

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



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



Photo credit: Rafael Rosario, ACLU-CT

ACLU of Connecticut Friends,

It is with pride that I write you for a final time as board president of the ACLU of Connecticut. Looking back, I am amazed at the progress we have made together for the betterment of our state. In the last four years, Smart Justice worked tirelessly to achieve long-held goals of Clean Slate legislation and a good start toward prosecutorial transparency. Our advocacy team ended prison gerrymandering and secured important steps in the efforts to improve voting rights and hold police accountable. The litigation team took on difficult and important civil rights and civil liberties cases in support of dignity and human rights for everyone in our state, especially those incarcerated in prisons and jails. Looking back fills me with confidence and optimism for our future in Connecticut. Looking forward, I know that the ACLU of Connecticut is ready for the toughest challenges of our time.

Thank you for sharing our tenacious belief in justice and equity for all. Thank you for standing with us in this fight.

Ben Solnit
Board President

Ben and I began our leadership of the ACLU of Connecticut at almost the same time, and during that tenure, our organization has grown significantly. Since 2017, we have built every program thoughtfully and strategically, transforming us into a true force in the state. We are committed to continue working with our partners and allies to ending discrimination and systemic racism in the criminal legal system, investing in our communities' health and well-being instead of policing and incarceration, increasing access to the ballot, and much more. We know that every policy and court case we fight for must account for and confront the systems that perpetuate white supremacist racism, particularly against Black and Latinx people. As an organization, we will be taking time to envision the world and Connecticut we want to see, by creating a strategic plan for the next three years and expanding to have a truly statewide presence. We will begin, in 2022, by adding to our litigation and advocacy teams, furthering our outreach to advance justice and equity in our cities, the courts, and at the Capitol.

My sincere thanks to Ben for his leadership during some of the most tumultuous times our country and state have ever faced. And my gratitude to you, supporter, for your dedication and commitment to our shared vision for a safe, free, and fair Connecticut.

David McGuire
Executive Director

2021 LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

Connecticut's 2021 legislative session ended at midnight on June 9, 2021, with the work of the ACLU of Connecticut and our many allies continuing until the final minutes. The ACLU of Connecticut weighed in with testimony on more than 150 bills, and we pushed the Connecticut General Assembly to pass civil liberties bills for voters' rights, criminal legal reform, racial justice, and more.

Our public policy and advocacy department made critical progress on voting rights, fought hard for the rights and dignity of incarcerated people, and continued to take on policing's political machine in 2021. Together with our Smart Justice leaders, they innovated to create "parking lot advocacy" at the COVID-closed Capitol, gathering outside in the parking lot in sun, wind, rain, snow, and heat to make sure legislators and the Governor couldn't ignore the power of justice-impacted people. With Smart Justice, they broke new ground for the country in 2021 with Clean Slate and fought hard for the rights and dignity of incarcerated people.

Highlights from the 2021 Legislative Session in Connecticut include:

CLEAN SLATE

ACLU Smart Justice Connecticut has been advocating for this bill to pass into law for three years. After pressure from Smart Justice and our allies, including the Connecticut Coalition Against Gun Violence, SEIU 1199 New England, and Stop Solitary, the Governor finally signed Clean Slate – the strongest in the nation – into law. Clean Slate will automatically erase a person's record if they have gone for a defined period of time without a new conviction (the time period varies for people based on the type of conviction). People who have served their time and successfully reentered society have earned the opportunity to thrive.

EARLY VOTING

After years of ACLU of Connecticut advocacy, the legislature successfully passed a resolution that will give Connecticut voters the chance to decide whether our state should adopt early voting, through a question that will appear on the November 2022 ballot. Laws that restrict access to the ballot – like Connecticut's current prohibition on early voting – most dilute the voting power of Black voters, as well as and including voters with disabilities, voters with inflexible work schedules, voters who lack childcare, voters who lack transportation, and many others for whom voting on a single Tuesday in November is impossible. We've advocated for more than a decade for early voting, absentee voting, and other commonsense policies to improve access to the ballot in Connecticut.

NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE BALLOT ACCESS

This year, the legislature took the first step toward giving Connecticut voters the chance to decide whether to allow no-excuse absentee voting as an option for all voters. The legislature passed a no-excuse absentee voting resolution this year and will need to do so again by a simple majority in 2023 for the question of absentee voting to make it to the ballot in 2024. This is another step forward toward modernizing and further democratizing Connecticut's voting process.; nearly 650,000 voters took advantage of no-excuse absentee voting in 2020, after we and others successfully allowed for no-excuse absentee voting for the November 2020 election due to the COVID pandemic.

