

ACLU Georgia
WE THE PEOPLE



Annual Report 2018

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ACLU - A FORCE IN GEORGIA

Over the past two years, thousands of concerned Georgians have turned to **the ACLU of Georgia as the trusted, ethical, nonpartisan defender of our civil liberties**. They joined with us to oppose threats to our civil liberties both at the national level and here in Georgia. They stayed to help us combat voter suppression, support criminal justice reform, and protect freedom of speech, immigrant rights, women's rights, and more.

Our sacred, constitutional right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy. The past two years have found us tackling years of systematic voter suppression that left tens of

thousands of Georgians – predominantly people of color – disenfranchised. Leading up to the 2018 midterm election, it was all-hands-on-deck for the ACLU of Georgia. Our members and supporters pitched in to help us advocate, work for policy change at the legislature, and Get Out The Vote. One of our key concerns was to advance criminal justice reform in a state with a dismal record around mass incarceration, cash bail, and other abusive practices.

We are building for impact, adding expertise in legislative policy, civic engagement, and communications to complement our legal work and amplify outcomes. **This is Integrated Advocacy.** Community organizing and volunteer engagement, for example, bolster successful legislative advocacy at the state capitol.

As we successfully used Integrated Advocacy to challenge voter suppression in advance of the midterm election, we honed our skills and built teamwork. At the end of 2018, **ACLU of Georgia emerged as a stronger organization.**

Dr. King once stated: “We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now.” With his words in mind, we remain laser-focused on protecting voter rights and what we think of as the DNA of the ACLU -- **The First Amendment.**

The ACLU has become a force in Georgia because of your continued support, your activism, and your passion for the protection of our civil liberties. **We are deeply grateful.**



Andrea Young
Executive Director



Jack Kennedy
Board President

ACLU OF GEORGIA BY THE NUMBERS

- 83,000 supporters
- 15,000 social media followers
- 11,000 card carrying members
- 4,000 Guardians of Liberty
- 150 active volunteers
- 48 interns and fellows
- 48 community meetings, roundtables and events

The Ralph and Marjorie Knowles Voter Rights Fund



Established in 2017 with a generous gift from Marjorie Fine Knowles and contributions by friends and colleagues, the Knowles Fund is making possible some of our most urgent voter rights work. Knowles is the former Dean of the Georgia State University College of Law. She started her career clerking for a U.S. district judge, served as an assistant U.S. attorney, and held senior posts at

the Departments of Health, Education and Welfare, and Labor before moving to the South as a university law professor, and eventually Dean. Her husband Ralph, who passed away in 2016, was one of the South's preeminent attorneys who spent more than 45 years defending civil rights and civil liberties. The Knowles have supported the ACLU for over 40 years.

**160,000 registered
Georgia voters protected
from a voter list purge**



Canvassing in Gwinnett County

WE HAVE A GROUND GAME - INTEGRATED ADVOCACY

Amping up our media coverage, we turned the spotlight on voter rights as we challenged new aggressions against the right to vote. In August 2018, we saw this strategy reap great results in Southwest Georgia's Randolph County where legal action, national media attention, and grassroots activism combined to defeat a proposal by the local board of elections to close seven of the county's nine polling places.

As November grew closer, voter suppression tactics grew bolder. Right through election day, the Secretary of State and several county officials used all the tools of voter suppression to deny the vote to tens of thousands of Georgians. Our vote is the foundation of our civil liberties, and we would lean our full weight into protecting that right. In 2018, there were people whose votes counted only because the ACLU of Georgia moved to protect every Georgian's right to vote.

- We developed new capacity for voter engagement that can continue to reach tens of thousands of voters as we head toward 2020.
- Our political team lobbied for legislation that guaranteed evening and weekend voting hours and fairer legislative districts.
- We mounted legal challenges to confront poll closings, voter roll purges and other abuses.
- We won the first lawsuit challenging suppression tactics in the November 2018 elections, securing a victory before the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals.
- Our volunteers phoned our 21,000 members to alert them to the civil liberties issues in play in the election.
- We ended 2018 with a cadre of supporters: 83,000 strong.
- We strengthened our relationships and deepened our work with our partners.
- We took our voter education program on the road, across the state.



Volunteers phone banking



Press Conference in Randolph County

OUR IMPACT

PUTTING OUR LEGAL EXPERTISE TO WORK

Under the leadership of our new Legal Director, the ACLU of Georgia amplified the impact of its legal expertise, strategically adding demand letters and amicus briefs to our arsenal of tactics when a lawsuit wasn't a necessary or viable response. All told, we took legal action 76 times across the state.

