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# **ACLU of Alaska**

## Annual Report 2024

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# OUR MISSION & VISION STATEMENT

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The ACLU of Alaska defends the civil rights and liberties of all Alaskans through litigation, advocacy, and community engagement. We strive to create a more equitable state by partnering with a diverse network of Alaskans dedicated to preserving the rights guaranteed by the U.S. and Alaska Constitutions.

We envision a future where every Alaskan lives with dignity, enjoys full constitutional freedoms, and every community supports equity and justice for all.

## **Our Values**

**Equity:** We center equity for all Alaskans - especially those who have experienced historic, systemic marginalization - in our litigation, advocacy, and community engagement.

**Respect:** We treat all Alaskans with respect and dignity. We act with integrity that inspires trust.

**Compassion:** We advocate with compassion and fairness. We share compassion for people and communities impacted by systemic oppression. We provide compassion to each other as we carry out mentally and emotionally challenging work.

**Connective:** We represent the collective responsibility that uniquely calls us to protect each other and our state.

**Innovative:** We use creative and non-traditional legal and advocacy practices to effectively defend and protect civil rights and liberties. Our advocacy toolbox is diverse and expansive.

**Honesty:** We are honest with our communities and ourselves about the scope and scale of work we can take on given our resources.



Above: The ACLU of Alaska was invited to serve as Grand Marshall for the Anchorage Pride Parade in June. Staff were joined by supporters and friends in the parade.

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# OPENING MESSAGE



Friends,

The ACLU of Alaska is strong and ready. This past year, our organization helped safeguard the people of Alaska from threats to equality, free speech, and voting rights. We expanded access to reproductive care, stood up for a more just criminal legal system, and fought for the dignity of unhoused Alaskans. We grew our capacity to meet those challenges and for the challenges to come.

The ACLU of Alaska's mission is to protect and defend the civil rights and liberties of Alaskans. Our successes in 2024 show that we have the skills to stand up for the values that define and underlie our everyday work.

In 2025, the ACLU of Alaska will continue our work to defend Alaskan families and communities. We will work to prevent the erosion of basic rights for queer and transgender Alaskans and protect our communities against threats of mass deportation. We will defend the voices and votes of Alaskans in the coming months and years. We commit to ensuring that our state's constitution continues to be a defensive wall against federal overreach.

As we enter the new year and confront a new political environment, the ACLU of Alaska is prepared. Your support over the last year proved critical to our success, and we will continue to rely on you moving forward. We celebrate the success of the past year and know that we will meet the moments ahead, together.

*Mara Kimmel*

Mara Kimmel, Executive Director

## STAFF

**Francesca Ciampa** Alaska Fellow- Policy\*  
**Helen Malley** Skadden Legal Fellow\*  
**Jordyn Chabotte** Mat-Su Organizer\*  
**Katherine Wagner** Staff Attorney\*  
**Laura Herman** Director of Strategic Development  
**Lu-Anne Haukaas Lopez** Deputy Director\*  
**Mara Kimmel** Executive Director  
**Matthew Green** Operations Manager  
**Megan Edge** Prison Project Director  
**Meghan Barker** Communications and Engagement Director  
**Michael Garvey** Policy Director  
**Natalie Cauley** Justice Catalyst Legal Fellow  
**Ruth Botstein** Legal Director  
**Susan Orlansky** Senior Counsel  
**Tamika Harris** Alaska Fellow- Community-Centered Fundraising\*  
**Tuan Graziano** Donor Relations Manager

### Staff sendoffs

**Jacqueline Shepherd** Prison Project Intake Attorney  
**Melody Vidmar** Staff Attorney  
**Nithya Thiru** Queer and Trans Justice Program Manager

## BOARD

**Sam Thompson** President  
**Rich Curtner** Vice President  
**Sheri Heritage** Treasurer  
**Gabriela Olmos** Secretary  
**Kevin McGee** Equity Officer  
**Amana Mbise**  
**Besse Odom**  
**Christina Love**  
**Crystal Nixon-Luckhurst**  
**Irene Tresser**  
**Mino Minaei**

\*new staff in 2024

# ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

## IN THE NEWS

**8** Op-eds published by staff and board in state newspapers

**57** Media hits featuring ACLU of Alaska staff or work

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

**10** Mat-Su Action Nights

**29** Events hosted with community partners

## LEGAL

**12** Cases handled

**3** Cases resolved

**136** Legal intake requests  
*(excludes Prison Project)*

## LEGISLATIVE

**23** Bills tracked in the Alaska legislature

**30** ACLU of Alaska staff meetings with members of the legislature

**775** Messages from Alaskans sent to legislators on priority bills

## YOUR IMPACT

Join us in celebrating our collective impact as we continue to work together to ensure civil rights for all. It takes incredible resources to sustain this work. Your treasures, talents, time, and ties advance civil liberties for all Alaskans.

