

Strategic Plan 2020-2023

ACLU
Georgia

Approved by the
Board of Directors:
May 21, 2020

“Freedom makes a huge requirement of every human being. With freedom comes responsibility.”

– Eleanor Roosevelt

Letter from Leadership

In 2020, the ACLU celebrated 100 years defending liberty and rights for all. The ACLU of Georgia stands in that tradition with over 60 years of service to the people of Georgia. The ACLU is a historic organization, resolute in its pursuit of liberty and justice for all.

Over the last five months, the ACLU of Georgia’s Strategic Planning Committee has worked with staff to develop a road map that will guide our work over the next three years. We have listened to our stakeholders, including donors and members, evaluated our state’s political landscape, considered our partner organizations, and envisioned an ACLU of Georgia that will reach the strategic goals set out in this bold and dynamic plan. We continued this work undeterred by the evolving COVID-19 crisis. In fact, COVID-19 has highlighted the systemic disparities and inequities that continue to plague our society, and the need for a powerful organization is all the more urgent.

This strategic plan begins with our cornerstone issue — Voter Rights and Political Participation. We believe this is foundational to our ability to advance our other priorities and ultimately fulfill the vision and mission of the ACLU of Georgia.

Georgia is at a crossroads. As we strive to become a state that values all civil liberties and rights, this plan will guide us and focus our priorities, enabling us to build capacity and ensure sustainability, and remain nimble and responsive to unforeseen challenges as well as explore new opportunities. Through this aspirational plan, we will strengthen our core values and continue to be at the forefront of ensuring civil liberties and rights for all Georgians.

Your Partners in the Fight for Civil Liberties,



Andrea Young
Executive Director



Jack Kennedy
President of the Board



Lisa Bael Aman
Board Member and Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee



Vision and Mission

The ACLU of Georgia envisions a state that guarantees all persons the civil liberties and rights contained in the United States and Georgia Constitutions and Bill of Rights.

The ACLU of Georgia enhances and defends the civil liberties and rights of all Georgians through legal action, legislative and community advocacy, and civic education and engagement.

We are an inclusive, nonpartisan, statewide organization powered by our members, donors and active volunteers.

Core Values

The ACLU of Georgia believes and acts upon five core values.

Liberty and Justice

We hold that all people are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and have equality under the law.

Democracy and Patriotism

We believe that the United States must live out the true meaning of its creed, that all people are created equal, and all individuals should have their voices heard and be able to participate in our political process. We celebrate and strive to understand different perspectives, allowing us to stand united.

Nonpartisanship

Our work is guided by our principles, vision, and mission without regard to political party or personality.

Equity and Inclusion

We create a culture of belonging for all within our organization, one that respects and embraces differences, treats people equitably, and empowers staff and the Board to do their best possible work.

Integrated Advocacy

We are serious and resolute in our convictions and will utilize the most effective and efficient tactics to further our mission. We will center those most impacted by our work and work with an array of coalition partners.

Strategic Criteria

Essential to our strategic planning process was determining a set of objective criteria by which we could select our priorities. The following criteria reflect our core values and enable us to focus our resources to optimize the ACLU of Georgia's impact.

- ▶ Maximizes impact of vision and mission, and emphasizes core values
- ▶ Utilizes staff resources effectively, and leverages ACLU of Georgia's unique capabilities
- ▶ Increases awareness of the ACLU and grows our support base
- ▶ Engages diverse audiences
- ▶ Our progress is measurable

2020-2023 Strategic Priorities

In the next three years, we will proactively focus on five strategic priorities:

- 1. Voter Rights and Political Participation**
- 2. Women's Rights**
- 3. Criminal Legal System Reform**
- 4. Privacy and Surveillance**
- 5. Organizational Sustainability**

As a multi-issue organization, we will remain vigilant in all civil liberty issues and will support partners in areas where we do not lead. Furthermore, it is a strategic imperative for us to be an agile organization that can respond to new crises and opportunities. Should a new issue or possible priority present itself, we will apply the criteria described to assess our involvement.

“Every American citizen must have an equal right to vote. There is no duty that weighs more heavily on us than the duty to ensure that right.”

