



LOBBY DAY, EVERY DAY

REMOTE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

ACLU Iowa

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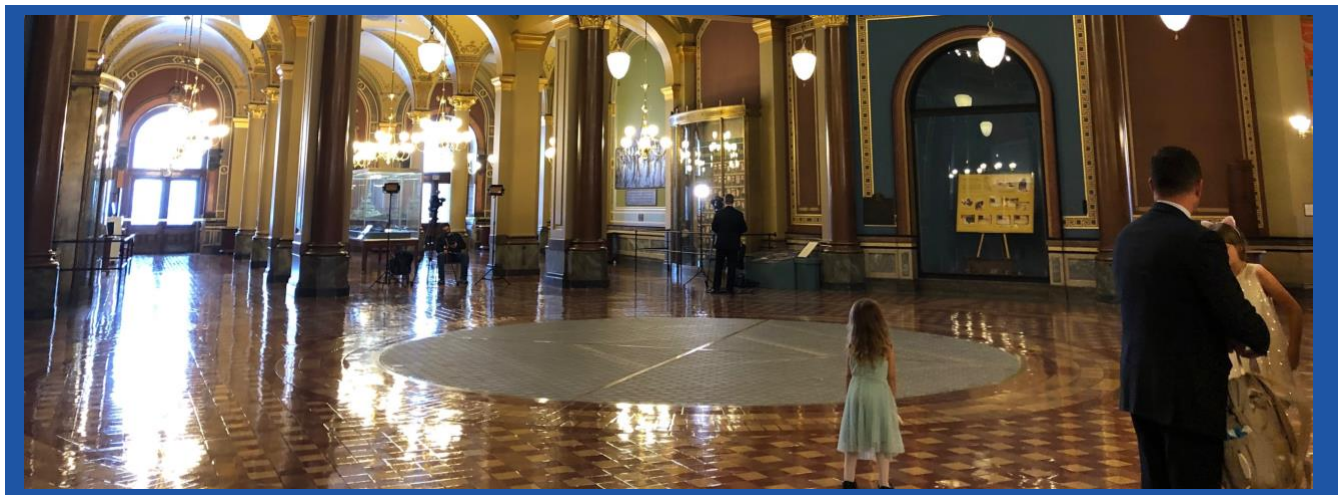
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ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT



WHAT?

The ACLU of Iowa is proud to share this remote advocacy toolkit with you. Keep this toolkit handy throughout the year as you engage in the legislative process and organize your community. You CAN advance civil liberties in Iowa by effectively communicating and sharing your story with elected officials.

WHY?

We, the people, elect our representatives and senators and it's up to us to hold them accountable on the issues that matter to us. Protecting immigrant and refugee neighbors, advancing reproductive justice, securing voting rights – plus so many more other critical civil liberty issues.

GET STARTED!

This toolkit includes the resources and education you need to take action. Inside you'll find a review of the legislative process, the ACLU of Iowa's legislative priorities, the best way to communicate with elected officials, and how to start organizing your own community around important civil liberties and civil rights issues. Together we can ensure our lawmakers protect our freedoms and defend our constitutional rights.

ABOUT THE ACLU OF IOWA

Since its founding in 1935, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Iowa has protected the basic freedoms and liberties of everyone in our state.

We are a private, non-partisan organization that fights to advance civil liberties and uphold the Iowa and U.S. Constitution. We are the state affiliate of the national American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU prides itself in upholding everyone's civil liberties, no matter who they are or what they believe.

We work in the courts, in the Iowa legislature, and through public education and advocacy to assure the rights of everyone in Iowa—from atheists to devout Christians, from labor unions to businesspeople and more—to make sure that the constitutional rights of all are preserved.

Key issues we work on include:

- Freedom of speech, expression, and the press
- Racial justice
- LGBTQ rights
- Student rights
- Personal privacy and security
- Open government and records
- Reproductive freedom
- Religious freedom and separation of church and state
- Rights of immigrants
- Women's rights
- Criminal justice reform
- Voting rights
- Disability rights

GET STARTED

HERE ARE A FEW WAYS YOU CAN GET STARTED RIGHT AWAY DEFENDING CIVIL LIBERTIES IN IOWA

1. Visit our website and sign up to receive the ACLU of Iowa's email alerts to get updates on issues and legal cases:
<https://www.aclu-ia.org/en>
2. Join our Rapid Response Team and take quick actions on legislative priorities: <https://www.aclu-ia.org/en/act-0>
3. Volunteer with our advocacy team:
<https://www.aclu-ia.org/en/act-0>
4. Follow us on social media:
 - Facebook: ACLU of Iowa
 - Twitter: @ACLUiowa
 - Instagram: @acluofiowa
5. Reach out— If you need assistance using this toolkit, or want to share how connecting with your lawmaker went, let us know. We want to support you as you advocate for civil liberties.

