



ACLU

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION
of CONNECTICUT

FALL / WINTER 2015

CIVIL LIBERTIES UPDATE



≡ A FREER FAIRER CONNECTICUT IN 2015 ≡

In 2015, the ACLU of Connecticut helped usher in major victories for our state:

Retroactive Repeal of the Death Penalty:

The state Supreme Court ruled that the execution of prisoners “no longer comports with contemporary standards of decency and no longer serves any penological purpose.”

Second Chance Society: This initiative reformed mandatory minimum sentences and other harsh drug laws to keep non-violent drug offenders out of prison and establish services to stop repeat offending.

Police Accountability Law:

A recently passed law enforcement reform package includes support for body cameras, mandatory prosecutorial reassignment in all fatal encounters,

the right to record police interactions, recruitment and retention of minority officers, and ongoing bias-free police instruction. This first-of-its kind legislation is a model for the rest of the country.

Closing the School-to-Prison Pipeline:

Clear guidelines are now required for police officers assigned to schools to reduce school arrests for misbehavior such as talking back, dress code violations or roughhousing.

Transgender Rights: Connecticut’s updated gender identity law is among the best in the country, enabling people to change their birth certificate to reflect their appropriate gender without invasive surgical requirements.

Social Media Protection: This new law forbids employers from requesting social media passwords from employees.

Remember, freedom can’t protect itself.

The ACLU of Connecticut and its supporters led the fight to accomplish these goals. None of these victories would have been possible without your help.

Enclosed is a donation envelope. We need your support to continue standing up for your rights in the Constitution State. In the coming year, we will fight for a fairer bail system, juvenile justice reforms and digital privacy protections including a requirement that police get a warrant to take content from your cell phone.

Please check acluct.org for updates on past and future priorities, and to donate online.

THE IMPACT OF SECOND CHANCE SOCIETY INITIATIVE IN CONNECTICUT

In 2015, lawmakers reduced minor possession of drugs from a felony to a misdemeanor and curbed the use of mandatory minimum sentences. These changes will save the state millions of dollars in incarceration costs in the coming years, which is money that can be spent on schools, health services and more police on the beat.

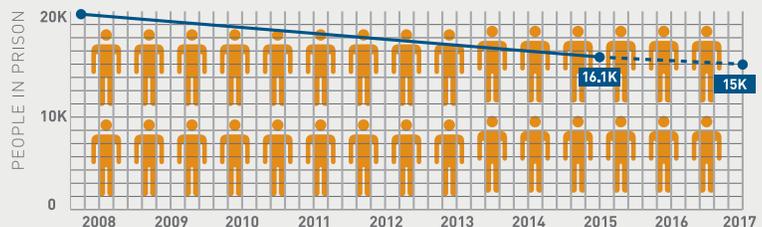
Prison is simply not an effective way of dealing with issues such as mental health and drug dependence. Diverting people in trouble into services instead of prison stops the cycle of reoffending and prevents crime.

2016 Savings: **\$6.6 MILLION**
2017 Savings: **\$12.4 MILLION**



CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM = **\$20 MILLION** IN SAVINGS OVER 2 YEARS

SINCE 2008, CONNECTICUT HAS BEEN A NATIONAL LEADER IN CUTTING ITS PRISON POPULATION:



CT CRIMINAL JUSTICE BY THE NUMBERS



18.9% of the jail population could secure their release for less than \$2,000 but do not have the financial means to do so.

\$50,262 is the annual cost of keeping someone locked up in Connecticut, according to some estimates.

10 people were in pretrial detention for prostitution offenses in Connecticut as of July 2015.

38 people were in pretrial detention for mere drug possession in Connecticut as of July 2015.

67% of Connecticut voters supported last year's reduction of penalties for small amounts of illegal drugs for personal use from a felony to a misdemeanor.

39.7% of the pretrial jail population held for less than \$20,000 is black.

63% of Connecticut voters support allowing adults to legally possess small amounts of marijuana for personal use.

10.4% reduction in prison population between 2010 to 2015, which coincided with historic decreases in crime.

6,000 fewer marijuana arrests every year after cannabis was decriminalized in 2011.

GET A WARRANT!



In June, lawmakers in the state House unanimously approved a bill that would require law enforcement to obtain warrants in order to gather cell phone information such as texts, Facebook messages and geo-locational data.

But the clock ran out to get approval from the Senate and the bill died, along with many others on the consent calendar.

The ACLU of Connecticut will continue fighting to protect your cell phone content. Police have tracked people's cell phones more than 14,000 times and the ACLU of Connecticut has not been able to identify a single instance in which a request has been denied to the police.

In 2016, we will succeed at winning a warrant requirement to access cell phone data.

Additional Fourth Amendment privacy rights that we will defend in 2016 include ensuring police obtain a warrant to use surveillance drones as well as strong regulations on roving devices, known as stingrays, that can intercept phone content.

