



WE ARE MORE RESILIENT
TOGETHER.



Photo credit: Whitney Thomas, ACLU-CT

2022 Annual Report

ACLU
Connecticut

LETTER FROM THE ACLU-CT'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD PRESIDENT



Photo credit: Laura Brownstein, ACLU-CT

Dear Friends,

In 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court erased decades of precedent and eliminated long-established civil rights and liberties, including abortion rights in *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Services* and civil rights overall in *Vega v Tekoh*. In light of these attacks on a national level, we know that the states must proactively work to fill the voids left by the federal government and to protect our rights, especially the rights of those who are most marginalized.

We at the ACLU of Connecticut have expanded our efforts to create and strengthen existing civil rights and liberties protections. By November, Connecticut voters had gone to the polls and overwhelmingly voted in favor of early voting, sending a resoundingly clear message that we will not back down from the fight to have our voices heard. In that moment, we also saw the power of investing in state-based action: early voting was the result of years of sustained advocacy, education, and organizing by the ACLU of Connecticut and our allies.

In addition, this year, the ACLU of Connecticut increased our staff, launched the ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC, and elected a new Board President. We adopted a strategic plan for 2023-2025, in which we focus on dismantling systemic racism from the front and back ends of the criminal legal system, investing in our communities' safety and health instead of policing and incarceration, increasing access to the ballot, and building organizational resilience. As you read this annual report, we hope you will notice the ways in which we have made progress in these areas.

As always, we remain grateful to our supporters for your dedication and commitment to our shared vision of an equitable, democratic, and anti-racist Connecticut in which all persons are treated with dignity in a thriving society.

In solidarity,

Margie Adler
Board President

David McGuire
Executive Director

MISSION STATEMENT

The American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut defends, promotes, and expands the civil rights and civil liberties of all people in Connecticut through litigation, community organizing and legislative advocacy, and civic education and engagement. We are an inclusive, nonpartisan, and statewide organization within the nationwide American Civil Liberties Union network, powered by our supporters, partners, staff, interns, cooperating attorneys, and our board of directors.

VISION & VALUES

The ACLU of Connecticut envisions an equitable, democratic, and anti-racist Connecticut in which all persons are treated with dignity in a thriving society.

We believe in, and aspire to incorporate into our actions, the following six core values:

Anti-racism: eliminating racism and promoting racial justice

Dignity: upholding the innate dignity of all human beings

Diversity: valuing the perspective of those with lived experiences different from ours

Equity: understanding power dynamics and creating opportunities for all to thrive

Inclusivity: sharing and building power with historically excluded people

Partners in Justice: elevating the voices of directly impacted people while working in partnership with, rather than on behalf of, the communities we serve



CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

If we are to create a healthy, thriving society for all people, we must stop the harms of the criminal legal system in its front end — policing and prosecutors — and back end — prisons and the collateral consequences of incarceration and criminal convictions. The criminal legal system was designed to perpetuate systemic racism, and it continues to disproportionately harm people of color, particularly Black and Latinx people, in our state. We seek to end mass incarceration and eliminate racial disparities within Connecticut's criminal legal system. We know that real community health, safety, and resilience lie in investing in people, not prisons and policing.

FRONT END: POLICING AND PROSECUTION

The front end of the criminal legal system is the funnel through which people enter the system — through interactions with police, prosecutors, and the courts.

With heart and heat, the ACLU of Connecticut advocated for legislators to create meaningful accountability for State's Attorneys and to stop police from legally lying to children during interrogations. While those bills did not succeed in 2022, we will push for them again in 2023, together with our partners like the Innocence Project.

In and out of the courts, the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut used public education and litigation to increase police transparency.

PROJECT FLASHLIGHT

For the first time, Connecticut residents have a centralized, easily accessible place to find information about the powers our local governments have traded away to police. In January, the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut launched Project Flashlight, an interactive website that centralizes, summarizes, and maintains information about police contracts, municipal police commissions, and — coming in 2023 — data about police violence and lawsuits against police. Project Flashlight is illuminating information about policing, because injustice thrives in the dark.