### FUNDRAISING & GIFTS

**3,132**

Member donors

**\$516K**

Grants awarded

**2,301**

Gifts from Alaskans

### PRO BONO PARTNERS

Arnold & Porter

Cindy Woods

Eric Glatt, Borealis Legal Services

Friedman Rubin Trial Lawyers PLLP

Highlands Law Firm LLC

Howard Anderson, Truluck Thomason LLC

K&L Gates

Lambda Legal

Lawyers Cmte for Civil Rights Under Law

Legal Voice

Native American Rights Fund

Nations Law Group

Northern Justice Project

Perkins Coie LLP

Planned Parenthood Federation of

America

Rich Curtner

Stoel Rives LLP

Tim Seaver, Seaver & Wagner LLC



# DIGGING INTO THE WORK STRATEGIC PLAN EXECUTION



# STRENGTHENING OUR CORE TO EXTEND OUR REACH

**Revising our guiding mission and vision.** In the fall of 2023, the ACLU of Alaska hired SALT, LLC, to facilitate a Strategic Planning Process. SALT worked with our Board of Directors to revise our strategic direction. In the next three years, the ACLU of Alaska will solidify our organizational stability, strengthen our effectiveness, and nurture our partnerships. These three goals are critical to ensuring strength and sustainability in the years to come.

**“We envision a future where every Alaskan lives with dignity, enjoys full constitutional freedoms, and every community supports equity and justice for all.”**

The ACLU of Alaska’s 2024 revised Vision Statement

**Investing in our greatest resource.** Thanks to a grant from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, the ACLU of Alaska was able to secure trauma training staff support from Managing Me Enterprises. These sessions have allowed our staff to process the hard and challenging themes and situations they are exposed to, and build tools for personal and professional resiliency. Investing in the mental and emotional well-being of our greatest resource — our staff— is critical to ensuring that this work can be sustainable for the hard years to come.

**Building systems for success.** In 2024, the ACLU of Alaska received hundreds of requests for legal assistance from Alaskans across the state. In order to better serve our community, we’ve revamped the legal intake procedures and obtained a new case management system that will be translated into seven other languages in 2025. The new systems allow us to be more organized and responsive to the legal needs of Alaskans who seek our help.

# PROTECTING OUR VOICE & OUR VOTE

**Defending the right to peaceably assemble.** During the spring legislative session, we successfully defeated a proposal by Governor Michael Dunleavy to curtail our free speech and assembly rights. While the bill passed through several committees, public testimony opposing the bill was so fierce that legislative leaders didn't move the bill. We'd like to thank the Alaskans who weighed in and provided testimony against HB 386/SB 255, making it clear to decision-makers that this was a bad call for Alaskans.

**Litigating for fair and free elections.** In 2022, the ACLU of Alaska filed a lawsuit when the Division of Elections failed to notify more than 5,000 voters of clerical errors and rejected their ballots without any opportunity to correct the errors during the 2022 special election. The ACLU of Alaska's legal team presented oral argument in December. This case is ongoing and a decision is expected in 2025.

**Working towards elections policy change.** During the spring legislative session, we worked with partners to improve elections through policy change. While the Senate passed an election reform bill on the final day of session in May, it didn't have the support it needed to pass before time ran out. Passing meaningful election reform is a top priority for the ACLU of Alaska in 2025.

**Getting out the vote.** This year, the ACLU of Alaska worked in various communities to turn out eligible voters. The Alaska Prison Project developed a Prisoner Rights Guide that was distributed and posted in all institutions across the state to support incarcerated and formerly incarcerated Alaskans who are eligible to vote. The Queer and Trans Justice Program launched a "Vote with a Friend" program and provided opportunities for LGBTQIA2S+ Alaskans to stay safe while casting their ballot. Thanks to a grant from the Alaska Voter Hub, we teamed up with social media influencers in Alaska to spread non-partisan voting messages and information on how people can register to vote and cast their ballot, which reached over 50,000 Alaskans online.

