



2018 ANNUAL REPORT

ACLU
Connecticut



Letter from the ACLU-CT's Executive Director and Board President

Dear ACLU of Connecticut Friends,

"Justice" was Merriam-Webster's 2018 Word of the Year.

In 2018, the ACLU of Connecticut launched Smart Justice, a groundbreaking campaign that showed what the full power of the modern ACLU of Connecticut can do. Before Smart Justice, criminal justice reform was not on the agenda for Connecticut's three main candidates for governor. After Smart Justice, our state's ultimate governor-elect had pledged to take six specific steps toward ending mass incarceration and eliminating racial disparities in his administration's first 100 days.

In many ways the election was also a referendum on many of the unconstitutional and bigoted policies our national office has repeatedly challenged. The voters spoke loudly and clearly to our new incoming government: Connecticut stands for fairness for everyone. In partnership with you, the ACLU of Connecticut will continue to fearlessly push the General Assembly to pass laws that will increase equity in Connecticut and set an example for the rest of the country.

While this annual report is a look back at 2018, it also offers a glimpse of the future your support helps make possible. In 2018, we focused heavily on making progress toward ending mass incarceration and eliminating police violence and injustice. We will continue to do so in 2019. In 2018, we hired three powerhouse justice-impacted organizers to launch Smart Justice. In 2019, we will expand our legal and communications staff to build the infrastructure for creating lasting change. In 2018, our marquee campaign was grounded in racial justice, a principle we are working to deeply ingrain in all our work and organizational structures.

With your support, we are evolving into a bold, authentic, and heartfelt ACLU of Connecticut, where deep legal knowledge, the hard-earned expertise and wishes of people most affected by the fights for justice, and focused advocacy combine to take on – and win – the toughest civil rights and civil liberties issues of our time.

Thank you for advancing the fight for liberty, justice, and equality in the Constitution State!

Onward,

Ben Solnit
President, ACLU of Connecticut

David McGuire
Executive Director, ACLU of Connecticut

Smart Justice

Connecticut will be safer, stronger, and fairer if our state pursues smart policies that prioritize people, opportunity, and rehabilitation over the expensive, ineffective, and cruel mass incarceration policies of the past. Led by people who have been directly impacted by the justice system, ACLU Smart Justice Connecticut is campaigning to cut Connecticut's jail and prison population by 50% and end racial disparities in our state's justice system.

Dismantling discrimination

Connecticut's justice system has some of the worst racial disparities in the country. Eliminating this unfair and unequal system requires racial justice approaches. In 2018, after nearly a decade of advocacy from legislative champions and the ACLU of Connecticut, the legislature passed a law allowing legislators to request an independent study, called a "racial and ethnic impact statement," of any proposed bill's potential effects on people of color. Done correctly and consistently, these racial and ethnic impact statements could help prevent racially unjust laws by providing policymakers and the public with a clear picture of a bill's potential consequences. This year, the ACLU of Connecticut also successfully advocated for the legislature to pass a law overhauling the state's use of special parole, an extreme sentencing option that was disproportionately used against people of color.

Defending progress

Once again, with our allies, the ACLU of Connecticut stopped legislation that would have undermined the popular earned risk reduction credit program, which helps people to earn time off of their sentences if they participate in certain programs and meet specific criteria. We also fought off a draconian proposal that would have allowed the state to incarcerate more youth, including youth who were the victims of crimes, in adult jails and prisons.

Holding politicians accountable

Smart Justice hit the gubernatorial campaign trail with one goal: that every gubernatorial candidate publish a criminal justice reform platform. Before November, Oz Griebel and Ned Lamont, two of the three main candidates for governor, had met with Smart Justice organizers and published proposals for criminal justice reform. Before being elected Governor, Lamont also committed to most of Smart Justice's First 100 Days pledge for criminal justice. In November, Lamont appointed ACLU of Connecticut executive director David McGuire and former Smart Justice field organizer Tiheba Bain to serve on a special transition committee to help shape his administration's criminal justice policy proposals before his first day in office.

