



# THE DEFENDER

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Newsletter of the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa

## Abortion Lawsuit Filed With Planned Parenthood

**The ACLU of Iowa, on behalf of Planned Parenthood, has filed a lawsuit to block a forced 72-hour waiting period and unnecessary second clinic visit.**

*Roe v. Wade* long ago recognized a woman's constitutional right to an abortion, but the Iowa Legislature this session fought its hardest to block women from exercising that right.

It introduced a host of legislation, including one bill that would have limited abortions after just six weeks. While that was ultimately rejected, another abortion restriction did pass, and Iowa ended up facing one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the nation.

Despite efforts by the ACLU and other advocacy groups, the legislature passed SF 471, which banned nearly all abortions after 20 weeks. It also required women seeking an

abortion at any stage of pregnancy to endure a minimum three-day waiting period and also to make a medically unnecessary second clinic appointment before the actual abortion service. Those delays create hardships for many women who have to drive long distances, may not have secure transportation, may have to take off work, or may have to find child care.

Two days before Gov. Terry Branstad was scheduled to sign this awful bill into law, a



Photo: Peter Leavitt

### A Season of Protest

In light of all the post-election protests on everything from women's rights to immigrants' rights to voting rights to racial justice, the ACLU of Iowa has updated its protesters' rights fliers and materials. Page 7.

lawsuit was filed to block the 72-hour rule and second clinic visit requirements by the ACLU of Iowa and Planned Parenthood Federation of

*Continued on page 6*

## Defending Newton Student's Free Speech Rights

**On the 48th anniversary of the landmark *Tinker* student black armband decision, the ACLU of Iowa again took on a similar battle—this time for a Newton High School student who doodled a political message on his arm.**

Newton school administrators apparently could have used a lesson in the history of student rights. Back in 1969, the ACLU of Iowa defended three Iowa students, including John and Mary Beth Tinker, who wore black armbands to school to protest the Vietnam War. They were told to remove them but refused. The case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, and *Tinker v. The Des Moines Independent Community School District* is now a landmark case for student political free speech.

But that important free speech lesson was lost on the Newton teacher who scolded a transgender teen a few days after the

Trump election. The student wrote "Love Trumps Hate" on his arm. When his physical education teacher saw what he was doing, he misgendered him by calling the student a girl in a belittling way and ordered him to the assistant principal's office.

### Threatened Punishment for Free Speech

There, the student fared no better. The assistant principal told him students shouldn't discuss politics at school and ordered the student to wash off his arm or go home. The student washed off his arm.

The student's mother knew her son's rights better than his educators: "When my son came home and told me what happened, I knew his rights had been violated, and I was both offended and frustrated. It is really important to me, especially during these times, to stand up for our rights."

On the day after the student was reprimanded, approximately 60 students

planned a walkout and protest. Their goal was to communicate a message of support, love, diversity and inclusion. But some teachers threatened that if students participated, they would not be given varsity letters for their jackets. As a result, many students decided not to participate.

### Educating the Educators

The family contacted the ACLU, which wrote a legal demand letter to the school, requesting a formal apology to the student; training for faculty on free speech and non-discrimination laws; and education for students on their rights at school. The school has agreed to all the conditions of the letter.

ACLU of Iowa Legal Director Rita Bettis said she appreciates the cooperation the school showed in responding to the complaint and hopes this sends a message to other Iowa public schools. ■



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AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION of IOWA

505 Fifth Avenue, Suite 901  
Des Moines, Iowa 50309-2316  
515-243-3576 or [info@aclu-ia.org](mailto:info@aclu-ia.org)  
[www.aclu-ia.org](http://www.aclu-ia.org)

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Mark Stringer, *Executive Director*

Rita Bettis, *Legal Director*

Sarah Conroy, *Development Director*

Veronica Lorson Fowler,  
*Communications Director*

Joseph Fraioli, *Staff Attorney*

Ellen L. Simmons, *Operations Manager*

Daniel Zeno, *Policy Counsel*

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# Counting Wins After a Brutally Challenging Legislative Session

**One-party control of the Iowa Legislature created serious challenges—especially in terms of reproductive and voting rights.**

This session we fought a number of harmful bills in the statehouse, but we also had significant wins in areas such as privacy, surveillance, and due process.

After the election, it was crystal clear that this was going to be a session in which we would be trying to minimize damage to a number of fundamental rights. And that was indeed the case.

Notable bills that passed and pose a severe threat to fundamental civil liberties are the new Iowa abortion law—one of the harshest in the nation (see Page 1), the defunding of Planned Parenthood in Iowa, and the passage of voter ID.



