



THE DEFENDER

April 2016

Vol. 44 / No. 1

Newsletter of the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa

Pushing Criminal Justice Reform in the Legislature

Harsher laws do not translate into a safer society. They only fill our prisons at a terrible financial and human cost.

The legislative session started off on a promising note with Gov. Terry Branstad delivering a Condition of the State address that called for reforming Iowa's criminal justice system to reduce racial disparities.

Criminal justice reform is among the ACLU of Iowa's top legislative priorities and for good reason: Iowa has more than 8,000 inmates in nine state prisons and about 31,000 offenders supervised in community corrections programs statewide. African-Americans constitute 25.3 percent of Iowa's prison population, while they comprise only 3.3 percent of the state's overall population.

But Branstad's message was met with skepticism by many prison reform advocates, including the ACLU of Iowa. Part of the



Considering The Right to Call 911

An Iowa Senate subcommittee considers amendments to the Right to Assistance bill, a priority bill of the ACLU of Iowa. It would prevent domestic abuse and other crime victims from being threatened with eviction or penalties for calling police. ACLU of Iowa Legislative Counsel Pete McRoberts is seated at far right. Read more about the Right to Assistance bill on page 2.

skepticism was that his call for criminal justice reform is in stark contrast with a legislative mindset that seems set on taking a tough-on-crime stance. This stance is held despite overwhelming evidence that harsher laws do not make us safer—they only fill our

prisons at a rate that our state cannot afford and wrongly destroy the lives of inmates, families, and communities.

In the 2015 session, for example, the Iowa General Assembly considered more than 100

Continued on page 3

Working for Driver's Licenses for All Iowa Immigrants

Immigrants, regardless of status, should have licenses to make roads safer and lives better.

The ACLU of Iowa has been a leader in forming a coalition of law enforcement, businesses, insurance, victims' advocates, and immigrants' rights groups to push for legislation that would create a driver's license for Iowa immigrants, regardless of their status.

The license would require passing the Iowa driving test and obtaining insurance.

Bills have been introduced in both chambers of the Iowa Legislature that would provide for such a license. House File 2318, introduced by Rep. John Kooiker (R-Boyden) and Senate Study Bill 1092 by Sen. Steve Soddors (D-State Center) would

provide for such licenses to be issued by the Iowa Department of Transportation.

Called Temporary Visitor's Driver's Licenses (TVDLs), they would make roads safer for all Iowans and life easier for thousands of unauthorized Iowans.

Makes Roads Safer for All

This type of driver's license for aspiring citizens would have important road safety benefits. Getting a driver's license requires learning the rules of the road and being tested on those rules. This makes the roads safer for everyone.

In fact, an AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety report found that unlicensed drivers are almost 5 times more likely to be in a fatal crash than are validly licensed drivers.

Having a license also allows an aspiring citizen to get insurance, which financially

protects not only the holder of the license but also anyone involved in an accident with that driver.

Adopted in Other States

Eleven other states, as well as Puerto Rico and Washington D.C., have successfully adopted similar licenses.

In Iowa, such licenses are particularly needed because in rural areas and small towns, driving is the only way to get around. Even in harsh weather and often with babies and children, Iowans often have no option but to drive to get to schools, churches, doctors, and grocery stores.

Immigrants who are stopped and do not have licenses can be fined hundreds of dollars for driving without a license.

Continued on page 5



The Defender is the newsletter of the ACLU of Iowa, published three times a year.

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES
UNION of IOWA

505 Fifth Avenue, Suite 901
Des Moines, Iowa 50309-2316
515-243-3576 or info@aclu-ia.org
www.aclu-ia.org

Volume 44, Number 1, April 2016
© 2016 American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa

Jeremy Rosen, *Executive Director*
Rita Bettis, *Legal Director*
Sarah Conroy, *Development Director*
Veronica Lorson Fowler,
Communications Director
Joseph Fraioli, *Staff Attorney*
Cristina Kinsella, *Advocacy Coordinator*
Erica Johnson, *Advocacy Director*
Pete McRoberts, *Legislative Counsel*
Ellen L. Simmons, *Operations Manager*

