

2017

LIBERTY EQUALITY FREEDOM RACIAL
JUSTICE CONSTITUTION ACTIVISM
PRIVACY LGBTQ JUSTICE DISSENT
FREE SPEECH WE THE PEOPLE
CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM VOTING
RIGHTS LEGISLATION RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM DUE PROCESS LITIGATION
IMMIGRANT RIGHTS POLICE REFORM
DISABILITY RIGHTS WOMEN'S RIGHTS
LIBERTY EQUALITY JUSTICE

YEAR IN REVIEW



David McGuire
Executive Director

PERSISTENCE IS OUR SECRET WEAPON

On November 12, 2016, four days after the U.S. Presidential election, I stepped into a new role as executive director of the ACLU of Connecticut. This year has been an unprecedented test of our democracy, unlike any I've seen in my previous ten years as the ACLU-CT's staff attorney, legal director, and legislative director. Dramatic changes nationally and in Connecticut's legislature have increased the urgent need for stronger state-level civil liberties protections.

Yet I have faith, because my experience with the ACLU-CT has shown me that defending people's rights against long odds is what we do best. For decades, the ACLU-CT and our allies fought in the courts and legislature to abolish the death penalty. In 2012, we finally passed a law to end it, yet a loophole left 11 people on death row. So, we shifted to the courts, where we argued that it would be unfair to execute people when the state had decided the punishment was unjust. Ultimately, three years after the law passed, the state Supreme Court agreed with our stance. Persistence, in that case and so many others, was our secret weapon.

Everyone who cares about civil liberties must draw on that same resilience now. I feel a great responsibility to thoughtfully grow our organization during this critical period, so that our litigation, advocacy, and legislative departments are all in the best positions to overcome threats to freedom while still seizing every opportunity to make positive change. This report outlines the ways we will protect and expand everyone's rights moving forward.

You, our steadfast supporters who stand up for freedom, equality, and justice, make us an effective bulwark for liberty. As an ACLU founder said, "so long as we have enough people in this country willing to fight for their rights, we'll be called a democracy."

Thank you for defending democracy with us. -- DAVID MCGUIRE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Andy Schatz
President,
Board of Directors

LOOKING BACK AND AHEAD

Finishing my eighth and last year as your ACLU-CT board president, America faces unprecedented attacks on liberty, but I remain optimistic.

During the past decade, the ACLU-CT has supplemented our 69-year tradition of effective litigation by increasing our legislative advocacy, community engagement, and communications capacities. As a result, we have helped to shape nearly 40 major (often bipartisan) state laws, including groundbreaking laws on transgender people's rights, cellphone privacy, and police use of Tasers. While mindful of ACLU co-founder Roger Baldwin's warning, "civil liberties battles never stay won," we're positioned not only to take on current threats to liberty, but to achieve lasting reform.

Success is a team effort. Our tireless, expert staff deserve full credit for the results, as this report highlights. Our board set the strategic plan and appropriate funding, and one year ago promoted David McGuire, a young but veteran ACLU-CT staff member, to lead our efforts as executive director. Pro bono cooperating attorneys and volunteer activists expand our reach. Most importantly, you, our members and donors, enable us to defend freedom. Thank you.

Liberty not only requires vigilance, but hard work, and there is much to do, both nationally and in Connecticut. Our colleagues with the national ACLU continue to battle threats in courts nationwide. Our ongoing work to create police accountability can counteract disturbing state and national trends. And we must protect free speech from attack and erosion. Effective communication and advocacy will be critical in the years ahead.