Daniel Zeno  
Policy Counsel

### Voter ID

**Critical loss.** What does it say about a bill when the only organization supporting it is the Iowa Minutemen? HF 516 was signed into law despite clear evidence that it will make voting more difficult and complicated—not to mention, expensive.

Problem provisions of the new law include:

- Requiring many voters to show government-issued identification at the polls.
- Reducing the time period for casting absentee ballots and voting early at satellite polling places from 40 to 29 days
- Requiring all election-day registrants to be subject to a deeply flawed background check process through the state's unreliable and inaccurate database of disenfranchised felons before they can cast regular, non-provisional ballots

Make no mistake: This is the latest in a broad strategy to make it harder for eligible voters to vote. It rolls back decades of progress to expand voter participation—especially for low-income people, people of color, people with disabilities, and senior citizens.

The ACLU of Iowa is now reviewing legal options to fight this blatant voter suppression law.

### Reforms to Civil Asset Forfeiture

**Important partial win.** This law, SF 446, is a step in the right direction. Law enforcement has been seizing cash and assets from motorists and individuals—in many cases, without a conviction and in some cases, without even an arrest.

The law has been changed so that law enforcement agencies now must keep records of the assets they've seized—key for transparent government and identifying repeat abuses. Additionally, the law now raises the standard of proof in forfeiture actions closer to that of what is required in a criminal conviction.

It's also a step forward that a criminal conviction is required before law enforcement may seize amounts of \$5,000 or less. However, that needs to be changed to require a conviction when seizing *any* amount.

Nor does the new law remove the profit incentive to seize property. Right now, the sheriff's office directly seizing cash can keep it. We'll work next session to get that and other elements of the law changed.

### Blocking the Use of Religion to Discriminate Against Others

**Important win.** By working strategically and successfully with business groups and partner organizations, we were able to prevent the introduction of a Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) bill, despite repeated attempts.

RFRAs are the discriminatory bills that other states like Indiana and South Carolina have contended with. They legalize discrimination on the basis of an asserted religious belief, allowing the denial of service, housing, and even bathrooms to LGBT people, women, and religious minorities. They even allow exception to criminal laws, like those against domestic abuse.

### Cities Banned from Discriminating Against Non-Relatives in Rentals

**Win.** The government shouldn't be in the business of deciding who makes up a family. The ACLU was successful in advocating for HF 134, now a law preventing Iowa cities from implementing discriminatory housing ordinances that dictate how many non-related people can live in a rental unit. The cities were narrowly defining "family" for residents rather than allowing them to define it themselves.

There is no civil liberties problem with other ordinances that aim to protect neighborhoods, such as limiting occupancy in general or restricting noise or parking. But cities must not impose a 1950s nostalgic worldview on residents about which people may or may not live together.

### Death Penalty

**Win.** It was horrifying to see some legislators trying to drag justice back nearly a half century, to 1965, when the death penalty was abolished in Iowa. However, alongside our allies, we were successful for now in convincing lawmakers that Iowans had no taste for government-sponsored executions. This bill died in subcommittee.

### Moving Forward with Medical Cannabis

**Partial win.** More people in Iowa are more likely to get much-needed relief from medical cannabis with a wider-ranging law that expands the list of diseases for which cannabis oil can be used (with a doctor's recommendation). Smoking of the drug is prohibited.

But there is more work to be done—including ultimately decriminalizing personal marijuana use altogether. We'll continue to lobby for improved marijuana laws in upcoming sessions.

### Pregnant Workers Rights Act

**Progress made.** The ACLU has been working for passage of a bill that would assure "reasonable accommodations" for pregnant workers. Those include allowing pregnant workers to carry a water bottle, providing a

stool to workers who must stand for extended periods of time, or temporary reassignment of duties if a doctor recommends physical limits during pregnancy. The bill recognizes that what is reasonable for one size of employer will be different for another.

Our bill was introduced with wide, bipartisan support and passed through a House subcommittee unanimously. But it didn't progress further. We'll pick up the bill next session to get it passed.

### A Halt on "Sanctuary Cities" Legislation

**Win.** This anti-immigrant bill, SF 481, would have penalized those county jails that, rightly, do not keep people in custody longer than authorized by a judge (see box below). It did not become law.

Merely because they abide by the Fourth Amendment, those jails have been threatened with the loss of funding for being so-called "sanctuary jurisdictions."

The bill was proposed because some legislators and Federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) would like Iowa county jails to hold an individual for days longer than authorized, simply because ICE requested it, with no authorization from a judge.

At a national level, similarly, President Trump in April signed a federal anti-sanctuary executive order. As of publication time, a federal judge had blocked that order, determining that it was unconstitutional.

SF 481 passed the Iowa Senate but not the House. If it is taken up again next session, we will work to make sure the bill does not pass the House.

