

# ACLU

## Maine

### 2026 SPRING NEWSLETTER

## THE POWER OF PLAGE

*A note from Executive Director Molly Curren Rowles*

Maine is one of the places that is known for being “kind, but not nice.” People tend to mind their own business in Maine, and maybe our social skills aren’t particularly robust or refined. As a result, it can be difficult to meet people or strike up a random conversation here. But

when neighbors are in need or facing injustice, Mainers show up with kindness.

**This winter, when Maine people's freedom and autonomy were threatened, thousands immediately took action** through mutual

aid, information sharing, and support with amazing organizations like Presente! MAINE, ILAP, MIRC, and Mano en Mano. We have been proud to work alongside these advocates and many others to defend our Constitution against a presidency that is abusing its power and threatening to punish all those who speak out against it.

Our legislative team did incredible work this session to champion and win on important immigrants' rights and civil rights issues. Our legal team is involved in a record number of over 20 lawsuits addressing some of the most flagrant constitutional violations our country has ever faced, and we have sent hundreds of public records requests to dozens of state and local government agencies. Since

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Molly Curren Rowles speaks at No Kings in Bridgton

## DEFENDING BIRTHRIGHT CITIZENSHIP AT SCOTUS

**WE WERE AT THE U.S. SUPREME COURT** for arguments in our case defending the core American principle of birthright citizenship. Hours after the president signed an executive order attempting to end this right in January 2025, we sued alongside other advocates.

ACLU National Legal Director Cecillia Wang spent nearly two hours arguing before the court, defending the 14th Amendment's guarantee that babies born in the U.S. are citizens. Three key themes emerged from the arguments:



ACLU of Maine staff with Board President Lily Lu at SCOTUS

**Ending birthright citizenship isn't just illegal; it's unworkable.** Ending birthright citizenship would upend over a century of legal precedent, calling into question the citizenship status of hundreds of thousands of newborns and creating staggering administrative chaos. The president is proposing a deeply flawed system that would subject every birth to legal scrutiny. Ending this core constitutional principle would create a permanent subclass of people stripped of the full rights and privileges of citizenship.

**This is not a partisan issue.** Justices from across the spectrum asked the government tough questions, revealing skepticism about the legal basis for the executive order. The broad concern reflects what we have seen in the lower courts, where judges across the country have uniformly blocked the order.

**This is not a question of policy; it's a question of constitutional interpretation.** No administration has the authority to rewrite the Constitution and restrict its fundamental rights and guarantees. The 14th Amendment's guarantee of birthright citizenship was enshrined in our Constitution to "put it out of the reach of any government official to destroy." That meaning cannot be rewritten with the stroke of a president's pen.

More than 150 years of precedent, congressional debate, federal law, and legal history support our case. We expect a decision in *Trump v. Barbara* this summer.

**Visit [ACLUMaine.org/Barbara](https://aclumaine.org/Barbara) to read more about the case and see photos and videos from our time in D.C.**

*The Power of Place, cont.*

January, we have connected with over 3,000 people at more than 40 programs, shared vital Know Your Rights resources with tens of thousands, and joined communities expressing their First Amendment rights.

Last year, we shared our concerns about what the Trump administration might do. This year, we have seen some of our worst fears realized. They have targeted judges, deported U.S. citizens, violently terrorized immigrant communities, fired upon peaceful protesters, and attacked journalists and free speech. Yet here in Maine and across the country, the ACLU continues to bring and win cases showing these actions are unlawful and unacceptable.

**This is bigger than partisan politics.** The more information we have, the more we can understand the threats we face – and the opportunities to protect democracy. Visit our website for information about our advocacy, legal work, and voting rights for a jumping off point into deeper discussions with friends and family about where we are as a nation, and where we need to go.

As we prepare for the midterms and face increasingly dangerous, depraved, and dispiriting narratives, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. But right now, our duty is to dissent, to show up, and to remember that we always have the power of empathy and kindness, and to care as much about the freedom of others as we do about our own.

**In solidarity and gratitude,**



**Molly Curren Rowles**, Executive Director

## Welcome, Lindsay!



**WE'RE EXCITED TO WELCOME LINDSAY CONRAD** as our new Director of Development! Lindsay is a non-profit professional with a background in fundraising, communications, and community engagement. She previously held development roles at Portland Trails and the Portland Symphony Orchestra. Lindsay brings a thoughtful and community-centered approach to her work, and is passionate about connecting people to causes that promote equity and justice. The team looks forward to working with Lindsay to strengthen and grow support for civil liberties across the state.

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



**Stay up to date!** Sign up for email alerts and follow @ACLUMaine on social media for the latest news and ways to get involved.



**Join us at an event near you.** We're joining communities throughout Maine. Find an event at [ACLUMaine.org/Events](https://www.aclumaine.org/Events).

## CASE HIGHLIGHTS

### **CARVAJAL-MUNOZ v. RAVENCAMP ET. AL.**

We're suing federal agents for abducting a Portland resident and violating his civil rights during the reckless crackdown known as "Operation Catch of the Day." Agents cannot come to Maine and terrorize communities without accountability.

Our client was driving to work when an unmarked SUV swerved in front of him. Agents smashed his window and dragged him out at taser-point. They left his car on the street with the door open, engine running, his belongings inside, and his phone on the ground.

Over the next 12 hours, agents kept him in shackles, refused to look at his immigration paperwork, and moved him between various unmarked vehicles and locations in Maine and Massachusetts. They targeted our client based on his race or ethnicity and had no legal basis for the stop and arrest.



Our client's dash cam captured video of masked agents blocking his vehicle, moments before abducting him.