Together, we can protect liberty for the long term. -- ANDY SCHATZ, PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2017 BY THE NUMBERS

355

requests for
legal help from
people in

90

Connecticut
towns

3

amicus
briefs
submitted

9

other
ongoing
cases

2

new
cases
filed

cited
in at
least

839

news
stories

10

protests
protected by
legal
observers

11

anti-liberty
bills defeated

10

pro-liberty bills
passed into law

38

bills supported
or opposed

37,000

email activists ready to
take action for civil
liberties in Connecticut

WE THE PEOPLE DARE TO CREATE

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

From police practices to prison policies, the justice system should treat every person fairly. With many voices, including the ACLU-CT, calling for change, Connecticut has led the nation in striving for a constitutional and fair justice system, but our work is far from done—particularly when it comes to making sure that justice doesn’t depend on the color of someone’s skin. Connecticut is second worst in the country when it comes to imprisoning Black men in solitary confinement, and our state detains Black youth ten times more than white youth. With focus and commitment, we can eliminate racial disparities in the justice system, protect the rights of people who are accused of crimes or imprisoned, and end the injustice of mass incarceration.



We are:

ending solitary confinement

HB 7302 prevents Connecticut from imprisoning youth in the most extreme form of solitary confinement. This new law is a step toward our ultimate goal of ending solitary confinement once and for all.

breaking the cycle of injustice caused by mass incarceration

Under HB 5764, people applying to become barbers and hairdressers in Connecticut no longer have to submit to criminal background checks just to apply for licenses. Instead, Connecticut’s hairdresser and barber licensure boards must consider someone’s skills before looking at that person's past.

fixing the discriminatory bail system

Governor’s HB 7044 eliminates the one-size-fits-all approach to setting bail for people who are accused of misdemeanors, and sets Connecticut up for additional, critical bail reforms in the future.

stopping civil asset forfeiture

Under HB 7146, Connecticut prosecutors will only be allowed to use civil asset forfeiture to keep someone’s property after that person has been convicted of a crime, and only if that property is related to that criminal conviction. A loophole, however, could allow the government to confiscate innocent people's property through the federal asset forfeiture program. We will fight to close this gap in 2018.

protecting progress from legislative attacks

Earned risk reduction credits, also known as “good time” credits, allow eligible prisoners to qualify for early release based on their positive actions when they are in prison. Connecticut’s experience has shown that they improve public safety while making prisons safer, less crowded, and less expensive. This year, we helped to defeat three bills that would have taken our state backward by eliminating or reducing good time credits, and we’re ready to defend them again next year.



Left: Activist James Tillman (right) lobbies state Rep. Derek Slap (left) to support solitary confinement legislation. Photo credit ACLU-CT
Right: Replica solitary confinement cell at the Connecticut capitol (top); visitors' reflections on the replica cell (bottom). Photo credit ACLU-CT

WE THE PEOPLE DARE TO BUILD

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

America's democracy was founded on a promise of equal treatment under the law. No matter the color of your skin, your zip code, or how much money you have, police should treat you fairly and respect the Constitution. Each step of the way, however, police have created loopholes to the checks and balances we expect in our democracy. Biased policing jeopardizes faith in fair treatment under the law. Police departments acquire weapons meant for battlefields without even notifying the people whom they are supposed to serve. And police have rigged the justice system so they can hurt and kill people, especially people of color, while only answering to themselves. We will create a more democratic Connecticut where people can have faith that police answer to the Constitution, not their own self-imposed and self-enforced rules.

We are:

securing justice for people wronged by police

Woodrow Vereen, a music minister, was driving his young sons to get ice cream after a Little League game when he was pulled over by Bridgeport police. Although he had done nothing wrong and did not consent to a search, police removed him from his car, frisked him, and detained him, all in full view of his frightened sons. We sued on his behalf. In July, we reached a settlement with the City of Bridgeport.

creating transparency

In 2014, video footage surfaced of Enfield police officer Matthew Worden beating a man in the head as the man lay handcuffed on the ground. Worden had a dubious track record: he was the subject of 14 misconduct complaints and 11 brutality and civil rights lawsuits. When Enfield settled some of those lawsuits, the town tried to hide the settlement information from the public. We took action by demanding settlement documents from Enfield. When the town refused, we appealed to the state Freedom of Information Commission, which ordered Enfield to provide us with the information we requested. Enfield is appealing the Commission’s ruling, which means we will head to court in 2018 to fight to make these documents public.