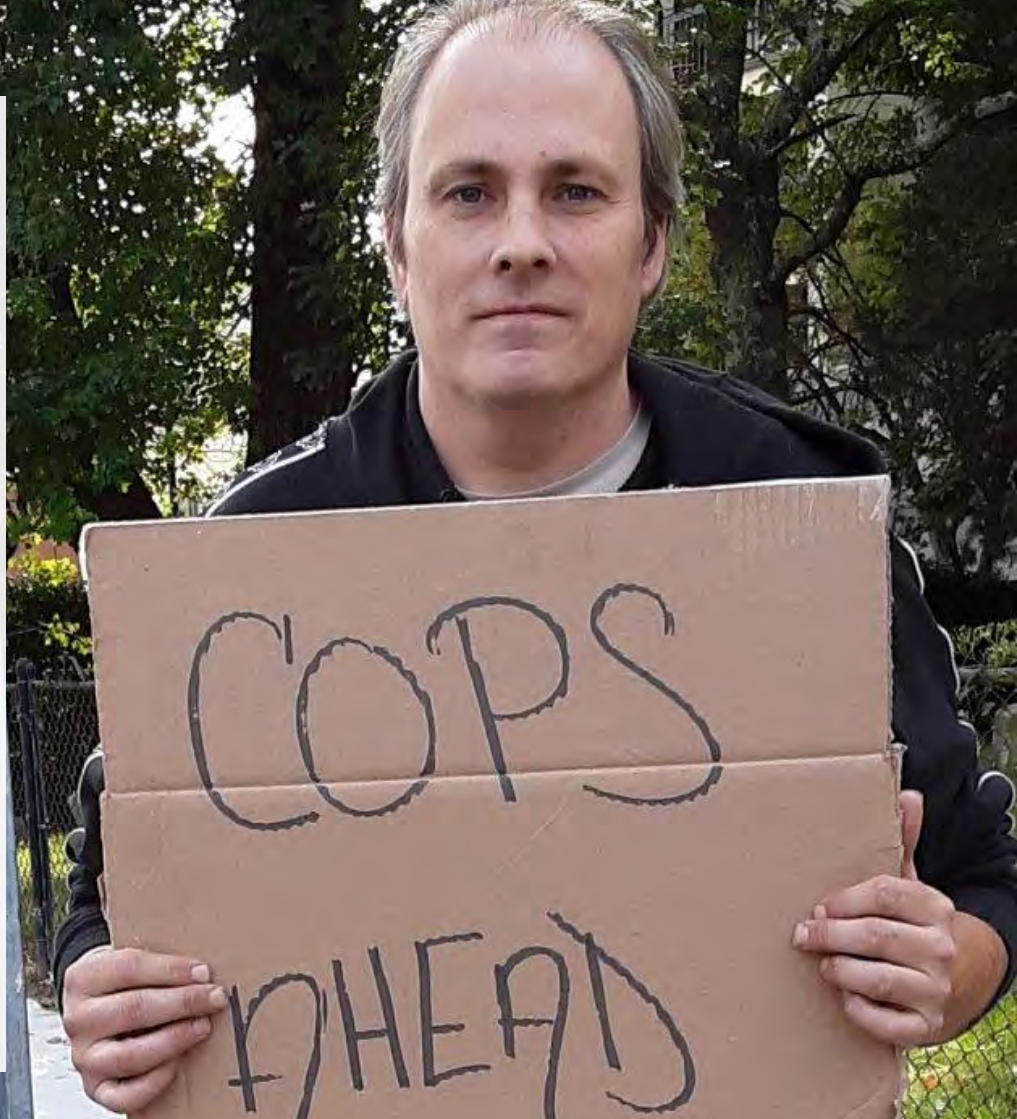
Left: Manny and Gus on the mic: Smart Justice cohort leader Manny Sandoval (L) and Smart Justice Field Organizer Gus Marks-Hamilton (R) rally outside a gubernatorial debate in Hartford. Photo Credits: Melvin Medina, ACLU-CT

Right: Youth joined the Smart Justice rally at the University of Connecticut in Storrs. Photo Credit: Melvin Medina, ACLU-CT



Police Accountability

In a democracy, the people should control how police departments operate, not the other way around. And the people should be able to hold their police departments accountable when they harm someone or violate someone's rights. Holding police accountable to the people they are supposed to serve is good for safety, justice, and freedom. The ACLU of Connecticut will keep fighting for meaningful change.