VOTER RIGHTS

In late October 2018, just before the election, the ACLU of Georgia secured a significant victory for voters whose absentee ballots were rejected due to an alleged signature mismatch. The federal district court ruled in our favor, preventing the rejection of these ballots. The Secretary of State appealed this ruling. The Eleventh Circuit Court of

Appeals sided with the ACLU of Georgia and rejected the Secretary of State's request to deny due process for absentee voters. This was the first time a voter rights challenge was permitted so close to a Georgia election.

We secured other voter rights victories as well in the City of Savannah and in Sumter, Fulton, and Glynn Counties. These victories fought back some of the most egregious voter suppression tactics in the 2018 election and secured the vote for thousands of Georgians.



Signature match lawsuit partners

FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS Travel Ban

In January 2017, the ACLU of Georgia responded to the urgency of President Trump's travel ban on people of the Muslim faith who were detained on arrival at the Atlanta airport. The First Amendment specifically prohibits government policies that target people of a particular faith, and we sued the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency to obtain government documents related to their implementation of the ban. A federal court ruled in our favor and ordered the documents be turned over to us.

Hand-held Signs

The City of Savannah announced that it would enforce an unconstitutional ban on displaying hand-held

posters during a St. Patrick's Day parade the Vice President would be attending. Our lawsuit sought emergency injunctive relief to prevent the city from enforcing this unconstitutional ban along the parade route. The city rescinded its policy as soon as we filed suit, and parade-goers were able to hold up signs promoting the dignity of LGBT people in full view of the Vice President.

In a similar lawsuit, a federal district court ruled in favor of the ACLU of Georgia and granted a temporary restraining order preventing the State Capitol Police and other law enforcement officers from prohibiting the display of hand-held signs in the Capitol Building. Our action allowed people protesting an anti-immigrant bill to visually signal their opposition.

Student Free Speech

Nearly 80 years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that students do not “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.” In early March 2018, the student organizers of March for Our Lives called for national walkouts in schools across the country in advance of their march on Washington later that month. We wrote every major public school district in Georgia to advise them of their students' First Amendment rights. When some schools disciplined their students for participating in the walkout, the ACLU of Georgia intervened to prevent a five-day suspension for one of those students. Other schools required students to participate in the walkout, and

we intervened there as well. Either response is a violation of students' constitutional rights, and the ACLU of Georgia stepped in to protect them.

**17,000
Georgia
voters
protected
from
poll site
closures**

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Ending Cash Bail

A person's ability to leave jail and return home to fight the charges against them often depends on how much money they have in their pocket. Too often, the criminal legal system treats people differently based on wealth, in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause and 40 years of U.S. Supreme Court precedent.

Margery Mock, a Glynn County resident, was arrested and jailed for alleged criminal trespassing while trying to visit a relative at a motel. The court set her bond at \$1,256. Unable to pay the cash bond, she remained locked up for several days. Individuals like Ms. Mock who cannot afford

cash bail face an impossible choice: plead guilty or face loss of family, job, and home while their cases move slowly through the system.

Working with the national ACLU, the ACLU of Georgia filed a federal class action lawsuit against Glynn County, the county sheriff, the chief magistrate, and a private attorney under contract to the county. We sought an immediate and permanent change to a discriminatory and unconstitutional cash bail system, and the county immediately began implementing changes in response to our lawsuit. Settlement discussions concerning permanent solutions are underway.

Fairness in Sentencing

In late 2018, we successfully represented a disabled Vietnam veteran before the Superior Court of Elbert County. The court granted our motion to waive the nearly \$9,000 in probation fines and fees that were imposed as part of a sentence for a nonviolent marijuana crime for this veteran and his wife who survive on a modest fixed monthly income. This substantial penalty would have clearly been impossible for them to pay.



ACLU attorneys in Glynn County lawsuit

The Efficacy of Medical Marijuana

Suzeanna and Matthew Brill's son is chronically ill and was suffering from daily epileptic seizures. The Brills had sought the care of a doctor, administered the prescribed medicine, and turned to the only legal form of medical marijuana in Georgia - THC oil. None of it worked. To end the horror of helplessly watching their child convulse several times a day, the Brills treated their son's epilepsy in the

only way proven most effective - smoking the plant itself - which immediately stopped his seizures. For over 70 days, he remained seizure-free.

Yet, the Twiggs County sheriff arrested and jailed the Brills. Their son was ripped from them and placed in government custody without the only medicine that had stopped the seizures. That very day, their 15-year-old son suffered a seizure, was hospitalized, and

flatlined 15 times before being stabilized. As loving parents, the Brills sought our help because they are committed to their son's best interests and health.