“NO MATTER WHO WE ARE, WE ALL HAVE RIGHTS.”
- WOODROW VEREEN



demanding police departments follow the law

Our investigation, "Earning Trust," found that many Connecticut police departments are ignoring state law--a law prompted by a 2012 ACLU-CT report--by putting up illegal barriers to accepting people's complaints of police misconduct. We sounded the alarm, and dozens of ACLU-CT supporters testified about the need for stronger police accountability laws.

paving the way for meaningful oversight of police

While we and members of the legislature's Black and Puerto Rican Caucus gathered (pictured above) to condemn the Bridgeport police department's fatal shooting of a 15-year-old boy, other legislators quietly met to stop a bill to make it easier for people to file complaints of police misconduct. Even in this climate, Connecticut adopted two reforms: HB 7308, which continues funding for police body and dashboard cameras; and HB 7093, which requires police departments to notify the state each time a police officer is fired for misconduct or resigns or retires while under a misconduct investigation. These laws help to lay the groundwork for more. Over the next five years, the ACLU-CT will spearhead a multi-year effort to create strong, first-in-the-nation laws to make policing fair and lawful.

WE THE PEOPLE DARE TO DEFEND FREE SPEECH

Free speech belongs to everyone, but America has often failed to protect the rights of people who have not typically held the reins of political power. Now, the free speech rights of people of color, women, LGBTQ people, religious minorities, and immigrants are under threat: the federal government harasses and spies on racial justice advocates, the president called for a reporter who criticized him to be fired, and Bridgeport police used recording equipment to intimidate protesters at a vigil for a boy who was killed by city police. The ACLU-CT is here to safeguard the right to peaceful protest, and to ensure the government doesn't rig the system to allow only the voices that it agrees with to be heard.

We are: protecting protesters' rights

Michael Picard was protesting near a police DUI checkpoint in West Hartford when a state police trooper approached him. The trooper wrongfully claimed that filming the police is illegal, took Picard's camera, and accidentally proceeded to film himself and his colleagues discussing a previous protest that Picard had organized and conspiring to fabricate charges against him.

We sued to stand up for Picard's Fourth and First Amendment rights to property, protest, and record information, and the case is moving forward.

speaking up for free expression

Under state law--as affirmed by a case in which the ACLU-CT filed a friend of the court brief--employees of private companies have a right to express their views on matters of public concern. When Connecticut-based ESPN suspended anchor Jemele Hill for tweeting her support for athletes protesting police brutality, we took the network to task. When Trinity College suspended Professor Johnny Williams for posting provocative comments supporting racial justice on his personal Facebook page, we reminded the college of its duty to uphold free expression.



Above: People protest the Muslim Ban at Bradley Airport. Photo credit Stephanie Vincent
Below: People demand police accountability in Bridgeport. Photo credit ACLU-CT



WE THE PEOPLE DARE TO DEMAND PRIVACY

Privacy is about keeping your information safe, and it's about protecting your loved ones from government intrusion. When the government searches your texts, spies on your home, or collects your DNA without a warrant or your permission, it is invading your privacy and the privacy of the people you know. Americans should not have to choose between connecting with their loved ones and protecting their rights, and the government shouldn't get a pass to invade your privacy just because the laws haven't kept up with today's technology. The ACLU-CT will create a world in which your information is your own and the Fourth Amendment ban on unjust searches extends to the modern era.