### Racial Profiling Legislation

**No advancement.** Racial profiling by Iowa law enforcement continues to drive our state's terrible problem of racial disparities in our county jails and prisons. A bill addressing racial profiling was introduced but failed to advance.

We will continue to work with partner organizations next session to craft and advance legislation that would minimize racial profiling.

*Daniel Zeno*

*ACLU of Iowa Policy Counsel*



### IN MEMORIAM

#### Iowa lost a great civil libertarian in April with the death of Art Heyderman, formerly of Bettendorf.

Art was a president of the ACLU of Iowa statewide board of directors and a representative on the ACLU national board. He was also a key organizer for civil libertarians in the Quad Cities.

His passion for fair and equal treatment of all people was an inspiration. A veteran of the Army Corps of Engineers, he also served during the Vietnam War and later the U.S. Army Reserves.

He was known for his love of wearing U.S. flag ties and often gifted them to others.



### THE ACLU'S WATCHDOG FUNCTION

#### Sometimes, just knowing the ACLU is out there can prevent government officials from violating civil liberties because, as one official put it, "the ACLU might chop your head off."

Part of the power of the ACLU is that our government leaders know it is watching and at the ready to employ advocacy and litigation at a moment's notice.

A recent example: One reason Iowa's 6-week abortion ban bill didn't get widespread support is that pragmatists in the legislature knew that the ACLU and other advocacy organizations would likely file a lawsuit and strike it down.

And when a voter ID bill was being created, there were versions discussed that would suppress voters even more. But those discussions didn't go further

because lawmakers knew the ACLU has a history of successfully litigating against voting rights violations.

With immigration issues, too, the ACLU has been successfully proactive.

The ACLU has been working for years to educate jails and let them know that it is unconstitutional to comply with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) requests to hold people behind bars longer than authorized by the judge (see details above).

And the message has gotten across.

The Black Hawk County sheriff, in a local TV interview, put it this way:

"Not that I want somebody who INS or ICE wanted roaming the streets, I don't... So I'm more than willing to work with them. However, I'm willing to work with them within the context of what I would have to do in front of my judges, too.

"And if I can't establish probable cause to believe that a crime was committed at the federal level, I have a problem with a legislator telling me guess what, you still have to put your neck on the chopping block so that the ACLU can chop it off."

# Protecting Privacy in Government Bathrooms

Privacy concerns about security cameras in the Iowa City Public Library led to a bill that prevents government entities from videotaping people in private areas.

The bill, SF 499, is now law and prohibits warrantless surveillance videotaping of people in private areas of state and local government buildings. That includes toilets, bath or shower facilities, locker rooms, and diaper changing areas—all spaces where a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy.

The law came about after Iowa City resident Kellsie Peponi found out she and other patrons of the Iowa City Public Library were being filmed in the women's bathroom.

She was further concerned when she found out that because the library is a government entity, the footage is public record for anyone to request, look at, and distribute.

The ACLU made an open records request for the footage of the Iowa City library bathroom and reviewed it. Disturbingly, the footage included people in various states of undress, including children, and people "adjusting" themselves. The individuals obviously were not aware that they were being videotaped and that the footage was available to the public.

Peponi said she "felt violated to realize that I had been filmed in the bathroom of the Iowa City public library. I knew that I had to stand up and point out how wrong it was to record



me in the bathroom without my knowledge and consent.

"People don't assume that they are being recorded by their local government in the bathroom," Peponi said. "Add to that the fact that anyone can just go and view the footage. That's ridiculous."

ACLU of Iowa Legal Director Rita Bettis said that the ACLU has been pushing the library for years to take down the bathroom cameras. It was gratifying to see that lawmakers took action.

"We are thankful to our client, Ms. Peponi, for being willing to stand up for her and others' privacy rights," Bettis said.

"We're also glad that the Iowa Legislature realized that this was a wider problem and intervened to protect Iowans from this type of bizarre and invasive surveillance in private spaces," Bettis said. ■

# Fundraisers Help ACLU of Iowa

After the election, Iowa businesses and creative organizations stepped forward to hold fundraisers for the ACLU of Iowa.