ACLU-CT client Michael Friend stands in the spot in Stamford where he was arrested for holding a "cops ahead" sign. Courtesy Michael Friend

Transparency for families harmed by police violence

Zoe Dowdell was 20 years old when he was killed by New Britain Police in 2017. Zoe's father, Shawn Dowdell, is still waiting for police to provide him with information – including dashcam footage – about what happened to his son. Under Connecticut law, the public has a right to this information. Representing Shawn Dowdell, the ACLU of Connecticut's legal team is demanding the New Britain and State Police abide by the law by turning over information to the Dowdell family.

Defending the right to protest police

Protesting the government is a normal part of democracy. Police, as government officials, cannot arrest people just for protesting them. Yet that is exactly what happened to Michael Friend, whom Stamford police illegally arrested for protesting them – in part, according to one police employee, because police thought Michael's protest sign was cutting down on the department's ability to make more overtime pay. In October, the ACLU of Connecticut filed a lawsuit against a Stamford police employee on Michael's behalf.

Creating community control over police surveillance

In Hartford, police have acquired advanced surveillance technology without seeking or obtaining approval from the City Council and without the opportunity for formal public debate. The ACLU of Connecticut teamed up with members of the Hartford City Council, statewide and local civil liberties organizations, immigrant's rights organizations, youth and children's rights organizations, and an LGBTQ organization to introduce an ordinance that ensures police cannot acquire surveillance technologies in secret and without formal public input.

Immigrants' Rights

The United States should be a safe refuge for people seeking a better life. Every person, of every immigration status, has fundamental human and legal rights that deserve protection and respect. Yet right now, people throughout our state and country are suffering under the Trump administration's cruel and racist immigration policies. In Connecticut, people facing deportation in Hartford's immigration court encounter some of the worst conditions in the country: the average bond set by Hartford's immigration court is tied for highest in the U.S., at twice the average amount set by immigration courts nationwide.

Bearing witness

The ACLU of Connecticut's volunteer court watch program is one effort to bear witness to and fight back against the federal government's deportation machine. Each week, volunteers with the program – a collaborative effort between the ACLU of Connecticut, CT Immigrant Bail Fund, ACLU of Massachusetts Immigrant Protection Project, and more – document what they see in Hartford's immigration court, including information about bond amounts, and report back to our legal staff.

Fighting back

This fall, when volunteers noticed that K* was in danger of being permanently separated from his one-year-old daughter through deportation, we notified the CT Immigrant Bail Fund, which was able to work with RAICES Texas to pull together the money to bring him home.