We are: demanding drone privacy

After public outcry and ACLU-CT advocacy, legislators dropped a bill that included a dangerous amendment to let police in Connecticut equip drones with weapons. This was good news for public safety and civil liberties. Unfortunately, the underlying bill, which was designed to protect people's privacy from police drones, also died. At least four Connecticut police departments have drones, including at least one with thermal imaging technology. Yet police departments don't have any statewide guidelines to control how they spy on people or property using drones or how they use the information that drones gather.

closing gaps in cellphone privacy laws

Because of two new laws passed this year with the ACLU-CT's support, police must obtain court permission before using "stingrays," devices that act like fake cellphone towers in order to intercept people's private phone communications and track people's locations using their phones.



Above: Bridgeport police officers record peaceful protesters during a vigil in memory of Jayson Negron, a 15-year-old boy who was shot and killed by Bridgeport police. Photo credit ACLU-CT

WE THE PEOPLE DARE TO ENVISION REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM



Reproductive freedom is essential for women to be able to determine the courses of their own lives and to equally participate in society. We envision a world in which every woman—from every zip code and income, and no matter where she works or goes to school—is able to make her own decisions about whether and when to become a parent, without facing obstacles from the government or discrimination from her boss. While Connecticut has come a long way since the ACLU-CT’s landmark cases of *Griswold v Connecticut* and *Doe v Maher*, we are still striving to make reproductive freedom a reality.

We are: stopping discrimination against pregnant workers

When Cromwell police officer Sarah Alicea found out she was pregnant, she and her husband (pictured left, photo courtesy of the Alicea family) were thrilled. Their joy, however, soon gave way to worry and frustration.

When Sarah told her employer, the Town of Cromwell, about her pregnancy, the Town denied her the chance to keep working and forced her to immediately take unpaid leave. Forcing a pregnant worker to take immediate unpaid leave is not just unfair—it is also illegal. In August, the ACLU-CT and the national ACLU filed a pregnancy discrimination charge against Cromwell on Sarah's behalf, and the case is moving through the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

advocating for contraceptive coverage

By requiring insurance companies to cover contraception without co-pays, the Affordable Care Act took a significant step toward making sure that women's access to birth control doesn't depend on the sizes of their paychecks. This year, the Connecticut legislature considered two bills, supported by the ACLU-CT, that would have preserved contraceptive coverage without co-pays in our state, no matter what happens nationally. The bills failed, but our work to preserve access to contraception continues.

WE THE PEOPLE DARE TO SUPPORT LGBTQ RIGHTS

Every person has the right to personal autonomy, freedom of expression and association, and equal treatment under the law. Those rights shouldn’t depend on who someone loves or how they express their gender identity. We envision a world in which every LGBTQ person can live openly without discrimination and enjoy the rights guaranteed by the Constitution. While Connecticut has come a long way since the ACLU-CT’s landmark case to make our state legalize marriage equality, we still have work to do.

We are: protecting children from conversion therapy

Conversion therapy is a dangerous and discredited practice that seeks to change an individual’s sexual orientation or gender expression. National and statewide leaders in medicine, mental healthcare, and human services have rejected it. After advocacy from the ACLU-CT and our allies, Connecticut adopted HB 6695, a new law that allows the state to revoke the license of any therapist who practices conversion therapy on children.

empowering LGBTQ youth to know their rights

LGBTQ youth can face unique challenges when navigating school or interacting with police. In a workshop just for LGBTQ teenagers, the ACLU-CT answered participants’ inquiries about their rights if they’re stopped by police or questioned by school administrators and talked about how youth can take charge in the fight to expand and protect equality and freedom.



Above: Activists hug during a rally at the Connecticut Supreme Court to support transgender youth. Photo credit ACLU-CT

WE THE PEOPLE DARE TO THINK FORWARD.

We don't just defend civil liberties; we envision a more free, equal, and just world, and we work to make that vision a reality.

