainings:

Collaborating with community advocates, activists, and organizers, we hosted dozens of **“Know Your Rights” trainings across the state about how to protect immigrant neighbors, students’ rights, free speech and protest rights, etc.** In the trainings, people could share information, ask questions, and learn more about their rights and how to assert them when necessary.







### Events and Office Hours:

In response to the Trump administration's overreach and abuses of power, we worked quickly to host several **statewide town halls**, facilitate dozens of **local resistance events**, and table at countless events like Pride, faith gatherings, and political events to engage directly with communities. Starting this year, we are holding **monthly office hours** to engage in discussions with staff about the current state of our civil rights and liberties. Find more about these events at [www.acluct.org/events](http://www.acluct.org/events).

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### Mass Actions:

In collaboration with partners, the ACLU of Connecticut has also supported the organizing of **mass actions across the nation like the series of No Kings rallies** in June and October. Millions of supporters across the country showed up and showed out for these mass actions, **showing the Trump administration that it cannot silence dissent**.

### New Staff Highlight!

We have heard from you all about the want and need to get involved in this work. That is why we have created a new position at our affiliate: **the Community Engagement and Education Program Director**. Joining us this year is Cristher Estrada-Perez (she/her/ella), whose work is rooted in anti-racism, community organizing, political education, and coalition building.







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## WHAT'S INSIDE?

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## STAY INVOLVED

Follow us on social media to stay updated on what's going on.



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We comprise three nonpartisan, nonprofit organizations: the ACLU of Connecticut, a 501(c)(4) organization which does legislative and organizing advocacy work; the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut, a 501(c)(3) which does litigation and public education work; and the ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC, a nonpartisan PAC committed to defending and expanding civil rights by building relationships, public awareness, and the political power of those directly impacted to create political change.