

# ACLU NEWS

American Civil Liberties Union of New Hampshire SPRING 2025



## FIGHTING FOR IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

From the first hours of President Trump's first day in office, the ACLU, and ACLU of NH, have been standing up against his anti-immigrant policies.

### WE'RE SUING: BIRTHRIGHT CITIZENSHIP

Less than two hours after it was signed on Jan. 20, we sued in federal court in New Hampshire to block President Trump's unconstitutional attempt to deny U.S. citizenship to certain babies born in the United States to immigrant parents. This move would deprive countless people of the basic right to vote, serve on juries, hold certain jobs and be a full member of American society.

Within weeks, we saw a court victory, with the judge blocking President's Trump executive order. This preliminary success ensured protection for our clients, including members of the Indonesian community in New Hampshire—but the fight goes on.

Birthright citizenship—codified after the Civil War in the 14th Amendment—is a keystone in the foundation of progress toward equality in America. Every attempt to restrict it before has been grounded in racism and has been—ultimately—repudiated by the courts.

### IMMIGRANT DETENTION IN BERLIN AND DOVER

At the end of February, the Trump administration started using the federal prison in Berlin, NH to detain immigrants for the first time. Berlin has indicated a capacity to house over 500 immigrant detainees, an unprecedented number for the state.



Since the election, ACLU of NH organizers have held nearly a dozen Know Your Rights trainings for immigrants, their families, and allies around the state. Often in conjunction with classes of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESL), the events include an overview of what to do if you encounter police, ICE, or a checkpoint, as well as protocol for schools and caregiver planning in case a parent is separated from their child. Role playing exercises helped reinforce the concepts while adding some levity to an otherwise serious issue.

This means that immigrants facing civil—not criminal—charges are being sent to a medium-security federal prison in one of the northernmost cities in the entire state, isolated from their family, advocates, and potential legal services.

We have spoken out against this transfer and are carefully monitoring whether these immigrants have access to counsel and humane conditions.

We are also continuing to monitor the immigrant population being jailed in the Strafford County Detention Center in Dover, which is already above 100 people, exceeding all previous records.

On the national front, the ACLU's advocacy led the Trump Administration to return civil detainees from Guantanamo to stateside facilities.

## ACLU

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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.

# DEFENDING OUR SCHOOLS AND OUR STUDENTS

Freedom of speech, freedom of thought, and the ability of our local schools to set policies to protect our kids are all under threat right now by the federal administration. But the ACLU of NH is prepared and is leading in this moment.

## THE RIGHT TO PLAY

Last August, we sued against a state law that banned transgender girls from participating in school sports—and we won a preliminary injunction that ordered the New Hampshire students we represented be allowed to play sports during the litigation process.

In February, we expanded that lawsuit to include the Trump Administration, due to the unconstitutional executive order that discriminates against transgender students in violation of Title IX and the U.S. Constitution.

President Trump's executive order, like the state law, excludes and singles out transgender students and insinuates that they are not



At a court hearing of our classroom censorship case, ACLU of NH Legal Director Gilles Bissonnette talking with the plaintiffs, Andres Mejia and Tina Kim Philibotte, who were then school administrators for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

deserving of the same educational opportunities as all other students.

Every child in New Hampshire and across the country has a right to equal opportunities at school and all students do better when they have access to resources that improve their mental, emotional, and physical health.

## NO SCHOOL CENSORSHIP

In March, we also filed a lawsuit in the New Hampshire federal court against the administration's efforts to censor teachers.

Our lawsuit, filed with the ACLU National office and the ACLU of Massachusetts, the National Education Association (NEA), and the National Education Association—New Hampshire, contends that the Department has no authority to dictate school curriculum or educational programs.

Federal law explicitly protects our local schools' ability to shape their own curriculum, including programs that reflect and celebrate the diversity of our communities and our world.

We already won a victory for teachers in New Hampshire last year in our lawsuit against the state's "banned concepts" law that stifled New Hampshire teachers' efforts to provide a true and honest education. We are preparing to defend that victory on appeal in court in Boston in April.

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## U.S. V. SKRMETTI: ACLU'S TRANS RIGHTS SUPREME COURT CASE

In early December, ACLU of NH staff members joined directly impacted parents from the state traveling to D.C. for a rally in front of the U.S. Supreme Court. Inside, the Justices heard oral arguments in the U.S. v. Skrmetti case, our challenge against a Tennessee law restricting gender-affirming hormone therapies. The law's violations of privacy and equal protection could have far-reaching implications on other health-care related cases.

"As the LGBTQ+ Organizer here at the ACLU of New Hampshire," says Kat Leiger, "I felt overwhelmed with gratitude for the opportunity to share queer joy and strength with directly impacted Granite Staters, and advocates from all across the country. We danced, chanted, and cheered for speakers who affirmed that transgender folks aren't going anywhere. While we won't know the Court's decision till this summer, we remain steadfast in our commitment to protect LGBTQ+ rights here in New Hampshire and are ready for the challenges ahead of us."



Our team joined thousands of trans youth, parents, medical professionals, and activists outside, while ACLU's own Chase Strangio, the first out trans person to argue in front of the Supreme Court, spoke inside.