Legal Cases to Watch:

- Alicea v Town of Cromwell: pregnant workers' rights
- ACLU Foundation of Connecticut v Town of Enfield: right of public to information about town settlements in police brutality lawsuits
- Picard v Torneo: right of a protester to 1) First Amendment right to receive information 2) First Amendment right against retaliation by police for his speech 3) Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable seizure of his possessions
- Watley v. Katz: rights of parents with perceived mental disabilities. We argue that the state Department of Children and Families must accommodate perceived mental illness when providing services to two adults that the Department alleged to be unfit parents because of their alleged mental illness.
- Biediger v Quinnipiac University: rights of women to equal athletic opportunities. The ACLU-CT won this case in 2012, but Quinnipiac has outstanding requirements to fulfill before federal oversight expires in 2018.

Legislative Issues to Watch:

- Toll privacy: If tolls come to Connecticut highways, we'll be ready to make sure that toll road license plate scanners don't become lawless tools to track millions of drivers without cause.
- Police Uses of Force: Connecticut law requires police departments to keep track of all uses of force, but it doesn't mandate police share that information with the state. We'll push to require police departments to send all use of force reports to the state.
- Police Militarization: Police departments are able to acquire weapons of war from the federal government without even notifying the public. We'll advocate for requiring police departments to hold public hearings when they want to procure military equipment.

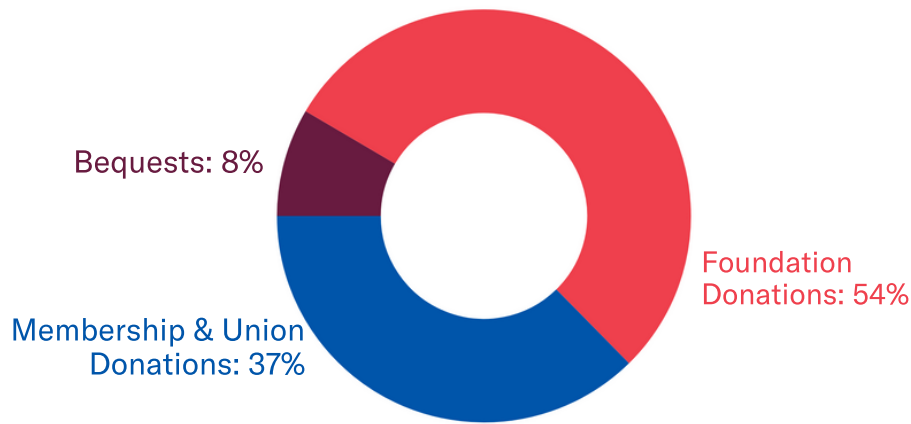
Movement Building to Watch:

- Criminal Justice Reform: We're laying the groundwork for more comprehensive bail and juvenile justice reforms, an end to solitary confinement, and lasting progress.
- Police Accountability: With legal, legislative, and advocacy strategies, we're building the foundation for statewide checks and balances to police.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION (APRIL 1, 2016 - MARCH 31, 2017)

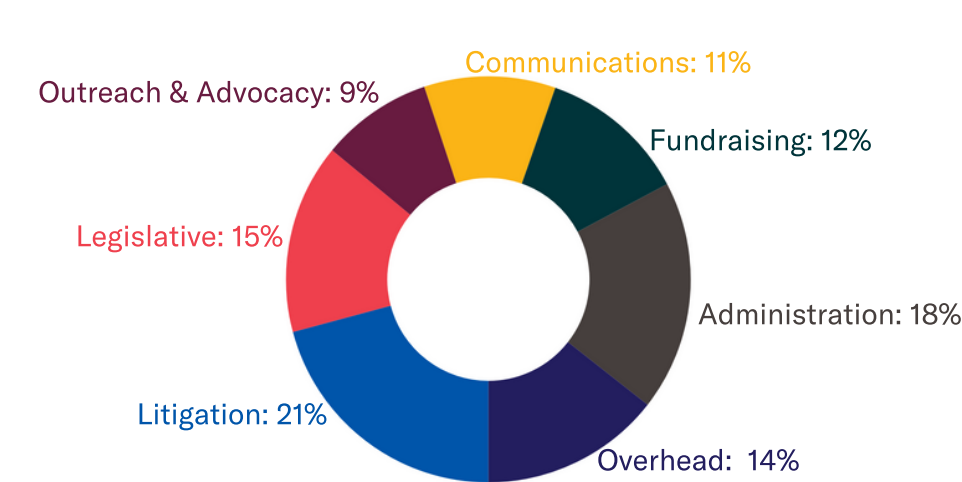
The ACLU-CT is comprised of two entities: the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut and the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut. Together, they are known as the ACLU of Connecticut / ACLU-CT. When you make a contribution to the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut, you are joining as a member; gifts to the Union support advocacy and lobbying on civil liberties issues and are not tax deductible. When you make a contribution to the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut, you are supporting our litigation, outreach work, and other non-lobbying efforts; donations to the Foundation are tax-deductible.