ACLU of Iowa Board of Directors

President: Eddie Broders, Davenport
Vice President: Shams Ghoneim, Iowa City
Secretary: Benjamin W. Allen, Des Moines
Treasurer: Mark Rosenbury, West Des Moines
Affirmative Action Officer:
Georgina Dodge, Iowa City
At-Large Executive Committee Members:
Jill June, Ankeny
The Rev. Mel Schlachter, Iowa City

LaMark Junior Combs, Sr., Davenport
Susan Cory, Muscatine
Steven J. Drazozal, Dubuque
JP Greer, Spencer
Joe Enriquez Henry, Des Moines
David Hoffman, Ames
Ousainou Keita, Iowa City
Mark Kende, Des Moines
Karen Mackey, Sioux City
Joan Masover, Fairfield
David Muller, Iowa City, *Hawkeye
Chapter Representative*
Zadok Nampala, Iowa Falls
Judy Stockbridge, Carroll
Victoria Szopinski, Ames
Sandy Vopalka, Indianola, *National Board
Representative*

Printed on 10% recycled paper

Highlights of Civil Liberties Wins and Challenges in the Iowa Legislature

With the second funnel deadline past, here's how some key civil liberties bills have fared.

We've been working on a wide variety of legislation this session, some of it discussed elsewhere in this issue. Other key bills are:

Reproductive Freedom

A number of legislative proposals that would restrict women's reproductive freedom were introduced in the Iowa Legislature.

They included a state constitutional amendment declaring that there is no fundamental constitutional right to abortion. They also included personhood legislation that would make performing or obtaining an abortion constitute murder, and a bill that would unreasonably restrict medication abortion.

The ACLU of Iowa strongly opposed these proposals, and none advanced out of committee.

The House did pass an indirect attack on reproductive freedom—HF 2329, a bill to ban the sale or donation of fetal tissue. Sale of fetal tissue is already banned under federal law, while donation is permitted, under strict guidelines, in order to further important medical research.

In addition, this bill was seen as an attack on Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, even though that organization does not participate in fetal tissue donation programs.

We opposed this unnecessary and unwise legislation and while the bill passed the House, the Senate never took it up.

The Right to Assistance Bill

No one should be penalized for calling 911. Yet that's exactly what some so-called crime "nuisance ordinances" do.

The ACLU of Iowa and the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence have strongly supported and pushed for Right to Assistance legislation (HF 493), which would protect victims of crime from retaliation after calling for emergency services. Crime nuisance ordinances make people think twice about calling for emergency services because they fear eviction or discrimination by a landlord.

This important crime victim bill, right before publication time, passed unanimously through the Iowa Senate. We're optimistic about this bill's chances in getting signed into law.

Pregnancy Accommodation

For women to truly have an equal playing field, it's essential that accommodations be made for pregnancy in the workplace.

The Senate took up this important issue by proposing a bill (SF 2252) that would prohibit employers from denying reasonable accommodations to pregnant employees. This bill passed out of the Senate, but failed to make it out of the House Labor Committee.

We will continue to work for legislation that assures equal opportunities in the workplace, regardless of gender.

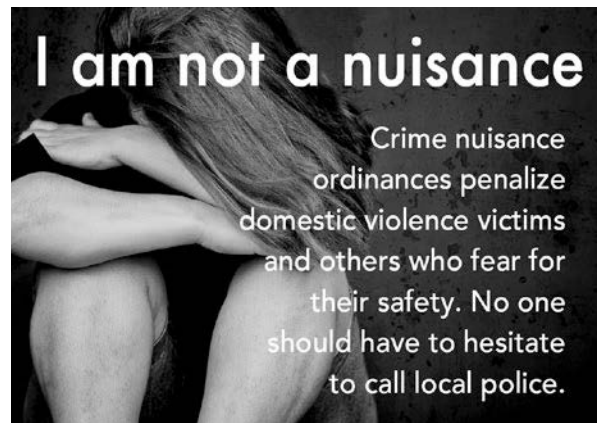
End-of-Life Decisions

The ACLU supports adults facing a terminal diagnosis in making informed, voluntary, end-of-life decisions, including choosing to live, to refuse treatment, and to seek assistance in dying by healthcare providers.

We also believe that end-of-life legislation must provide safeguards to ensure that people with disabilities—as well as those who are reliant on others for care who are in very vulnerable positions—are protected in their right to continue living. Those decisions must not be coerced or impulsive.