MAKING PUBLIC RECORDS PUBLIC

In *Town of Avon v Sastre*, we're working with local attorney J.R. Sastre to make public records public. In 2019, an employee of the Avon police department met with the town manager and provided him with a log of misconduct that the employee witnessed the chief of police, Mark Rinaldo, perpetrate on the job. The town manager gave a copy of the log to Avon's lawyer, who, relying on the log, assisted the town in reaching an agreement to pay Rinaldo \$115,000 in exchange for his immediate retirement. Attorney J.R. Sastre made a public records request for all documents relating to Rinaldo's retirement agreement, and Avon acknowledged that it was withholding a copy of the misconduct log. Sastre challenged the town's withholding at the Freedom of Information Commission, and the Commission sided with him. But now, Avon is appealing to the Superior Court to try keeping that public record secret. People have a right to know what the government is doing in our names — especially when the government agency in question has handcuffs and guns. The ACLU Foundation of Connecticut is stepping in to assist J.R. Sastre in fighting for government transparency in this case.

The ACLU Foundation of Connecticut also continued to litigate *Massimino v Benoit*, in which we are defending the right to record the police.

BACK END: PRISONS AND REENTRY

The back end of the criminal legal system is the experience of incarceration itself, and the lasting effects of living with a criminal record. At the legislature, the ACLU of Connecticut successfully advocated, together with our partners, for the passage of two new laws to mitigate the harms of incarceration, in and outside of prisons.

FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE LIVING WITH A RECORD

One in three American adults is living with a record of arrest or conviction, and that record is often a lifetime barrier to their and their families' survival. Because of the leadership of the ACLU of Connecticut's Smart Justice campaign, the legislature passed, and Governor Lamont signed, An Act Concerning Collateral Consequences of Criminal Convictions on Occupational Licensing. This new law went into effect on October 1, 2022. This law requires job licensure boards to look at people as individuals when evaluating job license applicants with criminal records. Instead of relying on blanket bans based on stereotypes, this law requires job licensure boards to look at whether a person's record was directly relevant to the job at hand and requires them to consider how much time has passed since the person's arrest or conviction.

PROTECT ACT

This new law takes significant steps toward ending solitary confinement in Connecticut and starts to create independent oversight of the Department of Correction. Our friends with Stop Solitary CT have fought for this law for years, and Smart Justice was proudly in solidarity with them for years in advocating for this progress.

In the courts, the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut continued the effort to end solitary confinement and in-cell shackling of people living with mental illness in prison (*Disability Rights Connecticut v Department of Correction*), to ensure gender-affirming care for trans people in prison (*Clark v Department of Correction*), and filed a new, groundbreaking case seeking to stop one of the cruelest collateral consequences of incarceration: prison debt.

BEATTY V. LAMONT

In a federal class-action lawsuit filed on March 14, 2022 on behalf of more than 30,000 people, two state residents are suing Governor Ned Lamont and Attorney General William Tong to eliminate Connecticut's prison debt law, under which every person incarcerated by the State of Connecticut owes the state hundreds of dollars for each day they spent in prison.

Nearly twenty years ago, Teresa Beatty was incarcerated for drug charges. Today, Ms. Beatty is a certified nursing assistant, a Stamford resident, a mother and grandmother, and a caretaker for her older brother, who is disabled. In 2020, her mother passed away, leaving Ms. Beatty a portion of the home where Ms. Beatty, her brother, and her family live. Once that home is sold, Ms. Beatty will desperately need her inheritance to put a roof over her and her family's heads. Yet shortly after her mother's death, the State of Connecticut came after Ms. Beatty, demanding \$83,762.26 for her time in custody, including when she was incarcerated pre-trial because she could not afford bail. Ms. Beatty's case is not unique. Under Connecticut's prison debt law, the state currently charges people \$249 per day, or \$90,885 per year, for the cost of their incarceration — more than what an in-state student would owe for 2.5 years' attendance at UCONN, including housing, food, and books. This debt follows them for decades, decimating inheritances from deceased loved ones, proceeds from lawsuits (even for harms done to them by the State in prison), and, ultimately, anything a person leaves upon their death. Because of current and historic systemic racism, this prison debt disproportionately falls on Black and Latinx people in Connecticut, serving as another mechanism for preventing the accrual of intergenerational wealth among people of color.

