

# Healing our divides

BY ALISON BEYEA

**T**HERE ARE TWO truths from Election Day that we all must reconcile.

Voters turned out in unprecedented numbers to restore and protect our democracy, and to reject the anti-civil rights and anti-civil liberties agenda of the current administration.

But more than 70 million voters, including a majority of voters in Maine's Second Congressional District, still marked Donald Trump's name on their ballots.

The stark divide in our country and state shows that we must remain engaged and committed to the work ahead – to rebuild our democracy and to turn back four years of cruel and targeted assaults on our most vulnerable residents: immigrants, communities of color—especially Black communities, and the LGBTQ

community. We must push to re-establish the rule of law and to ensure that laws are just and compassionate.

We have an obligation to do the hard work of

bringing our country together and bridging the divides that President Trump and his allies have worked so hard to exploit. In the winter, we'll be starting a new legislative session. Alongside our partners and activists, we will keep up the summer's momentum for racial justice through efforts to enact bail reform and drug decriminalization, alongside other bills.

Your ACLU of Maine will keep nurturing the seeds of justice, no matter the political party in power, so that the Constitution's promise to "we the people" bears fruit for all of us.

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# Let's hear it for the volunteers

BY DHIVYA SINGARAM

**T** WAS ALL hands on deck for the voter protection hotline, and we did it. We created a hotline with on-demand interpretation in more than 200 languages. We created a hotline accessible to hearing-impaired voters. We trained

more than 30 volunteers on how to operate the hotline and the basics of Maine election law. And we worked with seven volunteer attorneys to field and respond to Mainers more complicated questions.

Why a hotline this year? In an unprecedented election, with a lot of

opportunity for confusion, we wanted voters to have on demand help when they needed it. And we wanted to hear from voters—if one voter was having a problem in a particular town, a lot more voters probably were, too. Voters were our

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## VOTER PROTECTION CONTINUED

ears on the ground, all over the state.

We could not have done this without our volunteers. They are the superstars of the hotline, giving more than 300 hours of their time to help Mainers vote. They fielded calls about ranked choice voting, how to cast an absentee ballot, and even helped voters who had been turned away from the polls on Election Day. Meet two of our superstars.

## EMILY FROM MOUNT DESERT ISLAND



One reason Emily volunteered on the hotline: her co-workers who had become naturalized citizens. They would be voting for the first time in the United States.

And Emily did get to help an older, first-time voter cast their ballot. It was one of her most

meaningful calls on the hotline.

"If there was any way I could contribute to helping someone feel empowered during this time, that was worth so much to me," Emily said.

## JENNA FROM PORTLAND



As a student at Bowdoin College, Jenna would drive students to the polls in Brunswick on Election Day. So this year, volunteering on the ACLU's voter protection hotline was a natural fit.

Jenna fielded calls from all over the state. That was one of the best things about the hotline, she said, that all Mainers used it. "I was helping to protect every person's vote in Maine."

One of these calls came from a woman in a small central Maine town Jenna had never heard of. "She was just concerned and wanted someone to listen to her," Jenna said. "And the ACLU was listening."

**Interested in volunteering with the ACLU of  
Maine? Email [dsingaram@aclumaine.org](mailto:dsingaram@aclumaine.org)**

# Coming up in the Legislature

BY MEAGAN SWAY

**A** NEW GROUP OF state legislators have been sworn in, and we have work to do. Because the last legislative session ended abruptly, we had a lot of unfinished work. We are fired up and ready to pick up our work on bail reform, tribal sovereignty, juvenile justice reform, government transparency, drug sentencing reform, and criminal records sealing, among many other.

Keep an eye out for these bills that we're especially excited about:

## BAIL REFORM

We will be picking up our work from last session to end the practice of prosecutors and judges using unaffordable bail to keep people in jail pretrial for low level offenses. Access to justice shouldn't be about the size of a person's wallet.

## TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY

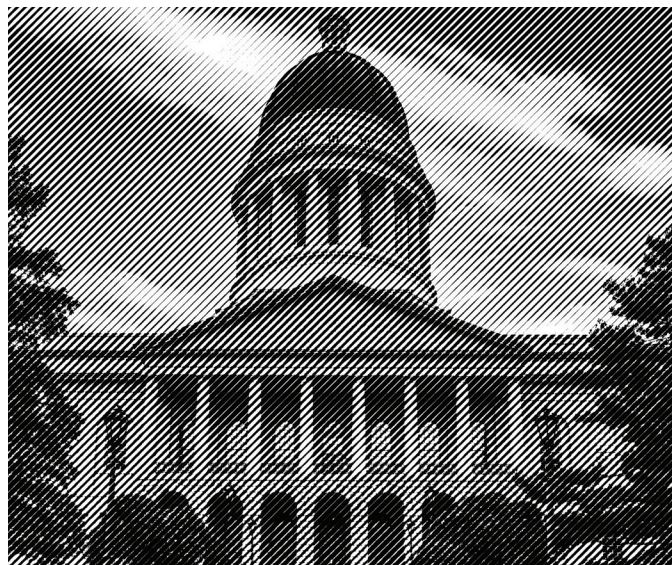
The four tribes in Maine had worked on major legislation to advance tribal sovereignty. But it died because of the legislative session's unexpected ending. The tribes are bringing back that legislation in the new session, and we will be there in support.

## DRUG SENTENCING REFORM

The state continues to arrest, charge, and sentence people for drug crimes unabated, even during a global pandemic. We will be continuing our push to end the racist War on Drugs.

## RACIAL IMPACT STATEMENTS

In the reckoning after George Floyd's murder, more people than ever before are aware systemic racism, and how it harms people in our state. Systemic racism gets entrenched by legislation that is race-neutral on its face, but is devastating to communities of color in its implementation. To stop that entrenchment, we have to



Get your Zoom game face ready, because we will be asking you to testify in committees, call your elected officials, and mobilize your friends and family.

analyze pending legislation for its racial impact before it goes up for a vote. We'll work on making that a requirement.

And, as always, we will be keeping an eye out for renewed attempts to reverse the hard-fought victories we've made together.

Because of COVID-19, we don't know quite what next session is going to look like, but we do know that you will be more important than ever. It is going to take all of us to move the needle on racial justice and civil rights expansion.

Get your Zoom game face ready, because we will be asking you to testify in committees, call your elected officials, and mobilize your friends and family. Change only happens when the people demand it, and we're so excited to continue the fight with you.



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