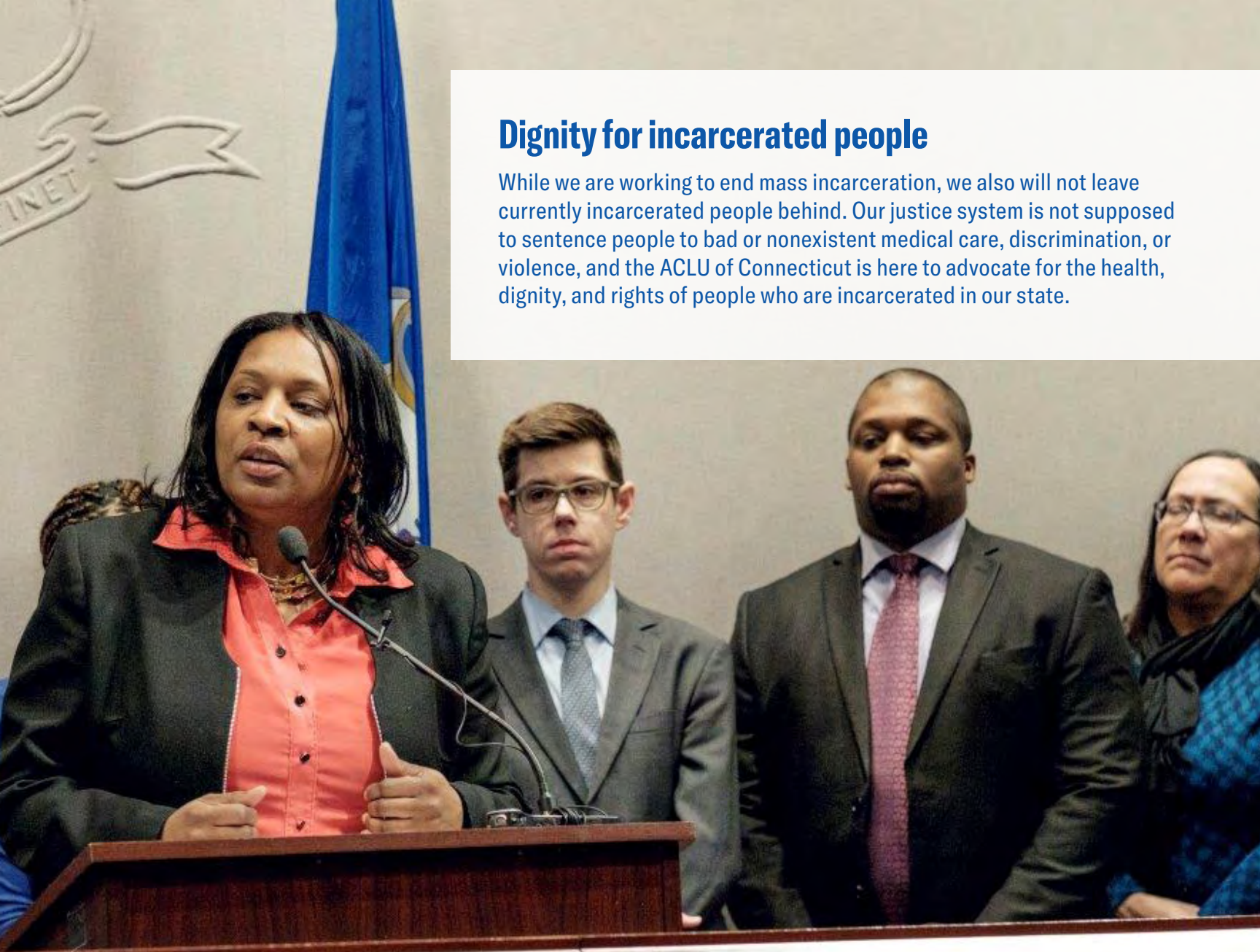
*Name abbreviated to protect K's identity



In June, hundreds of people rallied in Hartford to protest the Trump Administration's family separation policies. The courthouse where the rally took place is the same court where our volunteers bear witness every week. Photo Credit: Meghan Holden, ACLU-CT

Dignity for incarcerated people

While we are working to end mass incarceration, we also will not leave currently incarcerated people behind. Our justice system is not supposed to sentence people to bad or nonexistent medical care, discrimination, or violence, and the ACLU of Connecticut is here to advocate for the health, dignity, and rights of people who are incarcerated in our state.



Tiheba Williams-Bain, a Smart Justice leader, speaks about the need for fair treatment of women who are incarcerated. Photo Credit: Meghan Holden, ACLU-CT

Reproductive justice and trans rights

This year, with our allies and led by a group of formerly incarcerated women, the ACLU of Connecticut successfully advocated for a groundbreaking new law regarding fair treatment of incarcerated cisgender women and trans people. With this law's passage, Connecticut became the first state to require its Department of Correction to treat transgender people who are incarcerated according to their gender identities. The law also bans the state from shackling incarcerated women during pregnancy or labor, requires the state to provide incarcerated women with sufficient menstrual supplies, and mandates the state create family-friendly visitation policies in its prisons and jails.

Think Forward

Legal Cases to Watch

- Dowdell v New Britain and Dowdell v Connecticut State Police: freedom of information case, transparency from police
- Friend v Gasparino: protester's rights to free speech, information, and freedom from warrantless seizure
- Picard v Torneo, Jacobi, Barone: protester's rights to receive information, freedom from retaliation by police for speech, and freedom from 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