VOTING RIGHTS

The right to vote is precious, and we must make our democracy stronger by protecting and strengthening access to the ballot box. Voters across the country are facing the greatest assaults on voting rights since Jim Crow. The U.S. Supreme Court has turned its back on the federal Voting Rights Act, considered to be the crown jewel of the Civil Rights Movement. While Connecticut has begun taking steps to improve voting rights, people often assume our state has better laws than it does. In reality, Connecticut's barriers to the ballot box — particularly for Black and Latinx voters — are among the worst in the country. We are striving for our state to become a leader in equitable voting rights laws.

At the capitol, the ACLU of Connecticut worked in solidarity with a coalition of racial justice organizations to push for legislators to pass the Connecticut Voting Rights Act. This law, modeled on the federal Voting Rights Act, would help Connecticut to address and prevent discrimination against voters of color. While this bill did not pass in 2022, we and our partners will be fighting for it again in 2023.

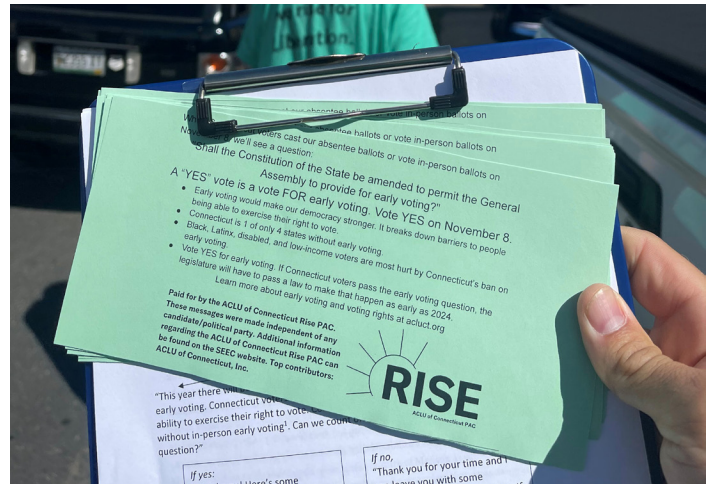
At the polls, the electorate included new voters this year. Until 2021, Connecticut was the last state to distinguish between voting while on probation and while on parole. In 2021, because of advocacy from the ACLU of Connecticut, formerly incarcerated people, and their loved ones, the legislature passed Public Act 21-2, which restored a person's right to vote while on parole, including special parole. As a result, approximately 4,000 people in Connecticut were reinfranchised. We educated people on parole about their new right to vote with our Know Your Rights guides.

In September, we launched the ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC, a nonpartisan political action committee that will defend and expand civil rights and liberties by building the necessary relationships, public awareness, public narratives, and pressure felt by politicians to build the political power of people directly impacted by civil rights and civil liberties issues. In its first election cycle, the ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC sought transparency from the candidates for Secretary of the State and Governor regarding their views on key racial justice issues. Before Election Day, we received responses from all but two candidates in those races.

EARLY VOTING

Connecticut is one of only four states without in-person early voting. While voting on Election Day is easy for many people, it is not easy for all, for example: people who work, especially working parents, as well as elderly and disabled voters. Voters of color, voters with disabilities, elderly voters, LGBTQ voters, and women are also more likely to face barriers to voting in Connecticut. For years, the ACLU of Connecticut advocated at the legislature for the passage of a bill to let Connecticut voters decide whether to allow early voting here, finally succeeding in 2021. In 2022, with the ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC in our toolbox, we were able to educate and inspire voters across the state to say "yes" to early voting. In less than six weeks, ACLU-CT Rise PAC canvassers knocked on more than 1,500 doors in more than 14 towns and cities across Connecticut, passing out information in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole, talking to voters about why it was critical to say "yes" and handing out "yes to early voting" yard signs. Our ads reached people more than 2.3 million times in the weeks leading up to Election Day, and busy Connecticut voters turned out to our voting rights info sessions in person and online. We released the first — and to our knowledge, only — poll of Connecticut voters of color, highlighting predominantly Black and Latinx voters' views on early voting.