WE NEED TO FIX CONNECTICUT'S BAIL SYSTEM

Today, more than 600 people in Connecticut jails could secure their release for less than \$2,000 but cannot afford to do so.

More than 1,000 people in the state could secure their release for less than \$5,000 but lack the financial means to afford bail.

Many of these people are held for minor, non-violent offenses. A number of them were arrested for mere drug possession-related offenses.

Once locked up, people can lose their jobs, homes and sometimes even their families.

And you are paying for this. It can cost between \$45,000 and \$50,000 to keep people locked up in our state. That's a minimum of \$3,750 per month cost to the public to hold someone who poses little threat to the community.

Meanwhile, truly dangerous people can secure their release as long as they have the resources to pay.

With your support, the ACLU of Connecticut will fight for a fairer system in which low-risk people are given supervised release and truly dangerous individuals are identified through an assessment and held. That would allow our state to prioritize public safety while also saving precious resources.

More importantly, a system truly based on public safety rather than the ability to pay will enable people to remain in their communities, keep their jobs and homes, and obtain lifesaving services.

POLICE ARE PART OF THE SOLUTION



BY CICERO BOOKER, RET.
LIEUTENANT, WATERBURY
POLICE DEPARTMENT

For 35 years I policed the streets of Waterbury.

During my time on the force, my colleagues in the department arrested people—as the law prescribed—who we knew would have benefited from services instead of prosecution. Drug users, people involved in sex work and those with mental illnesses too often end up ensnared in a criminal justice system that is not designed to help them.

Police know this because we are frequently the first point of contact for those individuals most in need.

There is a better way.

For example, in Seattle, Santa Fe and soon Albany, police officers are working with service providers to get people who use drugs help instead of punishment. Officers literally refer people to drug treatment, counseling and other services instead of jail. It works.

For years, our society has tried to arrest our way out of a drug problem. It hasn't worked. Now police can be part of the solution in Connecticut's cities.

There are other parts of the system we need to fix. When I was a police officer, we knew we were sending people into a system that failed them.

For a poor person, a \$2,000 bail may as well be \$2 million. For someone with

a lot of money, including major drug dealers, bail is not a problem.

We can create a fairer system that does not punish people merely because they are poor. New Jersey recently amended its bail system to a non-monetary model that assesses people for the risk they present to the public. Truly dangerous people are locked up while minor offenders are able to remain in the community, where they can work, pay rent and be with their families.

All of these things are possible but only with your support.

The ACLU of Connecticut is fighting hard to improve our state. That's why I'm proud to be a member and supporter.

CIVIL LIBERTIES—A CRITICAL POINT



BY STEPHEN
GLASSMAN
AND ANDY
SCHATZ

Several years ago, your ACLU of Connecticut refocused our efforts to secure lasting victories for civil liberties through legislation—and with your help we are succeeding.

While always ready to fight in court where necessary, winning residents' hearts and legislators' votes—instead of banging heads—better ensures lasting civil liberties victories. Since 2010, we have gained laws in areas as diverse as race and gender discrimination, police conduct, Internet privacy, immigration, and election and criminal justice reform. Our laws on transgender

rights, TASERs, and excessive force have become models for the ACLU in other states.

And we meet with many municipal, school, police and community leaders throughout the State to ensure support at the grass roots and grass tops levels.

As a result, this past legislative session has been perhaps the most productive. ACLU staff, members, partner organizations and donors wrote letters, spoke to lawmakers and participated in events, all of which was critical for that success.

But more must be done. We are within reach of further criminal justice reform, including ending counterproductive and discriminatory practices on solitary confinement and bail. We have the opportunity to ensure that the benefits of new electronic technologies are not

turned into a curse. And our legislative agenda for liberty includes much more.

Please join us in our fight for a more free and fair Constitution State.

Stephen Glassman is the Executive Director and Andy Schatz is the President of the ACLU of Connecticut

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STATE BOARD ELECTION COMING SOON >

Any member of the ACLU of Connecticut may recommend any member (including self) for one of the approximately 20 at-large seats on the Board of Directors on or before November 25, 2015, by sending the name and contact information of both the person making the recommendation and the person being recommended (if different) to info@acluct.org, or write to us at: ACLU of Connecticut, 330 Main Street, Hartford CT 06106.

The Governance Committee will consider all those recommended (and may request biographical or other information from potential new candidates), including current board members, and recommend a slate to the Board for nomination no later than

December 10, 2015. Candidates recommended but not nominated will be notified by December 15 and will have until January 25, 2016 to have their names included on the ballot for a contested election by filing a petition signed by at least 50 members of the ACLU of Connecticut, along with any biographical material in the form requested by the Board.

Ballots will be distributed by email in early February for return by March 10, 2016. If you do not receive an email with the ballot, please email us at info@acluct.org or at the mailing address set forth above.

Elected Board members will serve from April 1, 2016 through March 31, 2018.

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