**Responding to election threats.** Upon concerns of voter intimidation in Whittier, the ACLU of Alaska worked with the American Samoan community in Whittier and Anchorage on voting rights and how to interact with law enforcement.

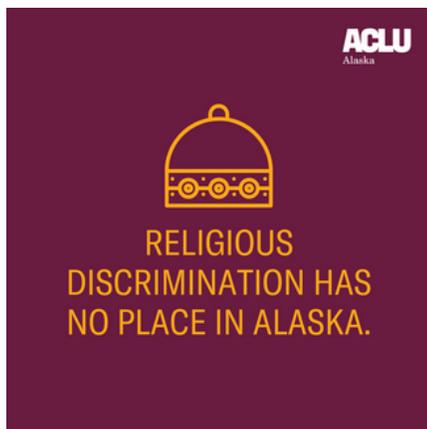


Above: ACLU of Alaska influencer Derrick Moore (@hardawaylearning) shares his first time voting on Instagram and TikTok as part of our Get Out the Vote effort.

# BUILDING A MOVEMENT: THE ALASKA PRISON PROJECT

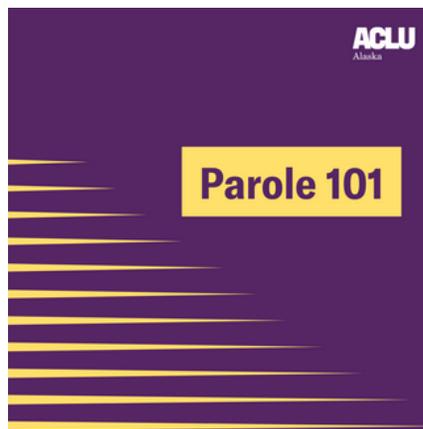
William "Jamal" Gary's religious freedom case was resolved when Anchorage Correctional Complex agreed to give him access to a prayer rug and make other religious accommodations.

We settled the case after the Department of Corrections (DOC) decided to honor Mr. Gary's right to religious freedom.



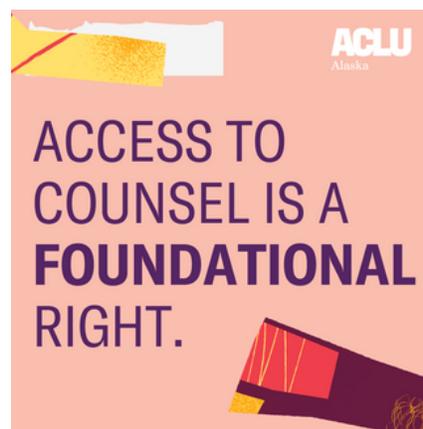
In Juneau, the Alaska Prison Project tackled two big legislative priorities: reform for the Alaska Board of Parole, and addressing deaths in DOC custody. ACLU of Alaska staff provided testimony to key

committees and delivered impacted Alaskans directly to decision-makers — even when they canceled a major hearing at the last minute. This work will continue in the 2025 legislative session.



Sexual violence in prisons continues to be an overwhelming issue that is reported to the ACLU of Alaska through our intake process. To build Alaska's legal expertise on

this issue, we hosted a Continuing Legal Education (CLE) training in September for more than 30 Alaska lawyers interested in learning how to represent incarcerated people experiencing sexual violence.



This year, we saw issues with DOC's unconstitutional mail policies and procedures, incarcerated Alaskans' inability to access counsel, gross medical privacy violations, and ensuring eligible,

incarcerated voters could cast their ballots in the 2024 elections. We worked with DOC where possible to resolve these issues and filed reports to federal agencies to investigate unresolved concerns.

## OTHER NOTEABLE NUMBERS

**2** We filed two cases to address the excessive sentencing of juveniles

**5** With support from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, we produced five new Prisoner Rights Guides.

## THE ALASKA PRISON PROJECT IN THE COMMUNITY

With the help of more than a dozen volunteers from the Anchorage Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, we began distributing monthly newsletters to incarcerated people in facilities across the state. These newsletters have included critical information, including legal case updates, legislative action items and news, 'Know Your Rights' information, and other community updates.



Above: Volunteers from the Anchorage Unitarian Universalist Fellowship stuff hundreds of newsletter envelopes to send to incarcerated Alaskans.



The ACLU of Alaska's Prison Project grew our network of pro bono attorneys. We have found pro bono representation for incarcerated Alaskans experiencing medical malpractice, wrongful deaths, and transgender rights issues while incarcerated, all of which have supported the vast legal needs we are witnessing across the state.