On Election Day, Connecticut voters sent a strong message for racial justice by overwhelmingly voting in favor of early voting. Now, the legislature must pass a law to enact the will of the people. In the 2023 legislative session, the ACLU-CT Rise PAC's sister organization, the ACLU of Connecticut, will lobby for legislators to pass a law that makes early voting truly accessible for all voters.



LGBTQ+ RIGHTS AND REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

We will never stop fighting to defend, promote, and expand civil rights and civil liberties for all people in Connecticut, especially those most vulnerable to harm by the government — LGBTQ people, people of color, disabled people, immigrants, women, and those at the intersections of each of these identities.

As the U.S. Supreme Court turned its back on *Roe v Wade*, and as states across the country — and towns right here in Connecticut — endanger trans youth, the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut was working in the courts to advance and defend reproductive freedom and LGBTQ+ rights.

DEFENDING TRANS YOUTH

Trans student athletes belong on our sports teams and in our schools, and all trans youth should be celebrated and protected for who they are. On behalf of Andraya Yearwood and Terry Miller, two transgender young women, the national ACLU and the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut defended the transgender youth participation policy of the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) in *Soule et al v. CT Association of Schools et al*, the nation's first federal court case challenging such a policy. In December, in a victory for trans youth here and across the country, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Connecticut's policy of allowing transgender students to play on the teams most consistent with their gender identity. In February, however, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals announced that it would re-hear the case en banc. Oral arguments will be on June 6, 2023.



ACLU national and ACLU Foundation of Connecticut lawyers defended trans student athletes' rights at the Second Circuit Court of Appeals.

BREASTFEEDING RIGHTS

In *Amanda R. Whitman-Singh v Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities and City of Norwalk*, the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut is representing a Norwalk mother in a lawsuit that seeks to uphold the right to breastfeed without restriction in public schools under Connecticut's civil rights law. In 2017, Mandy Whitman-Singh went to a classroom at a Norwalk school to discuss one of her children. Ms. Whitman-Singh began to breastfeed her younger child, when a teacher told her, "you can't do that in here." The court sided with Ms. Whitman-Singh this August, but Norwalk appealed. In October 2022, the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut joined the lawsuit as Ms. Whitman-Singh's lawyers. This case is about the right to breastfeed, which is protected under Connecticut's anti-discrimination laws. And it's also about making sure all of our state's anti-discrimination laws apply in public places, including public schools.

REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

The decision to become a parent is deeply personal, and no school or job should be able to interfere with that choice. Yet the U.S. Coast Guard Academy (and all other U.S. military service academies) imposes a blanket ban against cadets becoming parents, without exception. In 2021, the Veterans Legal Services Clinic at Yale Law School, the national ACLU, and the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut sued the U.S. Coast Guard Academy on behalf of Isaac Olson, who was denied the bachelor's degree he had earned because he became a father before his final year of school. In an October settlement in the case, *Olson v Mayorkas*, the academy agreed to award Mr. Olson his mechanical engineering degree. The settlement was a victory for Mr. Olson, but thousands of cadets across the country are still subjected to this archaic policy.

At the legislature, the ACLU of Connecticut, together with our partners at Pro-Choice Connecticut and Planned Parenthood Southern New England, successfully advocated for the legislature to pass two groundbreaking laws that make Connecticut a safe haven for abortion and gender-affirming medical care. A new state law shields people seeking and providing abortion care in Connecticut from the legal harms of bans in other states, and the 2022 budget implementer includes a section that protects people seeking and providing gender-affirming healthcare in Connecticut from the legal harms of bans on transgender healthcare in other states.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

In 2022, the organization adopted a new vision and values to guide our work, along with an April 2022-March 2025 strategic plan that focuses on our key issue areas: the front-end and back-end of the criminal legal system; voting rights; and, importantly, organizational sustainability. Our focus on creating an equitable, democratic, and anti-racist Connecticut in which all people are treated with dignity in a thriving society can only be achieved by expanding our reach to touch all corners of Connecticut. Our growth in 2022 included the opening of our new Stamford office, in which supporters and partners can convene and share ideas for strengthening our presence in Fairfield County, and welcoming our first legal fellow in August, bringing our litigation team to its full capacity.

The ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC does not endorse or oppose any candidates for office or political party platforms and does not provide financial or in-kind contributions to political candidates, political parties, or other PACs. The ACLU of Connecticut has always been composed of two separate sister organizations: the ACLU of Connecticut, a 501c4 organization which does legislative and organizing advocacy work; and the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut, a 501c3 which does litigation and public education work. With the formation of the ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC, the ACLU of Connecticut adds a third, independent organization registered under state law as an ongoing independent expenditure committee and federal law as a 527e1 organization.

STAFF LISTING

STAFF

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Dan Barrett, Legal Director

Elana Bildner, Senior Staff Attorney

Laura Brownstein, Development Director

Claudine Constant, Public Policy and Advocacy Director

Anderson Curtis, Senior Policy Organizer

Téylor Davis, Donor Relations Manager

Meghan Holden, Communications Director

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Whitney Thomas, Digital Content Strategist

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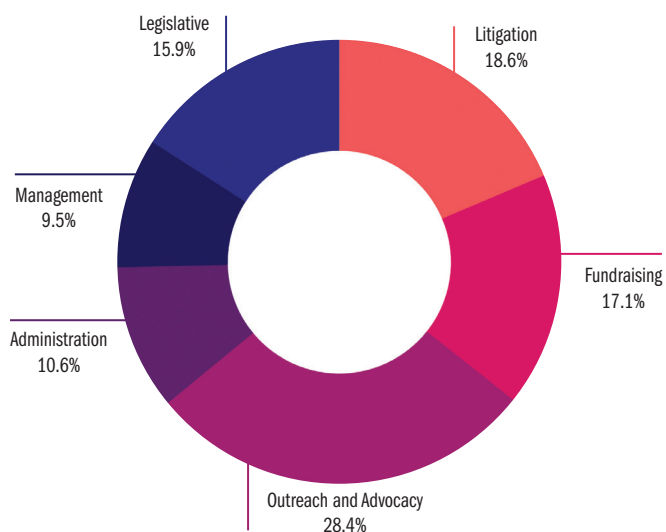
Nishi Tavernier

Mike Wishnie



Financial Information: April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022

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.

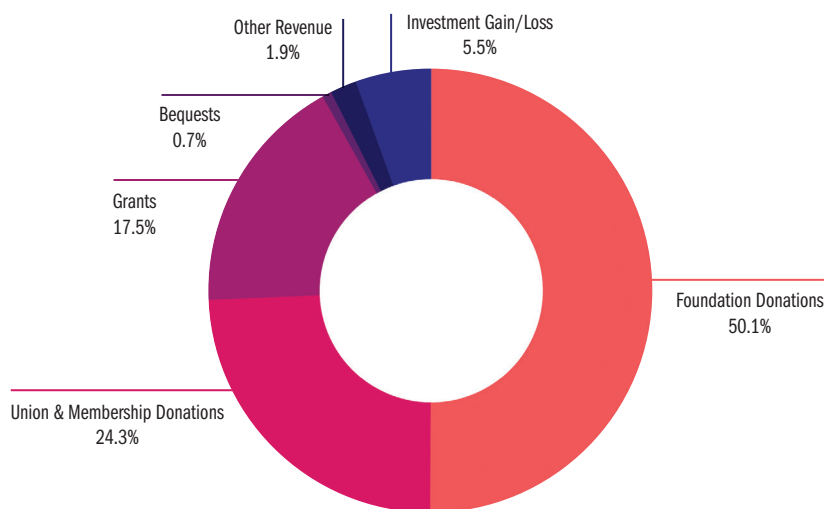


(note: above, Outreach & Advocacy includes Communications)

Expenses (Foundation & Union)

Litigation: \$365,998
 Legislative: \$312,624
 Outreach and Advocacy: \$558,065
 Administration: \$208,232
 Management: \$186,381
 Fundraising: \$335,539

Total Expenses: \$1,966,839



Support and Revenue (Foundation & Union)

Foundation Donations: \$1,693,315
 Union & Membership Donations: \$820,610
 Grants: \$593,000
 Bequests: \$23,052
 Other Revenue (Includes legal settlement): \$64,804
 Investment Gain/Loss: \$186,545

Total Support: \$3,381,326