SF 2051 would have provided adults who are diagnosed with a terminal disease and who have expressed a desire to end their life with the ability to do so.

That bill did not move forward in 2016; we look forward next year to working with key stakeholders to craft a strong bill that protects the rights of all involved. ■



Advocating for Criminal Justice Reform Legislation

Continued from page 1

bills that would either create new crimes or increase criminal penalties for existing crimes. In keeping with the important mandate to first do no harm, the legislature must not approve bills of this nature in 2016. There is no empirical evidence that these harsher laws reduce crime.

Discriminatory Policing/Racial Profiling

The ACLU is working for communities in which police treat people the same, regardless of perceived race, ethnicity, nationality, or religion.

Both the Senate (SF 2267) and the House (HF 2376) proposed bills designed to combat the problem in Iowa of discriminatory policing (often too narrowly called racial profiling because it encompasses unfair treatment based on more than just race). These bills were a good start but needed improvement.

Strong laws that successfully prohibit discriminatory policing should do the following:

- Define “profiling” in a comprehensive way that includes all impacted groups
- Require data collection that is based on officer perception of a person’s race, gender, age, and nationality
- Create an independent review board
- Allow people to file a lawsuit against law enforcement agencies that engage in discriminatory policing, with strong legal remedies if they win



The Senate bill passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee but never made it to the floor for debate. The House bill did not make it out of committee.

The ACLU of Iowa will continue to work with legislators, impacted communities, and advocacy groups to craft a strong discriminatory policing bill that truly ensures

that all people are treated fairly and equally by law enforcement.

Body Camera Legislation

Body cameras hold tremendous promise in improving police accountability. But it’s important that good policies and procedures are put in place to make sure body cameras are used effectively and protect privacy. That’s why we have supported a body camera bill (SF 2174) proposed in the Senate this session.

The bill sets out a much-needed process for collecting, storing and sharing body camera data while also protecting privacy by limiting who could request data.

The data could be shared only with those individuals who were subjects in the video and other legally authorized persons. The bill also would make data containing use of police force public record.

Instead of acting on it this session, legislators decided to further study the issue and take it up at a later date.

The ACLU of Iowa will continue to push for this bill and any other meaningful body camera legislation that protects privacy rights and fosters police accountability.

Juvenile Record Confidentiality

Gov. Branstad signed into law a bill to seal juvenile records (SF 2288). This law makes all juvenile court records confidential, unless the crime would have been considered a forcible felony if it had been committed by an adult.

The bill is important, because it may help address the tragic school-to-prison pipeline, fed disproportionately by students of color.

It will also help young people overcome childhood mistakes in order to get a job, successfully apply for college, and become a contributing member of society later in life.

Civil Forfeiture

The travesty of civil forfeiture abuses has been well documented in the media and rightly called a system of “legal thievery.”

Law enforcement should not be able to retain cash and other property taken from travelers and other individuals just by alleging that it may be part of a crime. SF 2262 would modify current law and allow police to retain property they take only after a person has been convicted of a felony for which forfeiture is expressly authorized as a penalty.

This bill did not make it out of the Senate before the second funnel, but we’re hopeful that it will still have a chance yet this session.

Detention Without Warrants

Because of tremendous email action and direct lobbying by ACLU supporters and coalition allies (see page 8), this outrageous



bill met its demise. HF 2276 passed out of committee but never made it out of the House.

The bill would have required local sheriffs to unconstitutionally hold people in custody for additional time after they should have been released, based simply on a request from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Holding someone in custody longer without charges is a serious action that requires a judge’s authorization. ■



SAVE THE DATE

**ACLU of Iowa Annual Event
Saturday, November 12
Des Moines Botanical Garden**

Join us for brunch at the beautiful Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden!

It will be a great time to connect (or reconnect) with fellow civil libertarians in Iowa, as well as enjoy good food, learn more about civil liberties issues in our state, and honor outstanding Iowans who have preserved and protected civil liberties in Iowa.

More information will be shared closer to the event. Or you can call or email sarah.conroy@aclu-ia.org.

Landmark Voter Rights Case Goes To the Iowa Supreme Court

Iowa mom Kelli Jo Griffin thought after she completed her sentence she could vote, but was charged with a crime simply for casting her ballot.

