



## STRATEGIC PLAN

### **Introduction**

The ACLU of Iowa has accepted the challenge of mapping out a list of strategic priorities to optimize our work and build capacity. The process toward this plan began with a strategic conversation among ACLU of Iowa director-level staff and was informed by comments and conversations with ACLU of Iowa members and stakeholders. A plan was then developed through several focused conversations between the President of the Board of Directors, the Executive Director, the Strategic Planning Committee, and the full Board in consultation with the National ACLU's Office of Affiliate Support.

This plan will be a living document to be continually engaged with, updated, and revised as our affiliate advances in its capacity building and impact trajectory. The Strategic Planning Committee will establish a mechanism to periodically revisit the strategic plan, assess progress toward its priorities, and recommend necessary revisions to the Board of Directors.

### **Our Past and Present**

The ACLU of Iowa has been dedicated to the protection and advancement of civil liberties for all Iowans since it was founded as one of the first state ACLU affiliates in 1935. Presently, we, along with our sister affiliates across the country, find ourselves facing difficult political headwinds and unique and pervasive threats to civil liberties. During this time of political division and turmoil, the ACLU of Iowa remains firmly committed to the same bedrock principles of freedom, liberty, and open democratic government enshrined in our U.S. and Iowa Constitutions that have inspired our work and successes over the last 80 plus years.

### **Our Future**

The challenges in our current political environment are serious and the need to defend against these threats is urgent. The ACLU of Iowa must respond rapidly and vigorously to attacks on civil liberties as well as work proactively to promote and advance rights not yet realized by too many. We envision a future where the ACLU of Iowa grows in capacity, extends its reach, and builds upon its legacy as a highly-skilled and dedicated defender and advocate of civil liberties to become an indispensable statewide institution with the ability to organize, mobilize, and activate constituents to demand that public policies and office holders comply with the U.S. and Iowa Constitutions. Further strengthening the ACLU of Iowa to fulfill its role as a trusted and credible civil liberties expert and watchdog will be essential.

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

The ACLU of Iowa has identified the following six areas of strategic direction:

**1. Grow Footprint**

The ACLU of Iowa will expand its presence statewide with a focus on reaching out to communities that are underrepresented among its membership and supporters. In addition to solidifying and expanding its support in Des Moines, Iowa City, and the state's larger cities, the ACLU of Iowa will actively seek connections in smaller communities across the state to further grow our supporter base and impact.

**2. Engage and Include Iowans**

The ACLU of Iowa will seek to engage all Iowans who support its mission of protecting and advancing civil liberties in Iowa regardless of political affiliation or party. The ACLU of Iowa will employ volunteer, supporter, and activist engagement activities to augment its core work of civil liberties litigation, legislative advocacy, and public education.

**3. Expand ACLU Visibility and Understanding of Civil Liberties**

The ACLU of Iowa will increase brand visibility and knowledge of civil liberties in Iowa. New and existing media and communication strategies will be accelerated to not only connect the affiliate to the public, but to connect the public to us and stakeholders to each other. The ACLU of Iowa will capitalize on the use of high-profile efforts, events, and civil liberties and civil rights victories achieved through its litigation and legislative advocacy work to amplify its brand and mission.

**4. Advance Diversity**

The ACLU of Iowa will achieve increased diversity in its membership, staff, board, allies, and other stakeholders in the areas of race, color, national origin, citizenship, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, geography of residence, age, gender, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital family status, education, and level of economic resources.

**5. Enhance Fund Development**

The ACLU of Iowa will grow its donor and membership base, building upon the membership and supporter boosts that came in the months following the November 2016 election.

**6. Employ Best Practices**

The ACLU of Iowa will research and formally adopt best practices in the areas of governance, finance, operations, and stakeholder relationships, including but not limited to attracting and developing leadership among its Boards and staff while emphasizing its long-standing commitment to non-partisanship. Proactive measures will be utilized to achieve compliance with internal and external regulators, strategize for leadership succession, and assure relevance through periodic progress reviews and updates to its strategic plan.