Support & Revenue (Union & Foundation)



Donations (Foundation):	\$446,059
Bequests (Union & Foundation):	\$69,756
Membership (Union):	\$307,576
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Total Support:	\$823,391

Expenses (Union & Foundation)



Litigation Program:	\$153,727
Legislative Lobbying:	\$111,790
Outreach & Advocacy Program:	\$65,721
Communications Program:	\$77,514
Fundraising:	\$87,476
Administration:	\$135,602
Overhead:	\$106,333
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Total Expenses: \$738,163

A NOTE ABOUT 2017: We are grateful for the outpouring of support that we received last year. Our mission and challenges remain large--we are a staff of nine full time and one part-time worker serving a state of 3 million people--but people have shown that they are ready to defend liberty, justice, and equality in Connecticut. We'll need your voice each step of the way.

ACLU-CT PEOPLE, 2017

Staff:

Dan Barrett, Legal Director
Laura Brownstein, Development Director
Teylor Davis, Executive Assistant
Kaley Lentini, Legislative Counsel
Sandy Lomonico, Criminal Justice Organizer
David McGuire, Executive Director
Melvin Medina, Outreach and Advocacy Director
Grace Sinnott, Paralegal
Meghan Smith Holden, Communications Director

Cooperating Attorneys:

JR Sastre
Andrew O'Toole

Interns:

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Isabel Blank
Kiria Borak
Andrew Bolger
Ralph Ekeh
Eric Jepeal
Paige Johnson
Lillian Mckenzie
Rachel Spears
Molly Thoms

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Robert Rautio*
Ramon Vega de Jesus
Kenneth Speyer
Karen Warner
Katherine Zager

[* Denotes executive committee member]

ACLU-CT: 69 YEARS OF DEFENDING THE CONSTITUTION IN THE CONSTITUTION STATE

1948

Organization founded, later receives national affiliation

1957

Opposed police censorship of comic books in Stamford

1965

Griswold v Connecticut overturns the state's birth control ban

1983

West v Manson orders the state to improve conditions for women prisoners

1980

Villafone v Manson strikes down discriminatory jury selection practices

1971

Breen v Selective Service Board rules against the government changing a student's draft status because of his anti-war protest

1986

Doe v Maher ends ban on abortion coverage for women enrolled in the state Medicaid program

1996

Sheff v O'Neill requires Hartford to desegregate its schools

1999

Settlement requires the state to increase staffing & funding for public defender system

2012

Advocacy secures legislative repeal of the death penalty & updates the law prohibiting racial profiling by police

2008

Kerrigan v Commissioner of Public Health makes Connecticut the 3rd state to legalize same-sex marriages

2005

Court orders government to lift Patriot Act gag order on "Connecticut Four" librarians

2016

Libertarian Party of CT v Merrill defends political parties' free speech rights

2017

Your support makes us stronger than ever.

THANK YOU
FOR STANDING
WITH CIVIL
LIBERTIES.