In March, the Iowa Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Griffin v. Pate*, the ACLU case seeking to restore voting rights for thousands of Iowans with a felony conviction in their background.

The case has gained national attention as an important part of assuring voting rights to as many Americans as possible.

In an unusual move, the Court expanded arguments for each side from the customary 15 minutes each to 30 minutes. It also allowed the parties to share argument time with people and organizations that filed friend-of-the-court briefs on their behalf in recognition of the complexity and importance of the case.

The ACLU of Iowa shared five minutes of argument time each with the NAACP and Polk County Auditor Jamie Fitzgerald.

The case is part of a larger effort to restore voting rights for more Iowans. In 2014, we filed an amicus brief with the Iowa Supreme Court in the case *Chiodo v. Section 43.24 Panel*.

The resulting favorable ruling held that Iowans with aggravated misdemeanor convictions were not disqualified from voting.

Voting Rights Under Assault in Iowa

The ACLU's case challenges what many consider to be the greatest threat to civil liberties in our state. Iowa is one of just three states that imposes lifetime voting bans on people with felonies, even after they have completed their criminal sentences.

Because of the War on Drugs and mass incarceration policies, an estimated 6 percent of the population in Iowa can expect to have at least one felony conviction in their lifetimes. Under the current law being challenged in *Griffin*, that means they'll face lifetime disenfranchisement as well. Further, because of the existing racial disparities in the criminal justice system, combined with this brutal felony disenfranchisement law, one in four African Americans have lost their right to vote in our state.

Iowa's draconian voting restrictions have been a point of national attention by presidential candidates, advocacy groups, and national media. A key part of the problem has been Gov. Terry Branstad's executive order to deny those with certain criminal backgrounds the right to vote unless they go through a laborious and confusing voting rights restoration process.

Voting is a Fundamental Right

"Protecting the voting rights of Iowans is one of the most important things that the ACLU of Iowa does," said Jeremy Rosen, ACLU of Iowa executive director.

"We are making progress in eroding actions taken by Gov. Branstad to restore the fundamental right of Iowans to vote after they have completed their sentences. They have paid their debt to society and voting is a important

way for them to once again integrate into society and participate in our democracy."

In the case of Kelli Griffin, a Montrose, Iowa, mom, she decided to vote in a local election to show her young children the importance of voting.

She never thought an old conviction for a nonviolent drug crime from her past would bar her from voting. She had been counseled by her defense attorney, correctly at the time, that she could indeed vote after she completed her sentence. But unknown to Kelli, with an executive order from Gov. Branstad, the law changed.

Two months after she cast her vote, she was arrested and charged with voter fraud, facing as many as 15 years in jail. She was acquitted but still cannot vote.

A decision is expected by the end of the Iowa Supreme Court's term in June. ■



Kelli Jo Griffin of Montrose stands on the steps of the Iowa Judicial Branch Building, where the Iowa Supreme Court is held. She was visiting Des Moines in January and wanted to see where oral arguments would take place.

Eastern Iowa ACLU Chapter to Hold Potluck Event

Get to know other ACLU of Iowa members in eastern Iowa!

The ACLU of Iowa Hawkeye Chapter invites ACLU members and their guests to a potluck social on Sunday, May 22 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

The Hawkeye Chapter covers several counties in eastern Iowa. The potluck will be held at the Environmental Education Center, located at the Eastside Recycle Center, 2401 Scott Blvd. SE, Iowa City.

Bring a small- to medium-sized dish to share. Soft drinks and coffee provided. Sorry, no alcohol allowed.

For more information or to RSVP, email hawkeye.chapter@aclu-ia.org. ■



Advocating for Immigrant Driver's Licenses

continued from page 1

Through the Iowa Safe Roads coalition, dozens of statewide and local leaders have pledged their support of such driver's licenses.

Poll Shows Support for Iowa Immigrants' Driver's Licenses

An ACLU of Iowa statewide poll has found majority support of driver's licenses for all immigrants, regardless of immigration status.

The poll, conducted by Public Policy Polling and underwritten by the ACLU of Iowa, found that 58 percent of all Iowa caucus-goers who were questioned support driver's licenses for immigrants, regardless of immigration status.

