

# ACLU NEWS

American Civil Liberties Union of New Hampshire SPRING 2021



## YOUR RIGHTS NEED YOUR VOICE



New Hampshire is in the midst of a hostile legislative session, with dozens of restrictive civil rights bills introduced in both the House and Senate. The hectic nature of this session is due in part to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Neither chamber is meeting at the State House which means that committees are taking testimony virtually—but the volume of virtual testimony has been phenomenal.

It has been inspiring and energizing to witness the unprecedented number of citizens taking action on legislation and testifying at committee hearings from their homes. Hundreds—and sometimes thousands—of people have been signing in to provide virtual testimony. This stunning level of activism has helped to sideline or defeat some exceedingly restrictive legislation, particularly those bills involving our reproductive and First Amendment rights.

The first three months of this legislative session have definitely been challenging. Dozens of bills have been introduced with the intent to restrict voting, deny access to abortion services, and violate the separation of church and state. We've already seen the House pass two horribly regressive anti-abortion bills. There are numerous bills intent on suppressing voter access and turnout and restricting LGBTQ equality. Bills that would provide more police accountability, reform prison sentencing, and adopt omnibus legislation on redistricting were defeated in House committees. As of this writing, we expect to see these and many other restrictive bills starting in April, so please stay vigilant.

Your activism on legislative matters makes a difference. When you let your legislators know your opinion on an issue—and that you're watching how they vote—you're also letting them know they will be held accountable at their next election. Legislators pay attention to email and phone calls. You can find your local legislators by visiting [aclu-nh.org/reps](https://aclu-nh.org/ reps).

## ACLU

New Hampshire

18 Low Avenue, Concord  
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The American Civil Liberties Union of New Hampshire (ACLU-NH) is a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that protects, defends and extends the civil rights of people in New Hampshire at the state house, in the courtroom, and in our communities and to fight discrimination against targeted and vulnerable populations. The ACLU-NH was founded in 1968 and is one of 53 affiliates of the ACLU Nationwide.

The ACLU-NH engages with the community through:

Litigation, representing those whose rights have been violated;

Legislative Advocacy, challenging laws that infringe on freedom and supporting laws that expand our civil liberties;

Education campaigns to ensure residents know their rights;

Grassroots organizing, mobilizing people to be advocates for themselves and others.

## WELCOME ED AND JENNIFER



We are excited to welcome Ed Taylor and Jennifer Denoncourt to the staff of our ACLU of NH affiliate. Ed started in December as our new Director of Community Engagement (DCE). He will be responsible for organizing campaigns, building volunteer capacity across the state, and engaging with community partners to advance civil rights. Ed is fiercely passionate about empowering, educating and mobilizing marginalized people to re-design the structures that exclude Black people and people of color. He is founder of Rise!, a group in the Upper Valley advocating for Queer and Trans People of Color.



A native of Maine, Jennifer comes to the ACLU from Rivier University in Nashua. At Rivier, she was the Administrative Assistant to the Graduate Nursing Program. As Administrative Specialist at ACLU of NH, Jennifer will support our daily operations and programs in numerous ways.

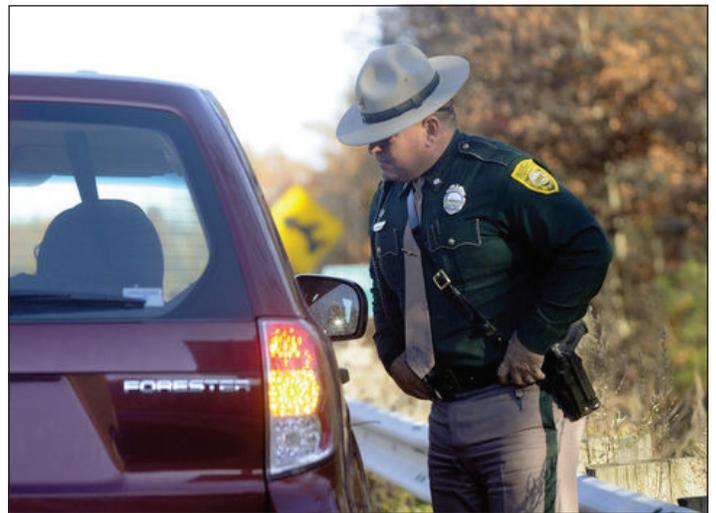
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## REFORMING LAW ENFORCEMENT

ACLU of NH has marked several important milestones in the past year in our ongoing work to create fundamental, systemic change in the role of police in our society.