AN END TO PRISON GERRYMANDERING

Connecticut is now the eleventh state to abolish prison gerrymandering. Counting incarcerated people where they are imprisoned for the purpose of redistricting – instead of their home communities – inflates the power of the districts where prisons are located, which are predominantly white and rural, at the expense of districts where incarcerated people reside, which are predominantly Black, Latinx, and urban. For more than a decade, the NAACP of Connecticut and we have fought to end prison gerrymandering. In early March, both organizations successfully launched a campaign to abolish the practice here, and the proposed state legislative redistricting maps reflect that change.





2022 WHAT'S NEXT

WHAT'S NEXT IN ADVOCACY FOR 2022:

As we head into 2022, we know the short legislative session (February through May) will be challenging. We expect to have to fend off attacks from prosecutors, police, and the Governor as they seek to increase incarceration of mostly Black and Latinx youth. We also know that our public policy and advocacy department and Smart Justice leaders, together with our allies from organizations across the state, are ready to keep fighting for new laws to advance civil rights and liberties, especially for people whom the government has made most vulnerable. This year, we will be expanding our public policy and advocacy department to include a new Fairfield County-based organizer. As our state heads toward an election season, we are also preparing to push back against politicians who will try to vilify and double down on harm of Black and Latinx youth, people who are living with a criminal record, and transgender youth. Our state must commit to moving forward, not backward into more discrimination.

STATE'S ATTORNEYS ACCOUNTABILITY

State's Attorneys are the top prosecutors in each of Connecticut's judicial districts. They serve eight-year terms, with no external performance evaluations by the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) during that time. We'll be advocating at the legislature for a law that brings State's Attorneys more in line with basic oversight requirements expected of other actors in the criminal legal system, including other prosecutors, and that starts using data to end biased and discriminatory patterns in State's Attorneys' decisions across our state.

#CARENOTCOPS

Under the leadership of our friends and partners with the Community First Coalition, we're working in solidarity with youth, parents, educators, and youth advocates to push for Connecticut to invest in counselors, not cops, in schools.

PROTECTING PEOPLE FROM POLICE DECEPTION

With our friends at the Innocence Project, we'll be advocating for the legislature to pass a law to prevent police from using deceptive practices to extract false confessions from innocent people, including children.

FREEDOM FROM COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES OF A RECORD

People reentering society after incarceration face more than 500 legal and policy barriers to being truly included in the world. While Clean Slate will make important strides toward fixing this, there are still gaps in that law, making it necessary for us to keep striving to end the endless cycle of collateral consequences of a criminal record. In 2022, Smart Justice will keep up the fight to end blanket bans that exclude entire groups of people from employment based solely on record and not individual assessments. This bill would require private employers to do the same thing that the state currently requires in its hiring practices. Under this bill, potential employers would need to look at job seekers as individuals, based on skills and qualifications and whether their record was in any way relevant to the job they're applying for.

HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR INCARCERATED PEOPLE

At the legislature, we will continue to advocate in partnership with our friends at Stop Solitary and others for the creation of independent oversight of the Department of Correction (something the legislature approved in 2021 but Governor Lamont chose to veto) and to end the cruel and unusual punishment of solitary confinement.

ON THE DOCKET

Our legal team of three has been hard at work. In cases on disability rights, the first amendment right to protest and record the police, women's rights, LGBTQ rights, housing rights, and the rights of people who are incarcerated, we're seeking justice, equity, and a better future for our state. In 2022, we're expanding our legal department to include a new legal fellow, to build our capacity to keep fighting in the courts for justice, liberty, and equity.

Clark v DOC - Incarcerated People's Rights and LGBTQ Rights

If the state decides to incarcerate someone, it has a moral and legal obligation to provide them with the medical care they need, including gender-affirming care for transgender people, which can be lifesaving. In 2020, we were honored to join this lawsuit as the new lawyers for Veronica-May Clark, who has been fighting for years for the Connecticut Department of Correction (DOC) to provide her with the gender-affirming medical and mental healthcare she needs. The case continues to move forward in federal court.

Friend v Gasparino - Free Speech and Policing

People must be able to speak truth to power by protesting the police. We're waiting for a decision from the Second Circuit Court of Appeals in this case, in which we represent Michael Friend, a man who was illegally detained and arrested by Stamford police while he was protesting near a police checkpoint.

Massamino v Benoit - Free Speech

People have the right to record the exterior of a police department, but Waterbury police didn't seem to get the memo when they arrested our client for exercising that right. We're suing Waterbury police employees Matthew Benoit and Frank Laone in federal court for illegally detaining and arresting Keith Massamino for filming the exterior of the Waterbury Police Department building from the sidewalk in front of it.

Olson v Coast Guard - 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. military service academies all ban parenthood among cadets, thereby forcing students to choose between parenthood and their degrees and careers. On behalf of a former cadet, and together with the national ACLU and Veterans Legal Services Clinic at Yale Law School, we're suing U.S. Coast Guard Academy to try to end its ban on parenthood.