Damonte Stogner & Erica Barz
 Community Engagement Associates
outreach@aclu-ia.org
 DS: 515-259-7047 EB: 515-207-5448

2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

UP TO DATE AS OF FEB. 10, 2021. REACH OUT TO US FOR UPDATED INFORMATION AS NEEDED: OUTREACH@ACLU-IA.ORG

PROTECTING THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PREGNANT WORKERS

- The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) would provide modest legal protections for pregnant workers. It would require employers to provide reasonable accommodations to pregnant employees- things as basic as being able to carry a water bottle or have a chair to sit on periodically- as long as it is not a hardship on the employer.
- Iowa needs a law with straightforward, predictable rules to ensure that pregnant workers receive these reasonable accommodations from employers.
- Responsible Iowa businesses are already doing this. Let's make sure all businesses do this. It's good for business, and it's good for Iowa families.
- In this session the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act has been introduced in the Iowa Senate as [SSB 1029](#). No House version has yet been introduced.
- You can find more information on this issue [on our website](#).
- **Ask for legislators:** Pass the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act to protect the health, safety, and jobs of pregnant Iowa workers.

INCREASING AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACCESS

- An Iowa Housing Opportunity Act would seal eviction records in appropriate cases and help people access affordable housing.
- This is a racial and gender justice issue since people of color, especially Black women, who fall behind in payments are far more likely to be wrongfully evicted than white people in similar circumstances.
- Between 2012 and 2016, Black renters in Iowa were on average 4.8 times more likely than white renters to have evictions filed against them. Additionally, Black women renters were 5.5 times more likely to have evictions filed against them than white renters.
- The aftermath of an eviction persists for decades, as tenants with prior eviction records face major obstacles to accessing future housing opportunities. Landlords routinely employ [screening policies that deny housing to any renter previously named in an eviction case](#), regardless of whether the case was dismissed, occurred many years ago, or was filed on unlawful grounds.

- Victims of domestic and sexual violence are often evicted for the actions of an abusive partner, and an eviction record further challenges their ability to find safe housing.
- **Ask for legislators:** Support the passage of the Iowa Housing Opportunity Act once it is introduced.

BANNING RACIAL PROFILING

- Governor Reynolds recently unveiled SSB 1140, a bill that is proposed to prevent racial profiling. This bill would actually undo years of progress in criminal justice reform, and would pit the government against Iowans and our constitution.
- This proposed legislation is also a full-blown assault on Iowans' fundamental rights to free speech and assembly. If enacted, for example, this bill would give sweeping new powers to the government to detain people even before they are found guilty of any crime. You can find the ACLU of Iowa's statement on the bill [on our website](#).
- ACLU of Iowa continues to support passage of a meaningful anti-racial profiling bill that:
 - bans racial profiling statewide
 - bans pre-textual stops statewide
 - requires annual data collection and analysis and data collection release to the public
 - creates an advisory board to review statewide data and recommend best practices
 - requires annual training on racial profiling, data collection, and data reporting
- You can find more information on our anti-racial profiling work [on our website](#).
- **Ask:** Oppose SSB 1140 and instead pass meaningful racial justice reform in Iowa, starting with a full ban on racial profiling.

DEFENDING ABORTION ACCESS

- The ACLU of Iowa works to ensure Iowans can get the reproductive health care they need without shame, obstacles, or stigma. We strive to ensure that our government respects and supports reproductive rights for all.
- The Iowa House has passed a constitutional amendment (HJR 5) that would take away Iowans' fundamental right to an abortion under the Iowa Constitution. A similar amendment (SJR 2) has been passed out of a Senate committee and all Senators could cast their vote on this piece of legislation soon.
- Make no mistake about it- this is the most serious threat to reproductive freedom in Iowa in recent history. Politicians are laying the groundwork to completely ban abortion in Iowa, in all cases.
- The majority of Iowans across the political spectrum oppose removing the state constitutional protection that recognizes the fundamental right that Iowans have to access safe, legal abortion.

- We've seen the legislature try to block access to abortion in Iowa year after year. Each of these attempts has been struck down by the courts, so now they're trying to do an end-run by targeting the very constitutional rights themselves.
- **Ask:** Urge your senator to vote NO on SJR 2 and defend abortion access for all Iowans and preserve the fundamental right to safe and legal abortion. (You can find our current action alert [here](#).)