Our legal team won two major police transparency cases last spring—**NH Center for Public Interest Journalism v. NH DOJ** and **Union Leader & ACLU-NH vs Town of Salem**—that give the public more access to police disciplinary files. We are currently building on these victories with a number of “right-to-know” lawsuits. If successful, these lawsuits promise to bring more transparency to several known instances of police misconduct in our state.

We’ve been active participants in the Governor’s Commission on Law Enforcement Accountability, Community, and Transparency (LEACT), and helped shape the **final report** and recommendations released last August. Since then, we have been advocating for the enactment of these recommendations as well as championing proactive legislation that will end qualified immunity and make police decertification hearings open to the public.

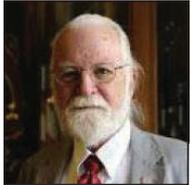


Our advocacy for police reform stretches back to the earliest days of the ACLU, and it is an issue that engages everyone at ACLU-NH today. We are united with many others across the nation in developing a completely reimagined vision of the role, presence, and responsibilities of police in America.

To get involved in supporting our work, let us know who you are by completing the online **Take Action** form, or by contacting Ed Taylor at [ed@aclu-nh.org](mailto:ed@aclu-nh.org)

# BILL OF RIGHTS AWARDS

Each year, the Bill of Rights Awards honors those in the wider community who our board and staff believe have made valuable and noteworthy contributions to advance or protect civil rights. Our honorees are some of the people and organizations that help us meet our legal, legislative, educational, and organizing goals—which are to protect the freedoms guaranteed to all citizens under the U.S. Bill of Rights and the N.H. state constitution. Last year, we were proud to honor state Representative David Welch, immigrants' rights activist Asma Elhuni, and Y.O.U. (Young Organizers United).



**David Welch** is a state representative who has been an instrumental ally on criminal justice reform over the past two years. He prime sponsored our successful legislation last session that repealed the NH pay to stay law. He also stepped up to the plate and opposed the death penalty for the first time in 2019, providing one of the most influential speeches on the House floor in support of repeal. Welch is in his 17th term in the NH House.



**Asma Elhuni** was Lead Organizer at Upper Valley Interfaith Project and prior to that the Communications Outreach Director for the Council on American-Islamic Relations. Asma was a point of contact in northern NH for Customs and Border Patrol checkpoints and other CBP/ICE apprehension issues. She has organized groups and individuals to alert towns when checkpoints occur. Asma is currently the Movement Policy Director of Rights and Democracy NH.



**Y.O.U.** (Young Organizers United) is a grassroots community group of young people of color dedicated to strengthening multi-issue and multi-racial coalitions designed to overcome ethnic, and racial, mainly the racially disparate treatment in high schools. They have advocated for students to have representation on Manchester's Board of School Committee.

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Thank you for showing your support for equality and justice, and the leaders who work to protect our freedoms.

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## BECOME A SPONSOR IN 2021

Proceeds from the Bill of Rights Awards fundraising event support ACLU of NH's Legal Program, the only one of its kind in the state devoted exclusively to defending the constitutional rights of our citizens. To learn more about sponsorships, contact Paul Racioppi, Development Director, at [paul@aclu-nh.org](mailto:paul@aclu-nh.org)



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## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Devon Chaffee

Last February, the ACLU of New Hampshire was working hard to make sure Granite Staters knew their rights when it came to voting in the First-in-the-Nation primary. We couldn't have imagined at that time what the rest of the 2020 had in store for the country and world.

Through two polarizing elections, a global pandemic, the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and others, we have taken our role as the civil rights watchdog in New Hampshire seriously. We look back at the success of our voting rights work, contributing to the record number of people voting in the November election. And we are still fighting for equity in New Hampshire's vaccine rollout, for the safety of people in prison or jail facing COVID-19, and for the rights immigrants who

remain in detention. Our work on racial justice has increased momentum, and we are pushing hard for meaningful police reform legislation this year.

Right now, we are also facing many uphill battles at the New Hampshire State House. We're fighting bills that are anti-abortion, that would make it harder to vote, and that would take away LGBTQ+ rights—just to name a few.

This work is urgent, but we are up for the challenge. We've always said we are in this for the long haul, and we are. We are profoundly grateful for your support and to be with you in this fight.

Devon Chaffee  
*Executive Director*