# PROTECTING ABORTION RIGHTS AND PRIVACY

Despite renewed efforts in New Hampshire and across the country to limit and dismantle abortion rights, our joint efforts with the state Reproductive Rights Coalition during the first half of the legislative session have so far been successful:

- The sponsor withdrew a proposed 15-week abortion ban bill because of the mass outcry of opposition that the coalition organized;
- A House committee chose to shelve a bill that would allow physicians and any staff at a hospital or pharmacy to deny anyone abortion and contraceptive care under the guise of religious belief;
- Two anti-abortion sex education bills failed on the House floor;
- And, we helped neutralize an effort to institute invasive data collection.

We're still watching for committee votes on other bills that have had hearings. But in sum, we've nearly defeated every single anti-abortion bill that's been introduced this year.

On the other hand, while legislators across the political spectrum acknowledge abortion bans are unpopular and have pledged not to roll back our current laws, they refuse to recognize the importance of "walking the walk" in a post-Roe era by strengthening state protections. Two bills that would recognize abortion as a critical component of reproductive healthcare and enshrine the right to abortion up to 24 weeks in state law have gained little traction. New Hampshire remains the only state in New England without explicit protections for abortion access.

## ABORTION AND MEDICAL PRIVACY WINS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Missouri healthcare providers will now be able to offer abortion care again after a circuit court judge temporarily blocked a discriminatory and unnecessary abortion restriction, thanks to an ACLU and Planned Parenthood lawsuit that was filed within 24 hours of Missouri voters passing the Right to Reproductive Freedom Initiative last November.

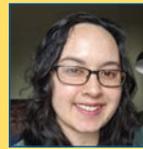
We are also celebrating a win fighting abortion surveillance in Maryland. In that case, the client suffered a traumatic stillbirth—only to be charged with murder and sentenced to 30 years in prison. Prosecutors used her internet search history, in which she researched pregnancy termination options, and lack of prenatal care as evidence that she intended to commit a crime. The ACLU's Abortion Criminal Defense Initiative and the ACLU of Maryland filed an amicus brief in the case.

# COMINGS AND GOINGS

## THE ACLU OF NH WELCOMES TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS THIS SPRING



**Carolyn Dever** is a longtime supporter of the ACLU. She is a full-time professor at Dartmouth College, where she has previously served as provost and chief budget officer. She is a founding partner of Dever Justice LLC, which works to support professional and leadership development for faculty members worldwide. Dever also serves on the boards of Johns Hopkins University Press, Public Books Foundation, and the Howe Library Corporation.



**Savitri Horrigan** (she/her/dia) recently shadowed the ACLU of NH Board as part of the Equity Leaders Fellowship. She is the Behavioral Health Strategist for the City of Nashua Public Health and Community Services. She has also worked with the Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success, and Planned Parenthood of Northern New England. Her areas of interest and work include substance misuse prevention and harm reduction, health equity, food access, reproductive justice, and advocacy for BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and immigrant communities. Savitri volunteers with the NH Indonesian Community Support and the National Association of Social Workers NH Justice Equity Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) committee and in 2020, she co-founded the BIPOC Social Workers of Northern New England affinity group.

## DID YOU KNOW

ACLU Foundation of NH is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Gifts to the Foundation are tax deductible, making it possible for you to donate through many mechanisms, including:

**Donor Advised Funds (DAFs):** As a 501(c)(3) organization, the ACLU Foundation is eligible to receive distributions from most DAFs.

**Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs):** If you are 70 ½ or older, you can also make a direct transfer to the ACLU Foundation from your IRA, to be counted toward your Required Minimum Distribution, without the withdrawal being treated as taxable income.

**Vehicle donations:** ACLU of NH partners with CARS at [Cars.org/aclu-foundation-of-new-hampshire](https://www.Cars.org/aclu-foundation-of-new-hampshire)

If you have any questions, talk with your financial advisor or IRA custodian. You can contact the ACLU of NH for our tax ID Number and recipient information at [sarah@aclu-nh.org](mailto:sarah@aclu-nh.org).



New Hampshire

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Learn how you can take action to protect civil rights and liberties at:

[www.ACLU-NH.org](http://www.ACLU-NH.org)



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: SAFEGUARDING OUR FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS



Devon Chaffee

I'll be frank with you: on both the federal and state levels, the first few months of 2025 have brought a barrage of direct assaults on our civil rights and liberties. It is clearer almost every day that our country's democratic processes and institutions are in danger.

Since Election Day in November, we have heard from many of you about the worries of what is to come. The harm, fear, and chaos being sown chafe against the fabric of the society we aspire to build. The unrelenting attacks on immigrants and LGBTQ+ people, especially transgender youth, are cruel, inhumane, and heartbreaking.

At the ACLU, we have been strategizing for more than a year for this possibility, and we are prepared to fight these attacks—in the courts, on the streets, and in our communities.

In just eight weeks, the ACLU has already filed 20 lawsuits against the Trump Administration, including three from right here in the Granite State. His executive orders attack birthright citizenship, the freedom to learn

and teach honestly in classrooms, and the freedom to belong. We're defending these rights in court.

On the state level, we have a "trifecta" government with Kelly Ayotte as governor and Republican control of both the state House and Senate. Once the legislative session started in January, immigrants, LGBTQ+ rights, and core criminal legal reforms came under acute attack.

New Hampshire politicians are advancing legislation that is deeply regressive and is opposed to everything our state stands for, including bills that would violate the rights and privacy of transgender students, target immigrant families with increased fear and policing, and dismantle key criminal legal reforms that strengthened our civil liberties.

These are the times in which—and for which—the ACLU was made more than a century ago.

Just like we have been for 105 years nationwide and 56 years in New Hampshire, the ACLU is and will be a bulwark for our constitutional freedoms, determined to make our country a more perfect union.