Legislative Issues to Watch

- Prosecutorial Transparency: Injustice thrives in the dark. Yet unlike in other states, Connecticut's unelected prosecutors, who are called "states attorneys," are not required to disclose statistics about their decisions to the public. In 2019, the ACLU of Connecticut will fight for legislation requiring the state to collect and make public statistics about prosecutors' decisions on charging, bail, plea bargains, convictions, and police-involved incidents.
- Anti-Discrimination Protections: People who are returning home after incarceration should have a fair chance at reentering society and supporting themselves and their families. In Connecticut, formerly incarcerated people face more than 600 legal and policy barriers to finding jobs, housing, education, insurance, and more. In 2019, the ACLU of Connecticut will advocate for groundbreaking legislation to prevent discrimination against people with a criminal record in areas of housing, employment, education, and other public services and accommodations.
- Legal Representation in Immigration Court: In state criminal court proceedings, people are guaranteed a court-appointed lawyer if they cannot afford one. But in federal immigration court, the law does not guarantee that same basic chance at justice – even if someone is a child facing separation from their parents. The ACLU of Connecticut will push for the legislature to pass a law to guarantee legal representation for children facing deportation in court and for adults who are detained, facing deportation, and cannot afford an attorney.
- Toll Privacy: If tolls come to Connecticut highways, we are prepared to make sure that toll gantry license plate scanners do not become lawless tools to track millions of people without cause.

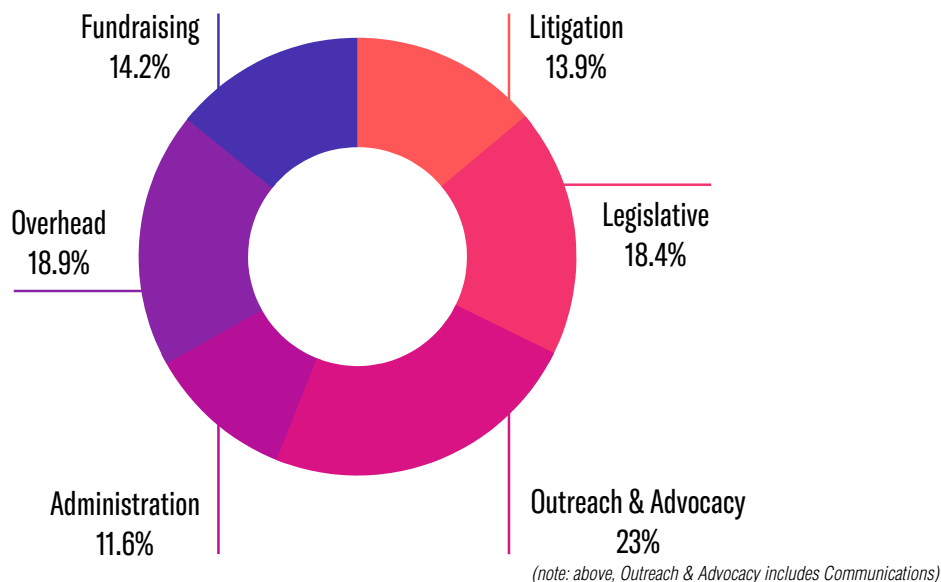
Movement Building to Watch

- Smart Justice: The ACLU of Connecticut's Smart Justice campaign was a force to be reckoned with on the gubernatorial campaign trail, and it will be just as powerful at the capitol and throughout the state. Smart Justice is a long-term movement with far-reaching goals, and we are laying the groundwork for more progress.
- Police Transparency: Information is power, yet access to basic data and facts about police behavior are often controlled by (and for) police themselves. With legal, legislative, and advocacy strategies, we are building the foundation for meaningful democratic control over police. In 2019, the ACLU of Connecticut will launch a groundbreaking police transparency website that reveals town-by-town and statewide information about police collective bargaining agreements, taser use, civilian oversight, and lawsuits and settlements. This transparency website, started many months and FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) requests ago, will be a powerful tool for the public to hold their police departments accountable.
- In 2019, the ACLU of Connecticut will closely monitor the state's treatment of people who are incarcerated, including cisgender women and transgender people. As we have been for more than 70 years, we are prepared to fight back against unjust and inhumane conditions of confinement.
- Connecticut's new governor will have a decade-long impact on our state. Governor-elect Lamont will appoint new public officials whose work affects the daily lives of everyone in Connecticut: commissioners for the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Department of Correction, and Department of Children and Families; appointees to the state board of pardons and parole; and members of the commission charged with selecting state prosecutors. The ACLU of Connecticut will advocate fearlessly for a transparent and inclusive process that results in leadership for a fairer, freer, and more equal Connecticut.

Financial Information: April 1, 2017 – March 31, 2018

The ACLU-CT is comprised of two entities: the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut and the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut. Contributions to the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut support advocacy and lobbying on civil liberties issues and are not tax deductible. Contributions to the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut support our litigation, outreach work, and other non-lobbying efforts; donations to the Foundation are tax-deductible.