Our amicus brief on behalf of the Brills led to their reunion with their son. In the 31 states that have passed comprehensive marijuana reform, this would not have happened.



The Brills with ACLU GA attorney

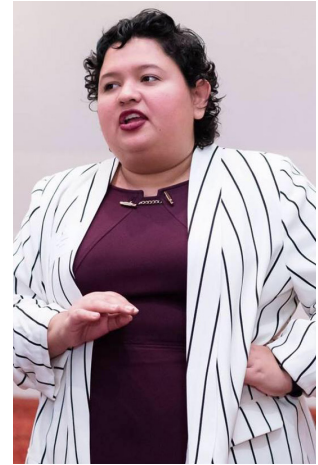
**2 million
reached
in social
media issue
campaigns**

Resilience - Maria's Story

Maria Palacios was two months old when her family brought her to the U.S. and eventually to Gainesville, Georgia. This country and Georgia are all she has ever known. Maria has been a legal permanent resident of Georgia since 2009 and a U.S. citizen since 2017. A parent, PTA President, business owner, and nonprofit leader, Maria wanted to represent her district in the Georgia State House of Representatives. However, her eligibility hinged upon the interpretation of the term

“citizen of the state.” The Secretary of State ruled that Georgia’s state constitution requires candidates to be U.S. citizens for at least two years.

Maria was determined to fight the battle to represent her community and had the courage to become the plaintiff in an ACLU lawsuit to regain her place on the ballot. A lower state court denied our petition, and the Georgia Supreme Court declined to hear the case. Maria went on to support other candidates and continue her community service.



Maria Palacios



Families Belong Together rally

**All 159 Georgia counties
have ACLU members**

LEGISLATIVE POLICY

IMPACT AT THE GEORGIA LEGISLATURE

Our work during the Georgia legislative session in early 2018 gave us **five significant wins**. From all the bills we evaluated, we selected five with important implications for civil liberties and where we believed we could have an impact.



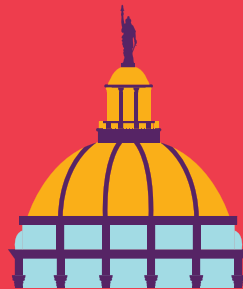
Citizen Lobby Day on redistricting



Press conference at Capitol

LEGISLATION SUPPORTED

- Senate Bill 407, Governor Nathan Deal's comprehensive **criminal justice reform** bill. Central to the bill were improvements to pretrial justice, particularly relating to reducing or eliminating misdemeanor cash bail for those who can't afford to pay. This bill passed.
- House Bills 764 and 65, which added PTSD and intractable pain to the list of qualifying conditions for **medical marijuana**. These bills passed.



LEGISLATION OPPOSED

- Senate Bills 309 and 363 would have limited **voter rights** by rolling back voting hours inside the City of Atlanta and reducing weekend early voting throughout the state. These bills were defeated.
- Senate Bill 452, known as the Deportation Pipeline Bill, would have transformed local police officers into federal **immigration** officers by mandating that, on the basis of suspicion alone, officers detain or transport people to a federal detention center. This bill was defeated.
- Senate Bill 375 would have allowed faith-based child-placing agencies to turn away same-sex couples looking to provide a safe and loving home to abused and neglected children. This bill was defeated.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Due to Georgia's legacy of racial oppression, the state easily and frequently sends people of color to jail and prison. Following the passage of Governor Deal's comprehensive criminal justice reform, our 2018 Smart Justice Georgia campaign highlighted the need for continuing attention to lowering incarceration rates and ending racial disparities within the criminal legal system.

The campaign energized our members and other voters to prioritize criminal justice reform as they voted in the 2018 midterms. Voter education was a priority, and our members and supporters hosted 27 events in Atlanta, Athens,

Macon, and Columbus. At the same time, our community engagement team participated with our partners in the Save Our Democracy Tour, visiting 11 additional communities across the state. We posted the civil liberties positions of four key statewide candidates as well as the voting records of all state house and senate members. We reached as many as two million visitors to our website and through social media. Our efforts contributed to the record turnout for the midterm election and to 11 wins in 12 legislative races we targeted because the candidates supported sound criminal justice reform positions.



Burrell Ellis launches Smart Justice GA



Community Conversation



Voices of Smart Justice event

OUR FUTURE

We are building for the long term. Over the next three years, we are focused on the fundamentals of democracy – mobilizing community voices to enact nonpartisan redistricting, fighting voter suppression in the courts, and expanding access to the ballot through our integrated advocacy model.