SUGGESTED ACTION TIMELINE

We suggest connecting with your legislators at least once per week during the legislative session, which is tentatively scheduled to run until April 30 this year. This end date is not set in stone, so keep an eye on the Iowa Legislature’s website and news outlets for any changes.

This can be accomplished through email, phone, letters or postcards, and events. Consistent contact will help you build a good working relationship with your legislators.

Join our Rapid Response Team mailing list to receive action alerts and talking points on civil liberties legislation. You can find the Rapid Response team form by visiting our website (aclu-ia.org) and clicking the “Take Action” tab.

If you have the physical version of this toolkit, use the included letterhead or postcards to make sure your legislators know you’re an ACLU of Iowa volunteer! Please only use ACLU branded materials if you are advocating for our 2021 legislative priorities. If you’re using the virtual version of this toolkit, you can print your own ACLU of Iowa volunteer letterhead via the toolkit landing page link you received via email.

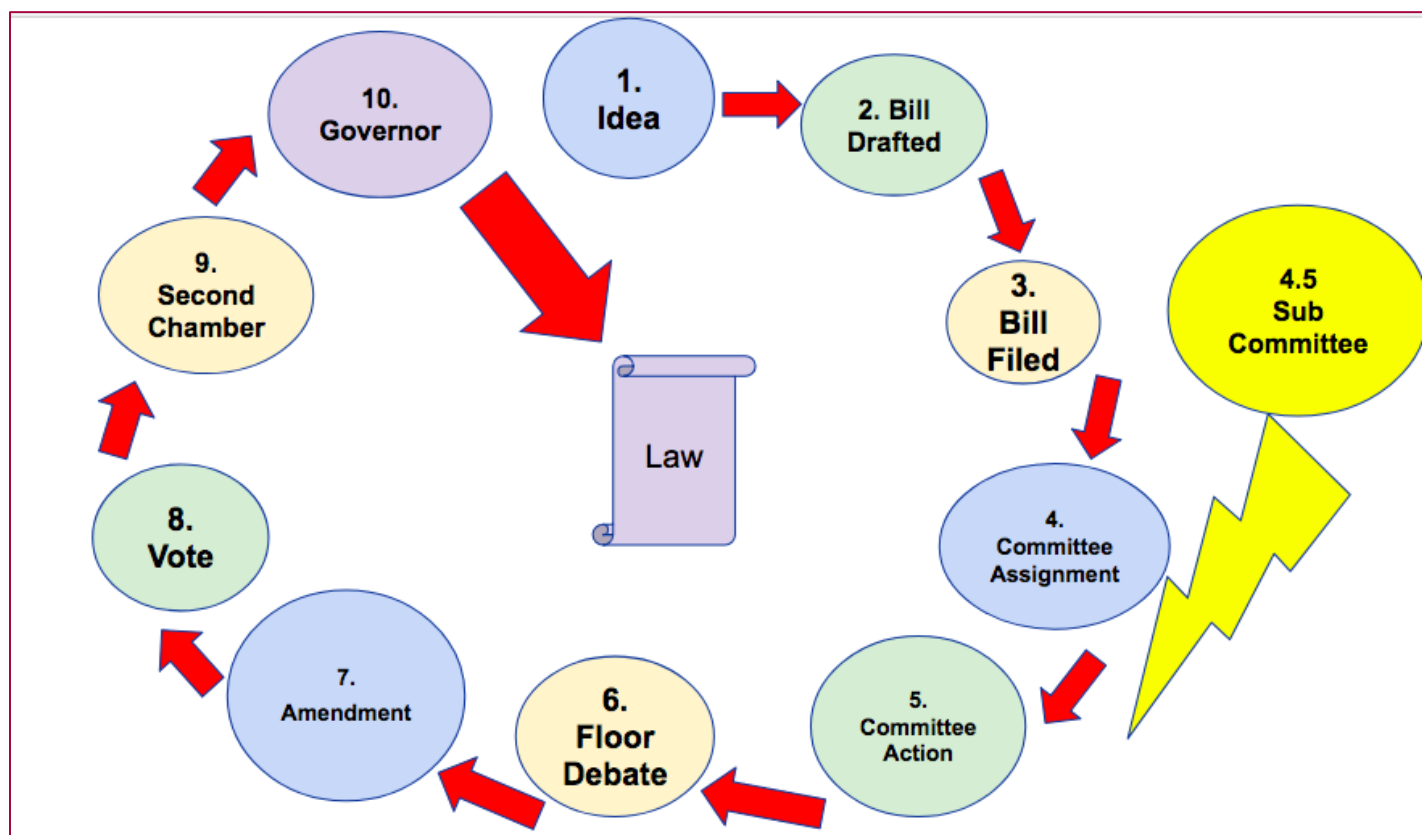


HOW AN IDEA BECOMES A LAW

THE FOLLOWING STEPS DESCRIBE IOWA'S LEGISLATIVE PROCESS. A DIAGRAM IS ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE FOR REFERENCE:

1. A legislator decides to introduce a bill. A bill is a proposal for the enactment, amendment, or repeal of an existing law, or for the appropriation of public money. A bill may originate in either the House or Senate. Ideas come from many sources: constituents, interest groups, and government agencies.
2. The legislator requests the idea be drafted into a bill by the Legislative Services Agency.
3. The bill draft is then sent to the Senate or the House where it is assigned a number and sent to the President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House. Or, if it is what is called a "study bill", it starts in a committee and stays there until it is ready for consideration by the full chamber.
4. The President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House refers the bill to a standing committee. A subcommittee, assigned by the standing committee, then studies the bill and reports its conclusions to the full committee.
5. The committee may pass the bill or pass an amended version of the bill. The committee may also send the bill to the floor without recommendation.
6. The bill is placed on the calendar, a listing of all bills officially eligible for debate. Now legislators may file amendments to the bill.
7. The bill and any amendments filed are debated by the whole chamber. Amendments must be approved by a simple majority of those legislators voting.
8. A constitutional majority, at least 26 senators or 51 representatives, must vote "yes" for the bill to proceed to the second chamber.
9. The bill goes through the same process in the second chamber. If the bill passes the second chamber without amendment, it is sent to the Governor. If the second chamber amends the bill it must be sent back to the chamber of origin for approval of those amendments. If the chambers cannot come to an agreement on the version of the bill, a conference committee is appointed.
10. After the bill passes both chambers in identical form, it is sent to the Governor. The Governor may sign the bill, veto the bill, or take no action on the bill.
11. The bill becomes law upon the Governor's signature or after three days during the session if the Governor takes no action. Bills received by the Governor during the last three days of the session must be signed or vetoed within 30 days. If the Governor takes no action on the bill after the 30-day time period, the bill is considered vetoed.

HOW AN IDEA BECOMES A LAW



HOW TO CONNECT WITH YOUR LAWMAKER REMOTELY

Aside from in-person meetings, there are several ways to connect with your elected officials throughout the year, not just during legislative session.

You can find your legislators by using the “Find Your Legislator” tool on the Iowa Legislature’s website: legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find

1. CONTACT THEM THROUGH EMAIL, LETTERS, OR PHONE CALLS. THE PHYSICAL VERSION OF THIS TOOLKIT INCLUDES MAILING MATERIALS.
2. SPEAK AT OR SUBMIT PUBLIC COMMENT TO SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS OR PUBLIC HEARINGS. THIS TOOLKIT CONTAINS DETAILS ON THE LEGISLATURE’S NEW PROTOCOLS FOR REMOTE PARTICIPATION IN THESE MEETINGS.
3. WRITE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OR OP-EDS IN YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPERS
4. SHARE YOUR STORY ON SOCIAL MEDIA
5. ATTEND OR COORDINATE VIRTUAL TOWNS HALLS AND OTHER VIRTUAL PUBLIC FORUMS

HOW TO MEET WITH YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

ESSENTIAL PREPARATION

STEP 1: KNOW YOUR LEGISLATORS

- What committees do they serve on? What is their professional background? Do you have any shared common interests? All this information can be helpful in building a relationship with your lawmaker and talking to them about civil liberties issues.
- Go to <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators> to access their contact information and bios.
- Focus on the legislators that represent your district or who are on committees that pertain to the issues you are advocating on.
- Find them on social media or visit their campaign websites. These are great tools to learn more about their priorities.
- Check out the 2019-2020 ACLU of Iowa Legislative Scorecard to see how your lawmaker voted on civil liberties during the last legislative session: https://www.aclu-ia.org/sites/default/files/final_09.17.20_2020_legislative_scorecard.pdf

STEP 2: KNOW WHAT TO SAY

Before you reach out to your legislator about an issue — whether by phone or virtual meeting — make sure you do your homework and know your content.