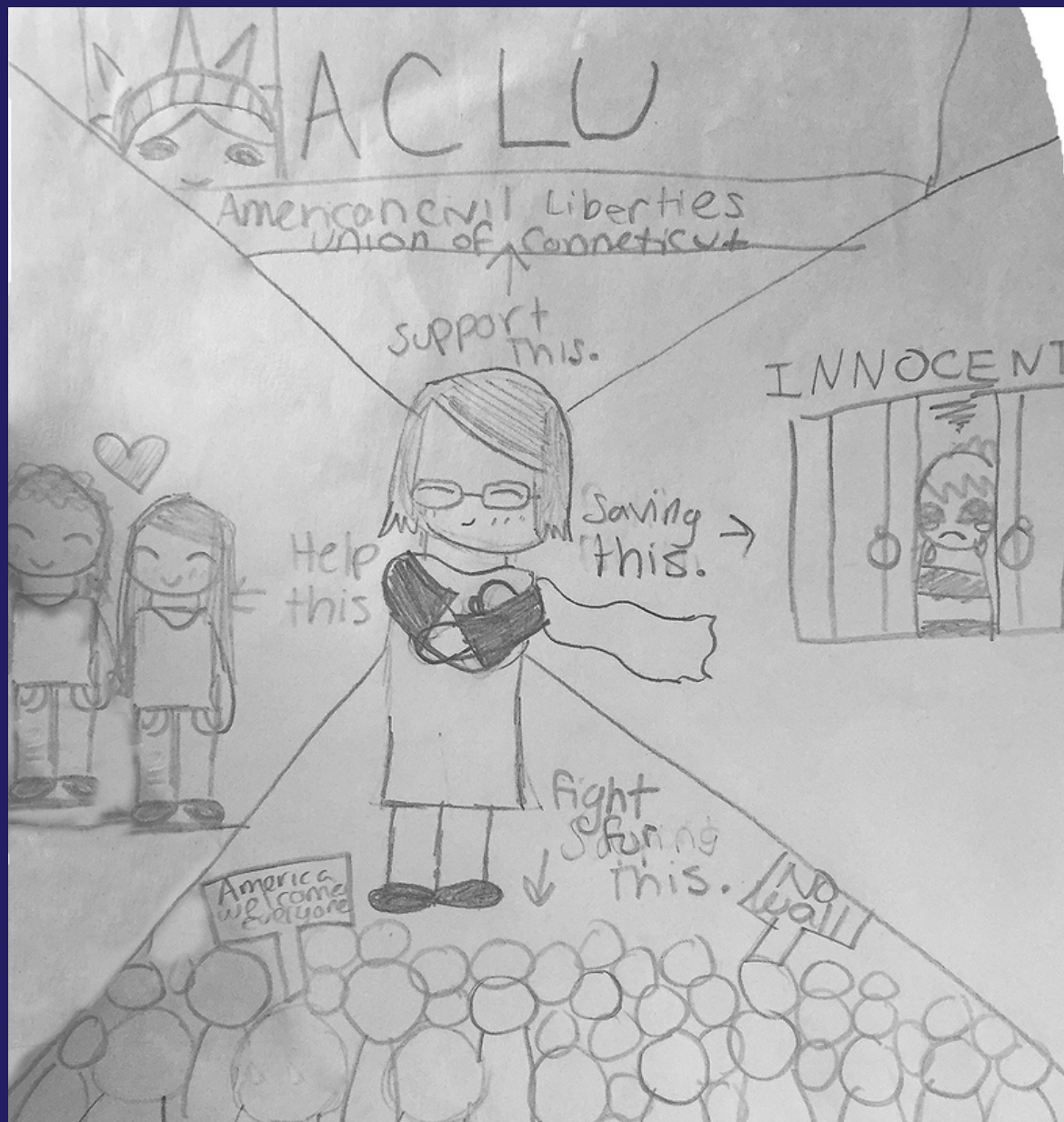


Image courtesy of ACLU-CT supporter Sofie, age 10, from Guilford