We are also building the next generation of civil liberties leaders through our robust internship program. Forty-eight interns and fellows – from high school students to law and doctoral students – shared their talents with us, performing critical work and providing insights and inspiration.



Summer 2018 interns



Marching at Atlanta Pride



Coalition partners at our office

THANK YOU

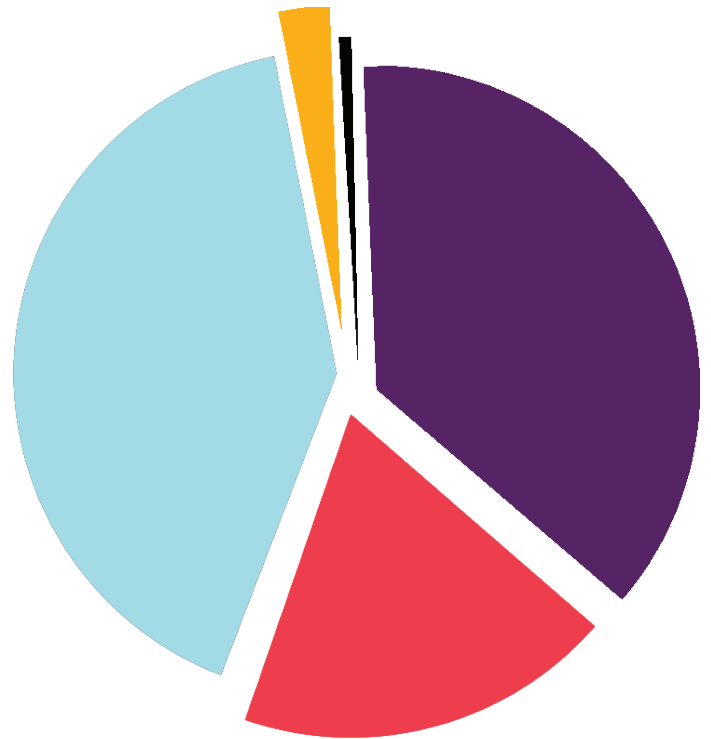
We are grateful to you for your support throughout the year and across the year.

- Our Members**
- Our Guardians of Liberty**
- Our Donors – Individuals, Law Firms, and Foundations**
- Our Board Members**
- Our Interns**
- Our Volunteers**

REVENUE

- CONTRIBUTIONS | \$888,534 | 37%
- REVENUE SHARE | \$455,455 | 19%
- GRANTS | \$988,117 | 41%
- BEQUEST | \$60,400 | 3%
- INVESTMENT AND OTHER | \$14,386 | 1%

TOTAL = \$2,406,892



TAKE A STAND FOR JUSTICE

WHAT WE DO:

- Protect the First Amendment and freedom of speech
- Protect reproductive freedom and women's rights
- Protect our sacred, constitutional right to vote
- End mass incarceration and racial injustice
- Protect freedom of religion and belief
- Defend the rights of immigrants
- Protect LGBTQ+ equality



HOW TO HELP

Since 1963, the ACLU of Georgia has defended, protected, and extended civil liberties for all Georgians. We bring this powerful legacy of more than half a century here in Georgia and 100 years of service from the National ACLU to the unprecedented challenges of our time. YOUR support makes this critical work possible.

MAKE A TAX DEDUCTIBLE GIFT TO THE ACLU FOUNDATION OF GEORGIA

at acluga.org/donate or by check to ACLU Foundation of Georgia, PO Box 77208, Atlanta, GA 30357

JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP or give the gift of membership at acluga.org/joinus (not tax-deductible)

JOIN THE GUARDIANS OF LIBERTY AND BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR at aclu.org/gol (not tax-deductible)

GIVE IN HONOR/MEMORY OF A FRIEND OR LOVED ONE with a **tax-deductible** tribute gift to the ACLU Foundation of Georgia.

OTHER WAYS TO GIVE TO SUPPORT THE ACLU OF GEORGIA

- Gifts of appreciated stock
- Gifts from your 401(k)
- Workplace giving
- Bequests and other Planned Gifts

MATCHING GIFTS – DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT

Many companies match their employees' donations to eligible nonprofit organizations. Your company's intranet or Human Resources department may

provide information on how to request a match.

TAKE ACTION! VOLUNTEER TO ATTEND CANDIDATE FORUMS, LOBBY DAYS, STATE OR LOCAL LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS at PeoplePower.org

STAY INFORMED – GET EMAIL ALERTS. Sign up on acluga.org

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND JOIN THE CONVERSATION. Find us **@acluofga** on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.



ACLU GA Staff

