

ACLU

Maine

WINTER
2019

Hello from the Engagement Team!

To be an ACLU of Maine volunteer is to care about civil rights and liberties for our communities – and to do something about it. **The ACLU of Maine Engagement Team is active like never before, and we want YOU to join the fun!**

On Election Day, our amazing volunteers headed to the polls in Bangor and South Portland, talking with over 300 voters about civil rights and liberties issues in Maine. A great start to conversations in 2020.

And that's not all! We're building a volunteer legal support team to provide research and data support to our attorneys in their efforts to end mass incarceration, fight back against discrimination, and protect privacy and free expression.

Last year we had 700 hours of volunteer time and with your help we can do more! Our vision is to build long-lasting, statewide capacity so that the ACLU can have a meaningful presence and impact in every corner of Maine.



Tabling at the Bangor Polls

Here's where you come in. Do you want to join an in-office volunteer session to make calls or put together a mailing? Or maybe you'd rather join us in Augusta to testify on a bill. Or get coached on Know Your Rights information so you can help us lead a training in your town? **There are so many exciting possibilities, and they all make a huge difference for our work.**

Last month, I headed to Charleston, South Carolina with

Donna, Olivia and Wendy – three of our dedicated volunteers – to take part in an ACLU organizer convening. While we were there, we connected with staff and volunteers from ACLU affiliates across the nation and strategized plans for organizing to build power. We came back with impactful ideas – and with your help, we are ready to put them into action.

If you want to join our amazing team of volunteers, email us today at dsingaram@aclumaine.org.

"Volunteering with the ACLU has given me the feeling that I am doing something really meaningful to build the world I want to live in, and that I want my children and my grandchildren to live in. Not to mention, it's really fun!" -Wendy Keeler, ACLU super volunteer

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dhivya Singaram".

Dhivya Singaram,
Engagement Coordinator/Organizer

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LEGAL UPDATE

PROTECTING FREE SPEECH IN OUR SCHOOLS

This fall, we filed a lawsuit on behalf of a Cape Elizabeth High School sophomore who was suspended for posting a note in the school bathroom to raise awareness about sexual assault. We argued that the note was First Amendment-protected speech meant to call attention to an important issue at the school and the administration's inadequate response. Speaking up about sexual assault is already difficult for young people. Punishing them for doing so only makes it harder.

In October, a federal judge issued a preliminary injunction blocking the suspension. The court's ruling affirms that students have the right to freedom of speech, and that they do not check their rights at the schoolhouse gate.

The Cape Elizabeth School Department has appealed the decision – stay tuned for updates.

ADVOCACY UPDATE

DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR ALL

The legislature may not be in session, but we're still hard at work in Augusta, calling on Maine's leaders to make better policy.

The Constitution requires that everyone has the right to an attorney in criminal cases, regardless of their income. But a recent report by the 6th Amendment Center found that Maine isn't fulfilling its obligation under the Constitution. Instead, our court-appointed attorneys receive little or no training and oversight. The result is deeply unfair outcomes for poor people in our legal system.

On November 19 we went before Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Defense (MCILS) to urge them to fix Maine's court-appointed lawyer system. We testified alongside advocates for racial justice, youth, and poor and working Mainers, and we delivered a petition signed by hundreds of YOU.

We have an opportunity to make needed improvements to Maine's system, and we'll keep working with MCILS until every person in our state can get a competent attorney to help them navigate their case.

A NOTE OF THANKS TO OUR OUTGOING BOARD PRESIDENT

Susan has been a member of our all-volunteer board since 2013. With her leadership and support, we have grown in staff and membership, and we are doing more to further civil rights and liberties in Maine than ever before. In these challenging years, Susan has been a fearless leader. We are so grateful for her service. Thank you, Susan!

This month, Susan Bates of St. George will finish up her three-year term as president of the ACLU of Maine Board of Directors.



"It has been an honor to join the long line of passionate, dedicated Mainers leading the board. At a time when so much is at stake in our country, I have been grateful to play a role in the fight for our rights, inspired by the staff who show up every day to do this work, and amazed by the outpouring of support from across the state. I look forward to continuing to serve with such a talented and committed board." -Susan Bates

IN 2019, I'M THANKFUL FOR...

"Advocates for survivors of sexual assault, for exercising their First Amendment rights to speak out and make change."

-Emma Bond, staff attorney

"Our incredible volunteers. Their support has been instrumental to our legislative victories this year!"

-Dhivya Singaram, engagement coordinator/organizer

"The depth of commitment and care so many people in Maine hold for protecting and expanding our civil rights."

-Laura Retherford, director of leadership giving

"A supportive team that works hard every day fighting for the rights of all people in Maine."

-Margarita Salguero-Macklin, office manager

"The education about people's rights that the ACLU brings to communities and especially to immigrants."

-Joelle Rutembesa, development & administrative associate

"The fearless abortion providers who stood with us to ensure all Mainers have access to safe abortion care."

-Alison Beyea, executive director

"The Portland school board members who share our goal to protect students from overpolicing and breaches of their privacy rights."

-Michael Kebede, policy counsel

"Maine's realization that people with substance use disorder should be able to take their doctor-prescribed medicine even when they're incarcerated."

-Zach Heiden, legal director

"The laws that enshrine the right of the public to access information."

-Emma LeBlanc, senior researcher

"The legislators who are working with us to stop jailing people just because they struggle with substance use or mental health."

-Meagan Sway, policy counsel

"The opportunity to see our legal and policy teams in action and on the frontlines for justice!"

-Pablo Anaya, major gifts officer

"Every person who called their legislator or testified in Augusta to help us pass the best internet privacy law in the nation."

-Ariel Kernis, deputy director

"The 2,000+ new social media followers who have joined us in the last year to have critical conversations about civil liberties across the state and beyond."

-Makena Bauss, digital media strategist

"Our wonderful donors and foundations that continue to help fund our fight for civil liberties."

-Beth Ansheles, finance director

"Freedom of the press and the fearless reporters who never stop shining a bright light on the workings of our elected officials."

-Rachel Healy, communications director

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