"It's encouraging to hear that the majority of Iowans support allowing all immigrants to access driver's licenses both from a humanitarian and safety perspective," said Erica Johnson, ACLU of Iowa advocacy director.

Few Options to Driving

"Immigrants are here and are driving," Johnson said. "That's because in a state like Iowa that is rural with harsh winters, they often have little option other than to drive in order to get to school, to buy food, or to get to doctors and churches. Making sure they are tested on the rules of the road and have insurance simply makes sense and helps everyone."

The ACLU of Iowa, a number of law enforcement officials, and advocacy groups have all been pushing for legislation that would authorize the Department of Transportation to allow all immigrants to apply for licenses.

Must Pass Driving Test

To receive the proposed two-year Temporary Visitor Driver's License, the person would have to study for and pass the driver's test and get mandatory car insurance.

The resulting license would be compliant with federal requirements, protected against fraud, and could be used only for driving—not as identification used to board an airplane, to receive government benefits, or to vote.

The poll, commissioned by the ACLU of Iowa and executed by the North Carolina professional polling company, was conducted on February 16 and 17. The poll was the first of its kind to quantify support for such licenses.

It surveyed 506 Iowa caucus goers: 48 percent attended their Democratic caucus, 52 percent attended the Republican caucus. ■

Law Enforcement Support

One of those groups is a number of Iowa law enforcement officials who have signed onto a statement of support for TVDLS.

Part of that statement reads, "We in law enforcement deal with a significant number of undocumented immigrants who live and work in our communities. This reality requires us to respond to new challenges as we look to promote public safety, one of which is the lack of a driver's license among some immigrants in our communities."

"A growing number of individuals, including some of us in law enforcement, support a change in the law to allow for issuing a 'driver's card,' which would be given after a person undergoes testing, gets mandatory insurance, and after that person proves their identity and Iowa residence."

"As long as those safeguards are met and information is verifiable, temporary licensing promotes law enforcement goals for public safety."

Those who have signed on are:

- Mike Tupper, *Marshalltown Police Chief*
- Bill McCarthy, *Polk County Sheriff*
- Paul Fitzgerald, *Story County Sheriff*
- Judy Bradshaw, *former Des Moines Police Chief*
- Ric Martinez, *Nevada Public Safety Director*
- Mark Prosser, *Storm Lake Public Safety Director/Police Chief*
- Daniel J. Trelka, *Waterloo Director of Safety Services*
- Jake McGee, *Oskaloosa Police Chief*
- Lawrence McNaul, *West Liberty City Administrator/Chief of Police*
- Dennis Conard, *Scott County Sheriff*
- Tony Thompson, *Blackhawk County Sheriff*
- Ray Beltran, *Eagle Grove Chief of Police*
- Larry Richtsmeier, *Franklin County Sheriff*

To see a complete list of supporters, go to www.iowasaferoads.com. ■



The ACLU Official Store - Cool shirts, hoodies, hats, and more



www.shop.aclu.org | Every Purchase Supports The Fight for Freedom



Immigrants' Rights Advocacy Day at the Capitol

The ACLU of Iowa led an immigrants' rights advocacy day March 3 to empower immigrants and others to advocate on immigrants' rights and related topics with their state representatives.

ACLU Advocacy Director Erica Johnson led a morning session on how to effectively talk to lawmakers on key issues. Then participants spread out across the rotunda to talk to their legislators and make their views known.

Shown in the photo here, from left, is Kenia Calderon, Drake student and also of the American Friends Service Committee; Jocelyn Hernandez of ACCESS; Alejandro Alfaro-Santiz, pastor of Trinity/Las Americas United Methodist Church in Des Moines; and Representative Megan Jones (R-Sioux Rapids).

Participants also received an update on key legislation, including warrantless jail detentions and driver's licenses for all immigrants regardless of status.

"They really did an amazing job telling their personal stories and advocating for their issues, which is the best way to have conversations with our representatives," Johnson said.

These types of training sessions are powerful, Johnson said, because the people who are most directly impacted by proposed legislation are the ones lobbying their legislators. These skills and strategies are essential for advancing the ACLU of Iowa's key issues.

Iowa Bar Exam Nursing Accommodations Improved

No woman should have to choose between breastfeeding and her profession.

