



Resilient Together

A note from Executive Director Molly Curren Rowles

The rare beauty and tranquility of summer in Maine have contrasted with a turbulent and uncertain news cycle this year. In my new role as director of the ACLU of Maine, I am enjoying getting to know my colleagues and deepening my understanding of our work, while also learning about how

our affiliate has weathered the past several years of significant internal changes.

Throughout the coming year, I will focus on building capacity to ensure we fulfill our

mission effectively. As members and supporters, your connection and commitment to the work we do is crucial. If you have feedback, suggestions, concerns, or ideas to share with me, I hope you will feel free to reach out anytime.

In today's uncertain political climate, the ACLU of Maine holds a unique and particularly powerful position: We are proudly nonpartisan, with a vision to extend the empowering, messy, joyful, and difficult responsibilities of democracy to ALL people, without exception.

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The fight to create a more perfect union is constant. Whether we are in a time of crisis or a time of comfort, we cannot sit back and let our guard down.

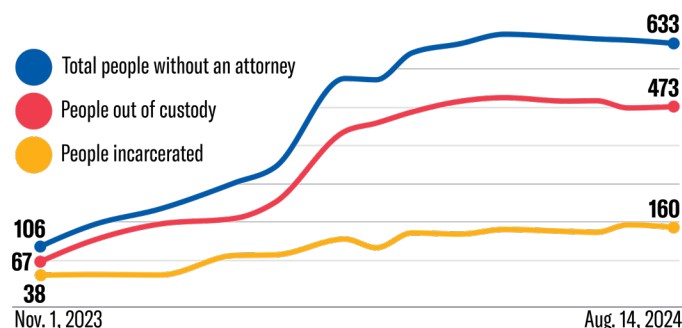
The Right to Counsel Denied

MAINE IS DENYING attorneys to hundreds of people who cannot afford their own, violating their Sixth Amendment right to counsel, undermining the presumption of innocence, and upending lives.

The right to counsel is not optional – it's the law. When the state charges a person with a crime, it is the state's responsibility to provide effective assistance of counsel to those who cannot afford their own.

In March 2022, we sued the state in *Robbins v. State of Maine* to force it to follow the law. This ongoing class action involves thousands of people: Some have been denied effective counsel and others have been denied counsel entirely. This crisis is getting worse every day.

497% The number of people denied their right to an attorney has risen 497% since Nov. 1, 2023.



We are preparing for trial this fall and are also maintaining a data dashboard showing the latest trends of this crisis. Our analysis shows there are problems everywhere, but people in some counties fare worse. For example, Penobscot County is home to 11% of Maine's population, yet 31% of the people denied counsel. Disproportionate rates align with higher prosecution rates, indicating all parts of government have a role, from some prosecutors who overburden the legal system to agencies tasked with providing effective counsel.

The finger-pointing within state government must stop. As the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1963 and as our analysis shows, the entirety of government must take responsibility – not one agency, official, or branch.

Maine is tipping the scales of justice against the people. We will continue this fight in the courts and at the legislature until the Sixth Amendment is guaranteed to all – because a person's freedom should never depend on their wealth.

See the latest numbers on our dashboard and catch up on our lawsuit by scanning the code or visiting ACLUMaine.org/MainesGrowingCrisis.



Resilient Together, cont.

Right now, we are working to ensure Maine's people know their rights, strengthening our coalitions, and preparing legal and policy actions for different election outcomes by:

- Sharing Know Your Rights information to empower voters to counter misinformation, vote their values, protest, and fight for their rights this November
- Collaborating with coalition partners and elected officials to immediately and consistently address any election interference that may arise
- Engaging in strategic planning for a variety of election scenarios to identify the challenges and opportunities of different outcomes and outline concrete actions the ACLU of Maine will take in response
- Sharing information about the impact of each candidate's stated policy goals on our fundamental freedoms: Ahead of the election, the ACLU has drafted 13 memos – 7 on a potential second Trump administra-

tion, and 6 on a potential Harris administration. The memos address immigrants' rights, reproductive freedom, LGBTQ equality, freedom of expression, racial justice, and criminal legal reform. See the memos at [ACLU.org/Memos](https://www.aclu.org/memos).

We are also preparing for the 2025 legislative session, returning to trial in the *Robbins* case to challenge Maine's systemic denial of the right to counsel, and engaging in local issues from Presque Isle to Portland.

The future is uncertain, but the ACLU will always continue to be a steady voice for civil rights and liberties – no matter which party is in power or which causes may be most popular.

Thank you for your ongoing support,

Molly Curren Rowles

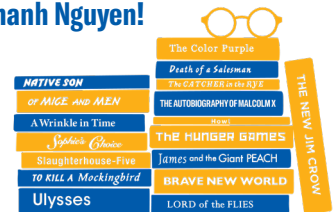
Molly Curren Rowles, Executive Director



We're proud to sponsor the 2024 Maine Lit Fest, featuring *The Sympathizer* author Viet Thanh Nguyen!

The Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance was founded in 1975 to enrich the literary life and culture of Maine. The First Amendment rights to express ourselves and access information are foundational to a healthy democracy. These freedoms are under attack, including in communities and schools throughout Maine.