Agents violated our client's Fourth and Fifth Amendment rights by racially profiling and stopping him with no reasonable suspicion of wrongdoing, unlawfully arresting him, using excessive force, and unjustifiably prolonging his detention. This case could reaffirm a crucial legal avenue to hold federal officers accountable under the Maine Civil Rights Act.

### **ACLU OF MAINE v. SANFORD**

Sanford officials refused to release public records about traffic stops that resulted in a person being transferred to federal immigration custody – a clear violation of Maine's open records laws. We're suing in state court.

### **UNITED STATES v. BELLOWES**

The Trump administration is attempting to force Maine to disclose unredacted voter records, including sensitive information like parts of social security and driver's license numbers. We filed a friend-of-the-court brief and argued before the court, advocating for voter privacy, data security, and confidence in free, fair, and secure elections.

**Visit [ACLUMaine.org/Cases](https://www.aclumaine.org/Cases) to read more about these cases and our other ongoing legal work.**

# PROTECTING HOME

**WITH THE SURGE OF RECKLESS ICE OPERATIONS**, we have prioritized ways Maine can limit abuses of power in our communities.

At the state level, we championed LD 1971, a bill to prohibit state and local law enforcement from collaborating with federal immigration agents. It passed the Legislature last summer, and it became law without the governor's signature in January 2026. It will take effect this July.

Just days after LD 1971 became law, Maine experienced a surge of violent ICE operations the government called "Operation Catch of the Day." Agents claimed they would detain only the "worst of the worst." Instead, communities across the state watched in horror as agents arrested roughly 200 of their neighbors, colleagues, friends, and family. People were ripped from their cars while driving to work and arrested in school drop off lines. Families sheltered in place, afraid to attend work and school. Businesses closed, clinics canceled appointments, and brave Mainers took to the streets.

**That surge has ended, but ICE and CBP continue to operate in Maine, and LD 1971 remains crucial** by clarifying that police and sheriffs are not immigration agents.

The law specifically prohibits them from investigating, interrogating, detaining, stopping, arresting, or searching a person for civil immigration enforcement purposes. It



Staff and Board at No Kings in Portland

also bars detaining people on ICE hold requests (which violate the Fourth Amendment and have no judicial authority), and prohibits using federal immigration officers for translation services during local law enforcement activities. Importantly, LD 1971 does not prevent Maine law enforcement from doing their jobs. Officers can still investigate crimes, execute judicial warrants, and must still comply with federal law.

**Our investigations show that dangerous cooperation between Maine law enforcement and federal immigration agents is not hypothetical.** We have sent over 150 public records requests to law enforcement agencies throughout Maine, shedding light on the extent of local cooperation with ICE and CBP.

We found troubling and widespread engagement in practices that likely violate people's constitutional rights. Our investigation uncovered dozens of instances in which state and local law enforcement pulled over drivers for minor traffic offenses. Instead of simply handling the traffic violation, officers frequently held people on the

side of the road for hours, waiting for ICE or CBP, who would then take them into custody.

These stops may violate the state and federal constitutions when people are held beyond what the Fourth Amendment allows, and when officers stop someone based on their race.

In one case, an Oxford County sheriff's deputy asked other agencies to watch for a specific vehicle and detain its passengers for Border Patrol. Scarborough Police located the car, detained the occupants, and held them until Border Patrol arrived. The detainees posed no public safety threat. This detention is just one example of local resources being used to do the federal government's bidding. In all, we found roughly 80 instances across 28 agencies that led to someone being handed over to ICE or CBP, and we're still uncovering more.

**Local governments are creating even stronger protections for their communities.** We worked with Rockland and Lewiston to pass ordinances that apply to *all* public employees – not just law enforcement. These ordinances keep local resources focused on local priorities. They also improve public safety by building trust between local law enforcement and their communities. At the time of this writing, we are working with leaders in Portland, Bangor, and Waterville to pass similar ordinances.

As the federal government continues to violate rights, it's important we do all we can to prevent local resources from being weaponized against Maine people.

## FROM THE STATE HOUSE

**WE ACHIEVED KEY VICTORIES** during the legislative session and made progress on several issues.

■ **LD 2106, New Law:** Protects essential state institutions – like public schools and libraries – from warrantless immigration operations.

■ **LD 2058, New Law:** Clarifies jails can decide if they will accept federal immigration detainees.

■ **LD 1457, Defeated:** Would have created new surveillance system on the Maine Turnpike, threatening privacy and allowing tracking without a warrant.

■ **LD 1822, Progress:** One of the strongest data privacy bills in the nation. It passed initial votes in the House and Senate, going further than past years, despite massive spending from Big Tech opposition. We are hopeful it will pass next session.

**Visit [ACLUMaine.org/Legislation](https://aclumaine.org/legislation) to see more details about these and other bills.**



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**WHAT'S INSIDE: UPDATES FROM THE U.S. SUPREME COURT, NEWS FROM AUGUSTA, AND MORE!**



## VOTE ON JUNE 9

**THE PRIMARY ELECTION IS ON TUES., JUNE 9.** Your ballot will include primaries for governor, the Maine Legislature, Congress, and more.

### KEY DATES:

- **April 9:** Absentee ballots available, early in-person voting begins.
- **May 19:** Deadline to register to vote online or by mail. (You can still register at your polling place or city/town office, including on Election Day.)
- **June 4:** Last day to request absentee ballot or vote early in person.
- **June 9:** Election Day. Polls close at 8 p.m. Anyone in line by 8 can vote.

**NEW:** All voters can apply for ongoing absentee ballots to automatically receive one every election.

**Visit [ACLUMaine.org/Vote](https://www.aclumaine.org/Vote) to know your rights and make a plan.**