**DE CARCERATED**

DEcarcerated has been an annual event hosted by the ACLU of Alaska to highlight the voices of people who have interacted with the criminal legal system and to create space for those who are incarcerated to be part of the community. We paused DEcarcerated in 2024, but are looking forward to new events in 2025. Stay tuned!

# DEFENDING OUR EQUAL RIGHTS: QUEER AND TRANS RIGHTS IN ALASKA

**Pushing back on discrimination against trans students.** The ACLU of Alaska filed litigation in January against the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (MSBSD) over its policy preventing transgender students from using bathrooms and locker rooms that match their gender identity. The ACLU of Alaska presented oral argument on our motion for preliminary injunction in late December on this case. A decision is expected in 2025.

**Defending the freedom to read.** The ACLU of Alaska, with the Northern Justice Project, LLP, filed a lawsuit against the Mat-Su Borough School District (MSBSD) for the removal of 56 books from school libraries that contained ideas and identities that the Board desired to suppress. This fall, the judge granted a preliminary injunction, requiring the MSBSD to return nearly all titles to school shelves before the start of the 2024-2025 school year. Soon after, the MSBSD settled the case, keeping the books on library shelves.



Above: Plaintiffs and lawyers from the ACLU of Alaska and Northern Justice Project point to the Bill of Rights.

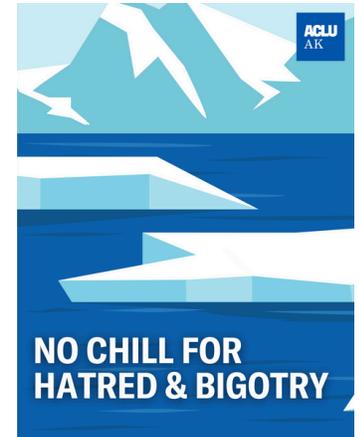
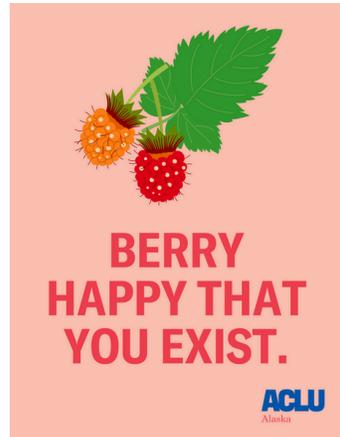
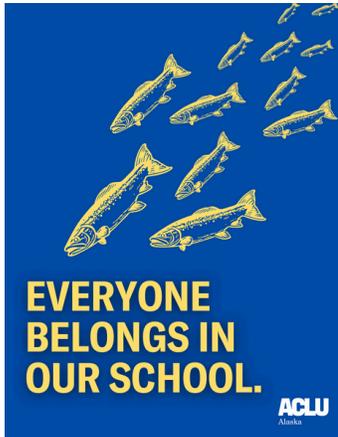


In September, the ACLU of Alaska participated in Banned Books Week to celebrate the freedom to read and access intellectual information. With local community partners and bookstores in the Mat-Su Valley, we collected banned and challenged book donations and transformed the Alaska Bookmobile into the Alaska Banned Bookmobile. We co-hosted two pop-up events in Wasilla and Anchorage, where members of the public could come to pick up a banned or challenged book to take home. Attendees also read aloud a segment of the books that later aired on Out North Radio.

Left: Volunteer Randy Robinson shows her shirt that says “Censorship is the real obscenity,” after reading a segment of a banned book in the Alaska Banned Bookmobile at a September pop-up event in Wasilla.

**Loud and proud in the legislature.** With partner organizations across the state, the ACLU of Alaska worked in the legislature to fight bills that targeted transgender Alaskans, particularly youth. We generated widespread opposition to bills that would have codified the existing policy to ban trans girls from participating in school sports, and that would have created physician liability for providing gender-affirming care. While none of these harmful bills passed, the rhetoric used by members of the legislature at many points was hateful and discriminatory. We are on high alert for these same threats in 2025.

## CREATING SPACE FOR QUEER & TRANS JOY



In the Mat-Su, the ACLU of Alaska created monthly opportunities, like Mat-Su Action Nights and Listening Sessions, for queer and trans people and allies to come together to connect, find support, engage in acts of joy, and celebrate strength and visibility. In July, attendees at the Mat-Su Action Night crafted messages of love and belonging for the LGBTQIA2S+ community in the Mat-Su. We expanded these messages and created posters and stickers (above) that conveyed messages of love and acceptance, and distributed them throughout the community. You can download and print posters here.