The Iowa Bar Exam is a critical two-day test that allows lawyers to practice in Iowa. But its previous policies on accommodating breastfeeding test-takers who wanted to nurse or pump were inadequate—as are the test-taking policies for many other professions in many other states.

Working With Law Examiners Board

Now, after working with the ACLU of Iowa, the national ACLU, and Law Students for Reproductive Justice, the Iowa Board of Law Examiners has revised its policies and practices to greatly improve the ability of young mothers to take the exam fairly, without undue discomfort or problems.

The ACLU commends the Iowa Board of Law Examiners for its leadership in providing

a fair and equal testing environment for test-takers who are breastfeeding.

Iowa's rules did allow breastfeeding women to apply for an accommodation of a health-related condition for the exam. They also allowed breastfeeding women to bring a breast pump and accompanying equipment and required that a private location be provided.

Breastfeeding Breaks Too Brief

However, the provided breaks were too short for some mothers to nurse or pump. Now the law examiners board permits the provision of additional off-the-clock time if existing exam breaks are not frequent or long enough for an individual's circumstances.

Also, importantly, the information is clearly stated on the Board's website so test-takers who need accommodations know they are available and how to request them.

Another problem was that there might not be an appropriate place at the exam facility to nurse or pump.

Now test-takers are assured access to a private, sanitary sit where they also have access to electrical outlets to operate some types of pumps.

Overall Grade Improved

Previously Iowa earned a mere "C" for its bar-exam breastfeeding policies by the national ACLU and Law Students for Reproductive Justice (LSRJ). Now, because of the improvements, the ACLU and LSRJ will be updating Iowa's grade to an "A-."

The ACLU expects to update Iowa's score to a full "A" grade once the Board adopts the anticipated changes of easy-to-use-forms for test-takers and making those available on its website. ■

Three New Staffers Join Des Moines Office

It's a time of expansion and changes in staffing for the ACLU of Iowa, building our capacity for protecting civil liberties across the state.



Joe Fraioli has been hired as a staff attorney, bringing the ACLU's staff up for the first time to two attorneys working full-time on litigation.

Fraioli will work with Legal Director Rita Bettis on active litigation and to further the ACLU's legal and policy initiatives.

Fraioli previously served in the Iowa State Public Defender's office as an assistant appellate defender, representing indigent Iowans before the Iowa Supreme Court and the Iowa Court of Appeals.

He has also served as a law clerk for the Fifth Judicial District of Iowa in Des Moines. He received his law degree with distinction from the University of Iowa.



Cristina Kinsella has been hired for a new position, Advocacy Coordinator.

Hired with special funding from the ACLU national office, she took the position just in time

for the Iowa caucuses. Kinsella did voter education and advocacy to make sure that civil liberties were part of the political discussion and educated Iowans on how to participate in the caucuses and how to introduce a resolution.

During the legislative session, she is assisting with our planning and lobbying efforts. After session, she'll continue to work on advocacy on ACLU issues, social media, and public presentations.

She received her law degree *summa cum laude* from Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego. She recently completed her Masters of Laws (LLM) in International Human Rights Law at the National University of Ireland.



Pete McRoberts has been hired as Legislative Counsel through the end of the Iowa legislative session.

He comes to the job with an excellent background, having

served last legislative session as a contract lobbyist for the ACLU of Iowa.

He is lobbying full-time for the ACLU, but also is continuing to be a principal in Dash Management, an executive counsel and legislative policy management firm in Des Moines.

Besides legislative management, his experience includes serving as an advisor or appointee to three Iowa governors as well as to an U.S. Senator and U.S. representative.

He has advised the Office of Management and Budget on federal agency proposals. McRoberts is the board chair to AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps, a federal national service agency, of which he was a founding member.

Legal and Communications Interns Do Research, Help with Media, Explore Non-Profit Careers

Legal Extern Molly Bryant

is currently a second-year student at the University of Iowa College of Law. She has volunteered for the Rape Victim Advocacy Program in Iowa City as well as served as treasurer for the campus chapter of Law Students for Reproductive Justice. A native of Bettendorf, Bryant received her undergraduate degree at ISU, where she studied journalism and political science.

At the ACLU, she has done legal research and writing regarding pregnancy discrimination in the workplace and police racial profiling.