Join Maine Lit Fest events October 3-13 in Bangor, Brunswick, Farmington, Presque Isle, Portland, Waterville, & online. Learn more and catch up with the ACLU of Maine at an event near you by visiting MaineWriters.org.



Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries joined ACLU of Maine members before his "Lessons in Hard History" lecture in June.



We rallied in Portland and Washington, DC, to protest cruelty to unhoused people in *Grants Pass v. Johnson*.



Communities celebrated Pride to support a bright future for all people, no matter their gender or who they love.



We joined allies to rally in Augusta for LD 780 and other bills to protect and expand abortion access in Maine.

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Meet the team at [ACLUMaine.org/Team](https://www.aclumaine.org/team).

Legislative Rewind, New Laws

THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION ended earlier this year and many new laws took effect on August 9. Alongside our allies, we won a number of victories in Augusta, from protecting criminal legal reforms to building momentum for the nation's strongest data privacy law.

DATA PRIVACY

Corporations have built a surveillance economy, collecting people's most sensitive information without consent. This threatens safety, equality, and democracy. We championed LD 1977 to implement sensible guardrails in Maine. This groundbreaking legislation passed the House and fell just two votes short in the Senate. Getting a comprehensive bill like LD 1977 this close to the finish line in the first year built momentum that we will use in the next legislative session.

ENFORCING THE RIGHT TO A SPEEDY TRIAL

Maine is one of only nine states without specific timelines to ensure criminal cases proceed fairly and efficiently – denying people's right to a speedy trial and forcing them to wait months or years for a trial. This was the first year lawmakers considered our legislation to address the issue and it earned initial passage in both chambers. However, it was not funded and we look forward to getting it to the governor's desk next session.

NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE INTERSTATE COMPACT

LD 1578 added Maine to the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, moving the nation closer to ensuring the presidential candidate with the most votes in the country wins. When enough states join that they collectively hold 270 electoral votes (the number needed to win the Electoral College), these states will give their

votes to the candidate who wins the national popular vote. This will give each voter equal impact and further the idea of "one person, one vote."

MAKING HEADWAY ON PUBLIC DEFENSE

Maine is the only state that relies almost entirely on private attorneys for public defense, denying thousands of people their Sixth Amendment right to counsel. While our lawsuit proceeds (see page 1), we are also pursuing legislative solutions. We supported LD 653 to fund four public defender offices, rural public defenders, and staff for the central office for public defense.

LD 653 passed and was signed into law. This is a step in the right direction, but as of this writing, 633 people are being denied their right to counsel, 160 of whom are behind bars with no legal representation.

PROTECTING CRIMINAL LEGAL REFORMS

We defeated multiple attempts to double down on the failed and racist policies of the War on Drugs. Lawmakers must focus on root causes of problematic drug use: poor access to health care, housing, jobs, and education. Incarceration will never solve a public health crisis.

TEACHING OUR FULL HISTORY

LD 2001 would have given teachers and schools necessary resources to comply with laws requiring schools to teach Wabanaki and African American Studies. This is crucial to helping students learn the truth of our shared past to make informed decisions about the future.

This legislation passed both chambers with bipartisan support, but it was not funded and failed to make it to the governor's desk.

Read our full legislative report and see what's next in Augusta by scanning the code or visiting [ACLUMaine.org/LegislativeReport2024](https://aclumaine.org/LegislativeReport2024).



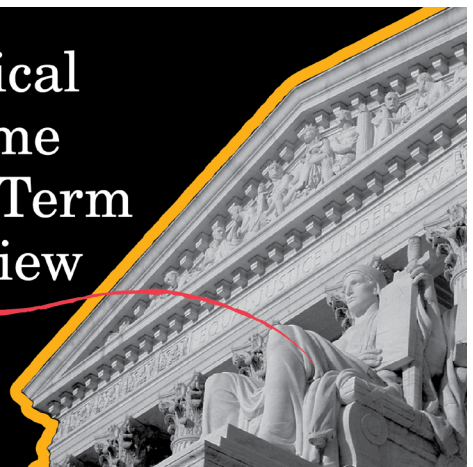
The Supreme Court wrapped up a pivotal term this summer, radically reinterpreting the law. Presidents can now largely operate outside the law, governments can criminally punish unhoused people for trying to survive, and the nation's fractured patchwork of abortion access is under threat.

The ACLU, ACLU of Maine, and other affiliates were involved in several cases, including as lead counsel in a 9-0 victory for free speech. We also filed friend-of-the-court briefs in several cases that resulted in wins for gun safety and free expression online.

Read about these cases by visiting [ACLUMaine.org/SupremeCourt2024](https://aclumaine.org/SupremeCourt2024) or by scanning the code.



A Radical Supreme Court Term in Review





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JOIN THE FIGHT.

We hope you continue joining us to create a more perfect union.

Make a tax-deductible donation by completing and returning the enclosed envelope, or give online by scanning the code or visiting ACLUMaine.org/Give,

where you can also learn about planned giving and becoming a member.