- Visit [our website](#) throughout the session as we identify the bills we are working on.
- Prepare a script before contacting your elected official. The more you know, the more your legislator can learn too!
- Share your personal story on how a particular issue may impact (or has impacted) you or a loved one.
- Reach out to the ACLU of Iowa community engagement team for support as you prepare to meet with your legislator – outreach@aclu-ia.org.

STEP 3: THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Be persistent! Lawmakers are very busy during session and can't always respond right away. Follow up with a phone call if you sent an email.
- Remember: Legislators work for YOU!
- Always be professional, use a positive tone, and thank them for their time and listening to you. Also, be sure to send them a thank you email or letter.

HOW TO WATCH AND PARTICIPATE IN LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS VIRTUALLY

The Iowa Legislature has new COVID-19 protocols to provide a public online participation option for their subcommittee and committee meetings. Options vary between chambers and meeting type. If you have problems navigating the [Iowa Legislature's website](https://legis.iowa.gov) (legis.iowa.gov) and/or finding live streams or public comment sections, please contact us at outreach@aclu-ia.org.

SENATE

Subcommittees: Zoom link

- Live comments: **Yes**
- Written comments: **Yes**

Senate subcommittees will be held via Zoom. Zoom information for the subcommittee will be included in the subcommittee notice, which will be published in the “Meetings” section of the Iowa Legislature’s website (legis.iowa.gov/committees/meetings) at least the day before the subcommittee is scheduled. Members of the public may comment during the Zoom subcommittee or provide written comments on legislation via the “Comments” link in the notice.

Committees: Senate chamber live stream

- Live comments: **No**
- Written comments: **No**

All Senate committee meetings will be livestreamed on the Iowa Legislature’s website and archived under that specific committee’s webpage after (legis.iowa.gov/committees). You can find the Senate chamber live stream on the homepage of the Iowa Legislature’s website.

HOUSE

Subcommittees: webex

- Live comments: **No**
- Written comments: **Yes**

All subcommittees will be livestreamed via webex. The webex link will be provided on the subcommittee meeting notice, which will be published in the “Meetings” section of the Iowa Legislature’s website (legis.iowa.gov/committees/meetings). Members of the public are strongly encouraged to submit written comments on legislation via the “Comments” link in the notice.

Committees: webex

- Live comments: **No**
- Written comments: **No**

All committees will be livestreamed via webex. The webex link will be provided on the committee meeting notice.

HOW TO SPEAK AT SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS OR PUBLIC HEARINGS

BEFORE THE MEETING

- Find out when and where the bill(s) you care about will be heard. You may do so by checking the Iowa Legislature website for the daily schedules and agendas: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/committees/meetings>.
- Plan your talking points and story. You will be more effective getting your message across if you have prepared remarks in writing. You can then orally summarize your remarks to conserve time.

AT THE MEETING

- Be on time.
- Wait your turn. The chair or subcommittee members will announce if there is a specific speaking order and if there is a time limit.
- Begin your remarks by addressing the chair and committee members. State your name, where you live, and why you are there.
- Be courteous and brief in your language and address.
- Be confident. There is no right or wrong way to voice your opinion and concerns!

AFTER THE MEETING

- Thank the legislator and other speakers.
- Connect with other individuals or groups that share the same views as you!
- Let us know how it went! Reach out to our community engagement team at outreach@aclu-ia.org.

HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO ENGAGE LAWMAKERS

Social media is a great way to magnify support for the ACLU's legislative priorities and to share your thoughts on your elected officials' actions.

Thanking lawmakers for protecting civil liberties, telling your friends about conversations with legislators, and sharing your photos are just a few effective uses for social media.

GENERAL TIPS FOR CRAFTING YOUR BEST ONLINE MESSAGE:

BE VISUAL

Share a photo or infographic to increase the likelihood of having your post seen.

BE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTOR

You may get less attention if you use overly negative language. Be firm, but polite. Also, make clear in your message that you are a constituent. Lawmakers are more likely to respond or take action if that is the case.

USE HASHTAGS

Make sure to tweet into existing conversations or campaigns. Popular legislative hashtags are #ialegis and #iagov. Don't forget to tag us (@ACLUiowa) too!

RETWEET AND COMMENT

Retweet posts from your legislator's office and comment thoughtfully.

SAMPLE POSTS

"I'm lobbying my legislators remotely to support immigrant rights, fix our criminal legal system, and protect LGBTQ Iowans! #ialegis #iagov"

"Thank you [@legislator] for meeting with me about banning racial profiling in Iowa! #ialegis"

".@legislator -- Please vote NO on SJR 2 to defend abortion access. #ialegis # iagov"