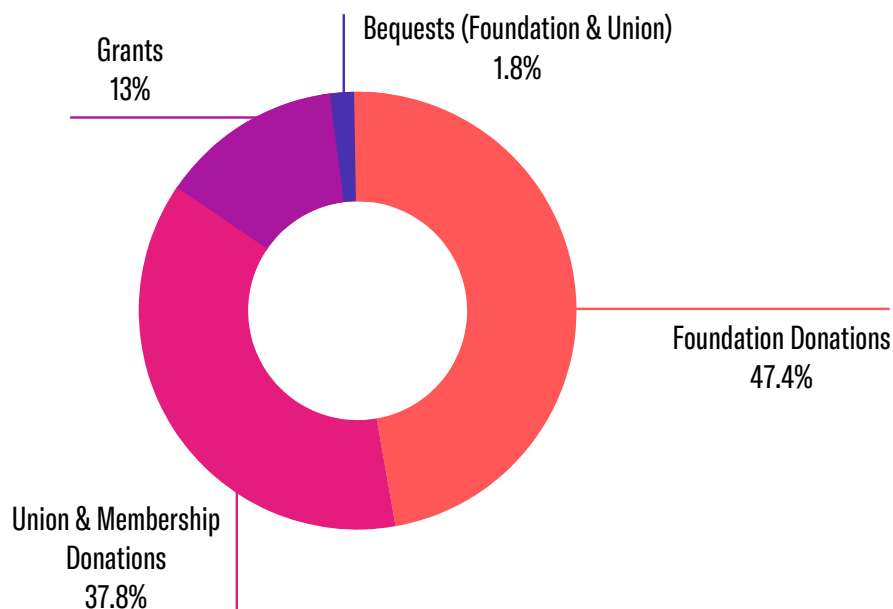
Following the 2016 election, the ACLU-CT experienced a tremendous increase in support. We will use a portion of these funds on building staff capacity to strategically and proactively work on the greatest threats to civil liberties in Connecticut.



Expenses (Foundation & Union)

Litigation Program: \$121,519
Legislative Lobbying: \$160,307
Outreach & Advocacy Program: \$200,793
Administration: \$101,310
Overhead: \$165,282
Fundraising: \$124,080

Total Expenses: \$873,291



Support and Revenue (Foundation & Union)

Foundation Donations: \$763,818
Union & Membership Donations: \$608,348
Grants: \$210,000
Bequests (Foundation & Union): \$28,458

Total Support: \$1,610,644

By the numbers

350 requests for legal help from **102** towns in Connecticut

→ **1** amicus brief submitted, **12** ongoing legal cases, **7** new legal cases filed

→ **81** bills supported or opposed in legislative testimony

→ **12** new laws to advance civil rights and liberties

Appeared in more than
→ **815** news stories → **37,000+** supporters ready to take action online

→ **39** Smart Justice cohort members

ACLU-CT People, 2018

Staff

Dan Barrett, Legal Director
Laura Brownstein, Development Director
Anderson Curtis, Smart Justice Field Organizer
Téylor Davis, Donor Relations Associate
Meghan Holden, Communications Director
Kaley Lentini, Legislative Counsel
Sandy LoMonico, Criminal Justice Organizer
Gus Marks-Hamilton, Smart Justice Field Organizer
David McGuire, Executive Director
Melvin Medina, Director of Strategic Initiatives
Grace Sinnott, Paralegal
Aubrie Smith, Administrative Support Manager

Smart Justice Cohort Leaders

Keith Barile
Tracie Bernardi
Beatrice Codianni
Ramon Garcia
Warren Hardy
Manuel Sandoval
Dieter Tejeda
Tiheba Williams-Bain

Interns

Aliyah Henry
Charisse Huff
Krystina Jackson
Garaldo Parrilla
Justin Reichman

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Tamara Lanier
Margaret P. Levy
Cristina LoGiudice
Jonathan B. Orleans
Robert Post
Amir Rezvani
Andy Schatz*
Kenneth Speyer
Katherine Zager

[*Denotes executive committee member]

Cooperating Attorneys:

Hope Metcalf
Andrew O'Toole
JR Sastre



Front Cover: Smart Justice rallies outside of a gubernatorial debate in West Hartford. Photo Credit: Melvin Medina, ACLU-CT



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