In June, the ACLU of Alaska was invited to serve as Grand Marshall for the Anchorage Pride Parade. Staff and members of the Board of Directors were joined by supporters and friends in the parade to celebrate LGBTQIA2S+ Pride. ACLU of Alaska staff also participated in Pride celebrations in Soldotna and the Mat-Su Valley.



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## PROTECTING REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN COURT

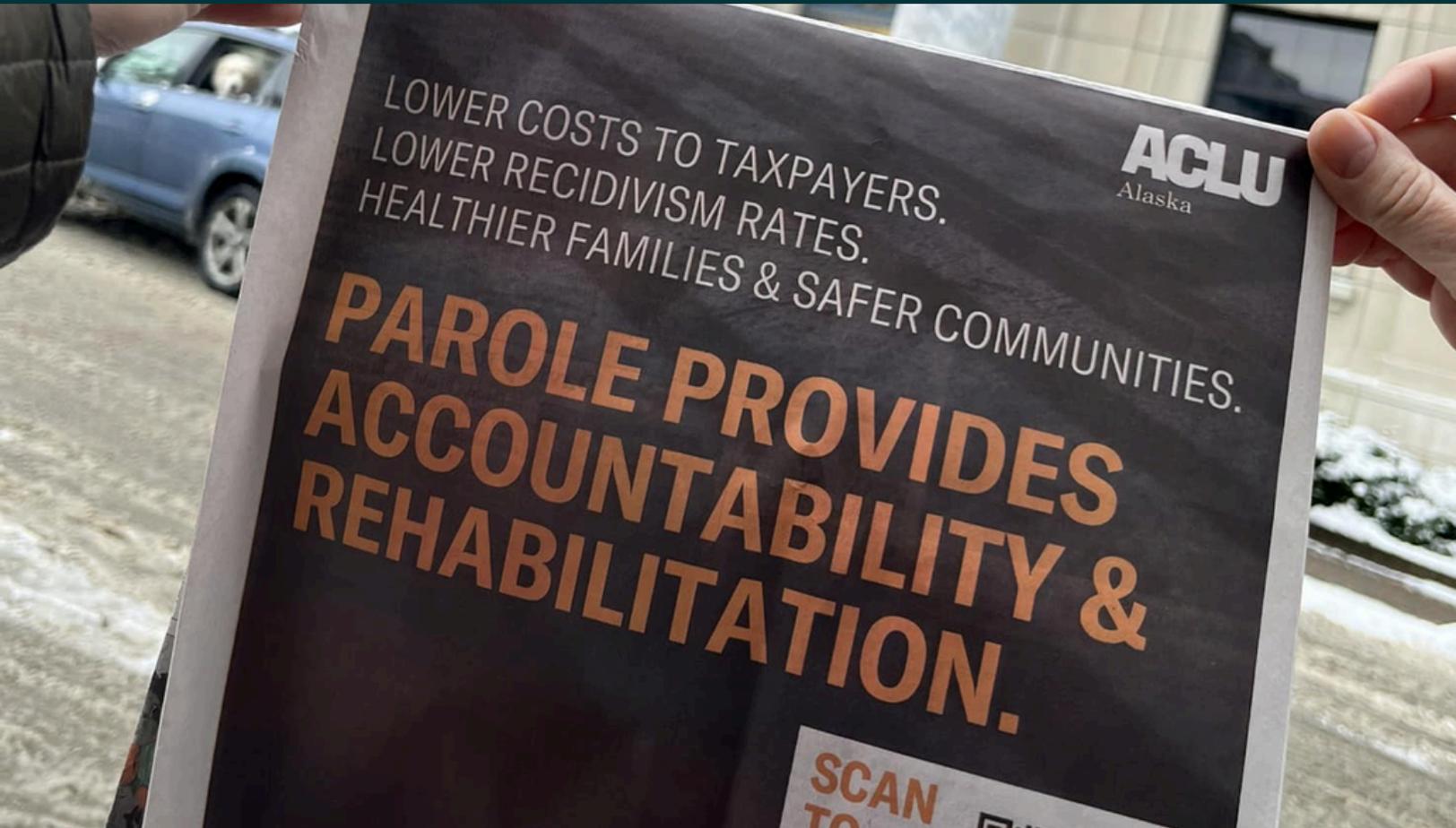
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Above: Alaskans exercise their First Amendment rights in Anchorage.