– Lyndon Johnson, March 6, 1965, on the introduction of the Voting Rights Act

VOTER RIGHTS and POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Universal voting is the foundation of democracy and fundamental endorsement of equality. The ACLU has a long history of fighting for voter rights in Georgia and was instrumental in the implementation of the Voting Rights Act from the 1960s on. Despite these efforts, the legacy of white primaries, gerrymandering, and an array of voter suppression tactics continues to concentrate political power in Georgia to protect discriminatory economic, social, and patriarchal interests. This has promoted the deliberate refusal to honor civil liberties and constitutional rights in Georgia.

Georgia witnessed extreme voter suppression leading up to the 2018 election — poll closures, voter roll purges, and more. During this time, the ACLU of Georgia became a lead organization in voter rights, establishing a strong non-partisan reputation. We also deepened our work in redistricting reform, which will be a central issue facing the state following the 2020 census.

First Amendment rights are a central element of political participation. Even individuals who are not eligible to vote (children, non-citizens), retain the right to speak, protest, organize, and petition for the redress of grievances. The ACLU of Georgia is virtually the sole organization in our state to take action when First Amendment rights are abridged.



Goal

By 2023, the ACLU of Georgia’s efforts will result in expanded access to voting and increased political participation. All levels of government — from county boards of elections to the Secretary of State — will strive to register every person, maintain their registration, and guarantee every single eligible voter has easy access and the ability to vote. Further, the ACLU of Georgia will continue to combat any threats to all Georgians’ First Amendment rights.

Key Strategic Components

- ▶ Expand access to the ballot, especially for individuals who are most vulnerable and historically disenfranchised.
- ▶ End gerrymandering in Georgia.
- ▶ Educate voters on ACLU of Georgia’s priorities to drive turnout.
- ▶ Protect First Amendment rights to political participation.

“Women’s rights are an essential part of the overall human rights agenda, trained on the equal dignity and ability to live in freedom all people should enjoy.”

– Ruth Bader Ginsburg

2 WOMEN’S RIGHTS

Throughout the ACLU’s history, great strides have been made to protect women’s rights, including women’s suffrage, education, women entering the workforce, and most recently, the Me Too Movement. Despite this incredible progress, women still face discrimination and are forced to constantly defend challenges to their ability to make private decisions about reproductive health.

Overall, women make just 78 cents for every dollar earned by men. Black women earn only 64 cents and Latinas earn only 54 cents for each dollar earned by white men. Nationally, Georgia is among the worst states in terms of reproductive health. It has the highest maternal mortality rate in the country and in 2019, the Georgia legislature enacted one of the most restrictive anti-choice bills in the country. The ACLU was the lead organization in striking down this six-week ban in court.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed even greater gender-oriented fissures in our society. Women, and particularly women of color, are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic — they are more likely to lose their jobs, more likely to work in essential jobs on the frontlines of the pandemic, and more likely to struggle with school closures and the loss of childcare for their children. COVID-19 gives this work even more urgency.

Goal

By 2023, the ACLU of Georgia’s efforts will result in increased reproductive rights and healthcare, more pro-choice elected officials, improved racial and economic equality for women in Georgia, and more women advocates.

Key Strategic Components

- ▶ Ensure access to reproductive healthcare, including safe and legal abortions in Georgia.
- ▶ Develop and advance a statewide women’s rights agenda rooted in racial and economic justice.
- ▶ Cultivate and sustain a consortium of women leaders to advance ACLU issues.



“Like Jim Crow (and slavery), mass incarceration operates as a tightly networked system of laws, policies, customs, and institutions that operate collectively to ensure the subordinate status of a group defined largely by race.”

– Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*

3 CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM REFORM

Our country’s mass incarceration system, rooted in the history of slavery, has devastated communities of color across the country, particularly Black communities, for decades. The U.S. leads the world in incarceration, and Georgia leads the nation in per capita rate of people under correctional control. As civil rights laws expanded access for African Americans, the criminal legal system expanded, punishment increased, and civil rights were taken away. Civil rights advocate and author Michelle Alexander describes this as “The New Jim Crow.”

The ACLU of Georgia has a long history of working on criminal justice reform, seizing opportunities to push for reform whenever those opportunities arise. Progress was achieved under Governor Nathan Deal — a culmination of criminal justice advocates’ tireless work, particularly from the Southern Center for Human Rights (SCHR), and the Georgia Justice Reform Partnership, which includes the ACLU.