Bryant says she was attracted to the ACLU because the organization "has a very 'voice-for-the-voiceless' vibe and that is something I have always been very passionate about. I love helping people and being in the legal department of the ACLU really opens a lot of opportunities for that kind of work."

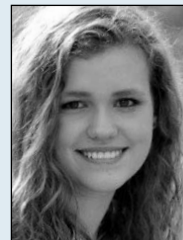


Communications Intern Brita Olmstead

is a major in English and women's studies. She is serving as a spring semester communications intern, helping with web site editing, media logs, and improving the women rights content on the ACLU of Iowa web site.

She's just back from a semester abroad in Rome, where she was an international intern at a local nonprofit photography school. She also tutors at Drake's Writing Workshop. Upon graduation, she hopes to travel and teach English abroad or work at a nonprofit publishing house.

Olmstead says, "I wanted to work with the ACLU because it's an organization out there fighting for rights I believe in. With my specific interest in gender equality advocacy, I saw this internship as a great opportunity to get involved."



Communications Intern Ashley Clay-Johnson

is currently a senior at Drake University studying sociology, human resource management and women's studies. Originally from

Chicago, she started volunteering with ACLU in the fall for a leadership class and then was brought on as a spring communications intern, updating the web site, media logs, and more.

After graduation this spring, Clay-Johnson plans attend graduate school in human resources management.

"I was attracted to the ACLU because it's an organization that stands up for people whose voice would not be heard without it," she said. "With my concentration in women studies, I am also very interested in the ways this organization helps with gender equality."



ACLU of Iowa Legal Program Reaching New Heights

The ACLU of Iowa’s legal program is filing a record number of critical cases.

The ACLU of Iowa legal program is on an impressive roll. Under the recent leadership of Legal Director Rita Bettis, we have filed a number of cases that are sparking national debate and fundamentally improving the civil liberties landscape in our state.

On March 30, we argued one of those cases, *Griffin v. Pate*, in the Iowa Supreme Court. This is our challenge seeking to protect the voting rights of people who have fully completed felony sentences. If successful, our case would result in our client, Kelli Jo Griffin—and as many as 6 percent of Iowans—having their voting rights restored. We anticipate a decision by June (see page 4).

The Griffin case is being discussed around the country because it sits at the intersection of several key civil liberties issues. It’s a major voting rights case, seeking to change Iowa’s shameful status as one of only three states in which those with felony convictions in their past cannot vote (unless they are able

to get an exceedingly rare restoration from the Governor). It’s also a case with enormous implications for racial justice. Because our state disproportionately convicts so many African-Americans and Latinos, that also means that our state law disproportionately takes away their votes.

Also, if we truly want former offenders to fully reintegrate into society, we must restore their fundamental civil and political rights.

Another case is getting national attention—from an unexpected source: The Daily Show. In early April, you may have seen our client, Meagan Taylor, featured in a segment about the discrimination faced by transgender people. It featured the 911 call by a West Des Moines hotel clerk who called to report that she suspected that Meagan and her accompanying friend were engaged in prostitution, for no other reason than their being transgender.

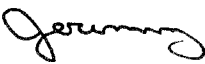
It’s part of our ongoing advocacy to advance equal rights for transgender people in our state. Iowa law protected transgender people from discrimination a decade ago, but those protections have gone largely unenforced.

We continue to work on a number of other legal issues. We’re protecting the rights of immigrants to seek the documents they need to secure employment, working to reduce shackling of juveniles, and pressing to make sure that all eligible Iowans can easily register to vote.

We’ve also successfully advocated for improved conditions for breastfeeding mothers who take the Iowa Bar Exam (see page 8).

And with the hire of new staff attorney, Joseph Fraioli, for the first time the ACLU of Iowa has had two full-time attorneys dedicated solely to litigation (see page 9).

Legal work is the foundation of what the ACLU of Iowa has done over the past 80 years. We look forward to more court victories in the years to come!

Best,

Jeremy Rosen
Executive Director



IN THIS ISSUE

Thank you to our amazing donors!
page 6

Voting Rights Case to the Iowa Supreme Court.....page 4

Immigrants’ Rights Advocacy Day page 8

Nursing Moms Get Better Accommodations at the Iowa Bar page 8