This past year, we filed a lawsuit with Planned Parenthood challenging a law that prevents certain Advanced Practice Clinicians (APCs) — such as physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and certified nurse midwives — from providing both medication and aspiration abortions. With the hard work of our partners across the state, the court struck down an unconstitutional statute that allowed only physicians to provide these services and expanded abortion access for Alaskans across the state, especially in rural areas. While the state has appealed the ruling, the Superior Court's ruling is in effect pending a decision by the Alaska Supreme Court.



# OUR MOMENTUM FOR 2025 MEETING THE MOMENT TOGETHER



# BUILDING A FIREWALL: PROTECTING & DEFENDING CIVIL RIGHTS & LIBERTIES

**We are prepared.** In the last year, the ACLU of Alaska worked with our national organization and local partners to plan for the 2024 Presidential Election. We were prepared for a Trump victory and are poised and ready to work with all Alaskans to protect our civil rights and liberties.

## HOW WE RISE TO MEET THE MOMENT



**Community education & partnership.** We're working on various items- 'Know Your Rights' presentations, legal clinics, online resources, and more — to help Alaskans defend their rights in the years to come. [Stay connected with us](#) for more details in 2025.



**Protecting Alaskan communities and critical rights.** We're quickly working to build networks of protection for communities, particularly immigrants and refugees, and LGBTQIA2S+ Alaskans, who are likely to be impacted the quickest by the new administration. Privacy rights for Alaskans and free and fair elections are two areas we will work to defend vigorously.

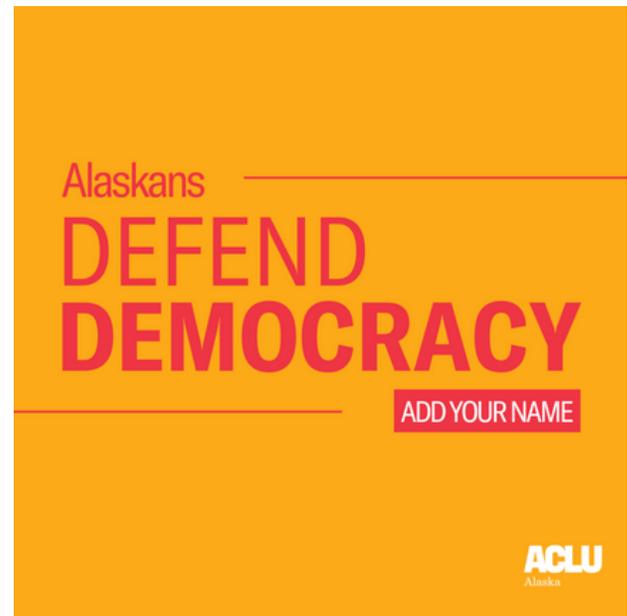


**Defending our fundamental rights to dissent.** In November, the U.S. House voted on H.R. 9495, a bill that at its core would enable current and future presidential administrations to stifle free speech, target political opponents, and punish disfavored groups — including groups like the ACLU. The House passed the bill, but hundreds of thousands of people contacted their members of Congress opposing H.R. 9495 and over 30 members changed their votes. We will keep up the fight and urge the Senate to vote NO on this bill if it comes up for a vote.

# TOGETHER FOR LIBERTY & JUSTICE

## ACCEPT THE CALL TO ACTION

2025 will be a test of our ability to defend our Constitution and our communities that face greater challenges in this new political climate. We are ready. We'll be calling on our supporters and our fellow defenders of democracy to take action at critical times, and we hope you'll stick with us. [Make sure you're on our email list](#) to accept future calls to action.



## PHILANTHROPY IS ACTIVISM

We need your help to protect our liberties and rights. People across Alaska are coming together to stand up for what they believe is right. Take your stand — become a card-carrying member of the ACLU or make a gift today.



*scan  
to take  
action*

or visit [action.aclu.org/give/alaska-join-renew-today](https://action.aclu.org/give/alaska-join-renew-today).

## INTERESTED IN HOSTING A HOUSE PARTY?

Hosting a gathering of our fellow Alaskans who share the commitment to civil rights and liberties is a great way to support the cause, help us fundraise, and connect advocates to action opportunities.

Contact [giving@acluak.org](mailto:giving@acluak.org) for more information on how to host or donate.

# ACLU

Alaska

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