Soule v CIAC - LGBTQ Rights and Gender Justice

Trans children are who they say they are, and they belong in our schools and on our sports teams. *In a case that seeks to undermine transgender students' rights to compete in school sports, we and the national ACLU continue to defend trans student athletes.* After an Arizona-based anti-trans group files a lawsuit challenging Connecticut's policy of including transgender students in school sports, we intervened to represent the interests of Andraya Yearwood and Terry Miller, two transgender athletes, and of all trans student athletes in our state. We had a victory in the district court, but the case is now under appeal in the Second Circuit.

Disability Rights CT v DOC - Disability Rights and Incarcerated People's Rights

Solitary confinement is physical and psychological abuse, including and especially for people living with mental illness. In this federal lawsuit, we are suing the DOC for its use of solitary confinement against people with mental illness incarcerated in DOC prisons and jails. We are proud to work with Disability Rights Connecticut, Yale Law School's Lowenstein International Human Rights Law Clinic, and Morrison & Foerster in this effort.

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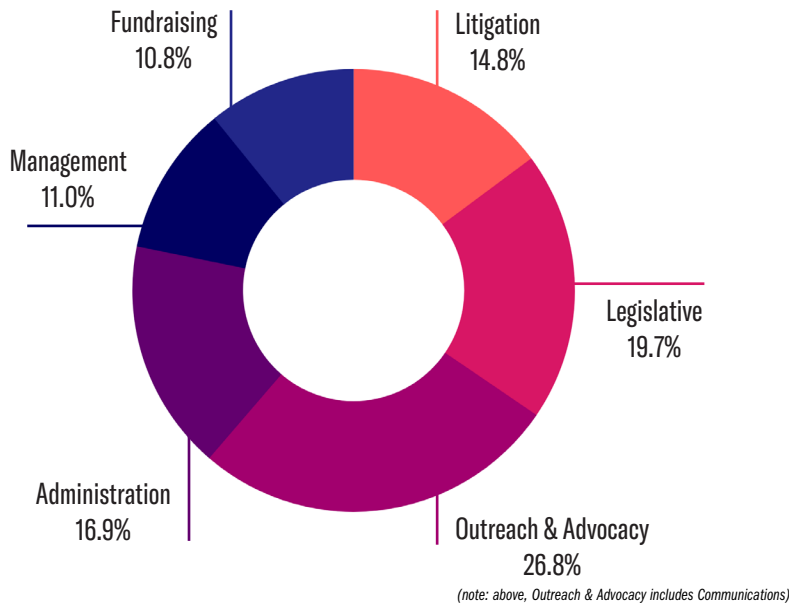
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Financial Information: April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021

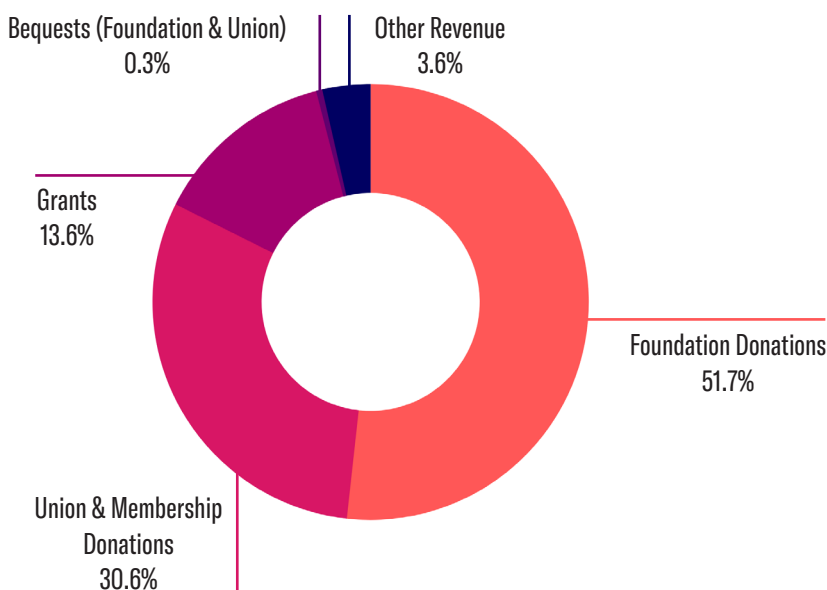
The ACLU-CT is comprised of two entities: the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut and the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut. Contributions to the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut support advocacy and lobbying on civil liberties issues and are not tax deductible. Contributions to the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



Expenses (Foundation & Union)

Litigation: \$285,184
 Legislative: \$378,553
 Outreach & Advocacy: \$515,536
 Administration: \$324,528
 Management: \$210,928
 Fundraising: \$208,517

Total Expenses: \$1,923,246



Support and Revenue (Foundation & Union)

Foundation Donations: \$1,533,190
 Union & Membership Donations: \$908,152
 Grants: \$402,402
 Bequests (Foundation & Union): \$13,615
 Other Revenue: \$105,669

Total Support: : \$2,963,028



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