That progress came under threat with the election of Governor Brian Kemp, who campaigned on “tough on crime and gangs.” The spread of COVID-19 brought new attention to the conditions inside detention facilities and the immediate threat of the virus spreading. Most recently, with the explosion in awareness around police violence and systemic racism, a tremendous opportunity to significantly reform Georgia’s criminal legal system has become more evident.



Goal

By 2023, the ACLU of Georgia’s efforts will result in reducing the population of our prisons and jails, ultimately leading to a reduction in prison beds and facility closures. The criminal legal system in Georgia will be more humane, and the leadership that controls the prisons and jails will be held accountable for violations of civil and human rights. The ACLU of Georgia will ensure that gains in marijuana and bail reform remain intact, and we will push forward on decriminalization of marijuana in Georgia.

Key Strategic Components

- ▶ Release incarcerated people who are high-risk and those who pose no threat to the public until the COVID-19 crisis is contained.
- ▶ Elect sheriffs, district attorneys, judges, and statewide leaders who are supportive of criminal legal system reform.
- ▶ Reduce the jail and prison population and advocate for humane conditions inside detention facilities.

“No system of mass surveillance has existed in any society that we know of to this point that has not been abused.

– Edward Snowden

4 PRIVACY AND SURVEILLANCE

Georgia lacks any meaningful law relating to the protection of personal information of its citizens. With few exceptions, under Georgia’s laws, anyone is free to exploit personal and/or sensitive information of Georgia residents without consent, compensation, or transparency. The rise of facial recognition technology gives new urgency to this issue. Schools, airports, police body cams, and license plate readers are just some of the locations and ways the government collects personal data. Abuses arise from the action and inaction of state and private actors.

The issue of privacy and surveillance is a core civil liberty issue, but few organizations address it. We often surrender privacy without conscious decisions or awareness of all relevant facts. As we enter this arena, made even more salient by efforts to contain COVID-19, we will lead with fact-finding and research.



Goal

By 2023, the ACLU of Georgia will identify specific privacy and surveillance concerns facing Georgians and identify potential legislative, public education, and other advocacy actions to protect civil liberties relating to the use of surveillance and other collections of personal data.

Key Strategic Components

- ▶ Conduct research on privacy and surveillance issues in Georgia regarding both state and private actors.
- ▶ Research strategies for addressing student privacy with respect to educational technology.

“... we established five essential qualities that affiliates needed to be successful: accountable, disciplined, ambitious, collaborative, and strategic.”

– Anthony Romero and Geri Rozanski, ACLU

5 ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

In June of 2017, the Board of Directors approved the Strategic Affiliate Investment (SAI) business plan.

Fundamentally, SAI is a National ACLU program to support affiliates in developing core capacities and advocacy skills. The mandate of the business plan, as adopted, is that by the end of FY2023, the ACLU of Georgia would sustain the expanded staff structure and program level without continued subsidy from the National ACLU.

We have made substantial progress. Since receiving the first SAI grant, we have decreased our annual subsidy from National and raised more funds locally. We have also learned that certain issues resonate more with current and potential supporters. With this in mind, it is critical that the ACLU of Georgia remains nimble and able to respond to issues as they arise, particularly those that can attract new and increased support.

Integral to a sustainable organization is a diverse and inclusive leadership team and staff. The ACLU of Georgia has applied Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) principles to its hiring operations and Board development and will continue to prioritize this. Finally, we will continue to build a strong volunteer base—constituents who will advocate for civil liberties, voters who will knock on doors, and people who will lend their talents and skills to strengthen our affiliate.

Goal

By 2023, the ACLU of Georgia will be positioned to financially navigate economic cycles and turmoil while also having competencies, people and member resources to be agile in prioritizing and addressing civil liberties challenges as they arise. Our Board, staff, leadership team and volunteer base will reflect the diversity of the state.

Key Strategic Components

- ▶ Triple annual fundraising over the next three years.
- ▶ Integrate Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) into board, staff and operations as well our donor and member bases.
- ▶ Build staff capacity to be agile and flexible.
- ▶ Build an even stronger and more diverse Board of Directors.

Thank you

to the members of the Strategic Planning Committee



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