A number of Iowans generously offered to hold fundraising events and make unique donations. Some include:

- A showing of the movie "1984," by FilmScene, Iowa City's non-profit cinema
- The Green Gravel Comedy Fest in Iowa City
- A National Coffee Fundraiser at participating coffee houses across the state and across the nation in February
- What a Joke, a national comedy festival over inauguration weekend with an event at the Des Moines Social Club
- The Last Night in America, a comedy and music event held the night before the inauguration
- A reading of Shakespeare's "Richard III" in Iowa City
- A concert by the Cafe Ceili Band in Fairfield
- The Cake Trio Benefit Concert in Iowa City
- An in-kind services donation from Grand Consulting for computer/technology support



A still from the movie, "1984," showed by FilmScene in Iowa City as a fundraiser for the ACLU of Iowa

## I/We would like to make a tax-deductible gift to the ACLU!

\$100  \$50  \$25  \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Payment:

- Check enclosed, payable to ACLU of Iowa  
 Visa  MasterCard  Discover  AmEx

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name on card (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Card number

Charge my card monthly at \_\_\_\_\_ per month

\_\_\_\_\_  
Expiration date                      3-digit code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email address for confirmation (required)

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

- I would like to receive email updates and alerts from the ACLU of Iowa.

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer(s): \_\_\_\_\_

- I/We will check with my/our employer(s) and submit the proper matching gift paperwork to the ACLU of Iowa office.

- I/We would like my/our gift in honor/memory (circle) of \_\_\_\_\_

- I/We wish to remain anonymous.

**Mail to:** 505 5th Ave. #901, Des Moines, IA 50309-2316

**Or make your gift online.** Visit [www.aclu-ia.org/donate](http://www.aclu-ia.org/donate).

Contributions to the ACLU Foundation of Iowa, a 501(c)(3) organization, are tax-deductible to the extent of the current tax code.

6/17DEF

# Four Interns Recruited to Assist During Spring Semester

**Clinton Luth** is a third-year student at the University of Iowa College of Law. Originally from Ravenna, Nebraska, Clint previously worked as a therapist in central Nebraska. He specialized in juvenile delinquency, which gives him a special insight on the ACLU's criminal and social justice work.



**Clinton Luth**  
Legal Intern

"I've been very lucky to be granted an opportunity to continue my work for the benefit of others," said Clint. "The ACLU of Iowa is a great organization that focuses its efforts where they are most needed, and I am happy to be able to contribute."



**Julia Steggerda-Corey**  
Legal Intern

**Julia Steggerda-Corey** is a Des Moines native currently in her second year at Drake University Law School.

She completed her undergraduate degree in international

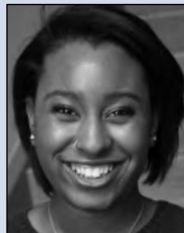
studies at Pepperdine University. Julia says that her internship at the ACLU "is a perfect opportunity to gain experience in human rights law, which is the field I want to go into."

She said she's especially proud to be interning at the ACLU "because it's such a necessary organization now, more than ever."

**Olivia Samples** is a graduating senior studying public relations and women's and gender studies at Simpson College.

She said she wanted to intern at the ACLU because of her "love of advocacy and hope of helping the world in some small way." She is also fascinated by the legislative and lobbying processes.

Samples is a North Carolina native, but is beginning to call Des Moines home. After graduation, she hopes to find a job in communications or advocacy but is staying open to new opportunities.



**Olivia Samples**  
Communications Intern

**Elise Bauernfeind** is a junior studying news journalism and politics at Drake University. She is a native of Maple Grove, Minnesota.

Elise said she was drawn to an internship at the ACLU "because I like doing work that makes a difference in people's lives and influences political policy." Eventually, she hopes to become a political correspondent or oversee media relations for political campaigns.

During her internship, Elise not only helped publicize ACLU positions and advocacy, she also got an opportunity to become part of the political controversy surrounding voter ID.

She wrote a blog, explaining how Iowa's new voter ID laws would affect her. In the last election, she was able to use either her Minnesota driver's license or her Drake University-issued ID to show in order to register immediately before she voted.

Neither type of identification will now count under the new voter ID law passed in April (because she needed to register on election day). Her blog was widely disseminated on social media, along with the graphic, below. ■



## Volunteerism at ACLU Explodes

**Iowans rally in record numbers to help defend threatened civil liberties.**

Usually, the ACLU of Iowa gets one or two people offering to volunteer every month or two. The day after the November election, we received more than 40.

And now, several months later, we are still busy engaging with more than 200 new general and legal volunteers who want to help in nearly every aspect of fighting for our state's basic freedoms.

They bring a wide variety of skills, including legal background and training, photography, graphic design, legislative experience, writing and editing, web and publication design, tech skills, language translation, social media savvy and connections, research skills, and local organizing and community involvement.

There are so many volunteers, in fact, that we've had to recruit volunteers—Molly McKee of Iowa City and Katie Bliss of Des Moines—to help with intake and organizing all these highly energized new people.

One of those volunteers is Adam Daugherty of Ames. A recent graduate in marketing and political science from Iowa State University, he's become a fixture of our social media presence, assisting in posting materials and giving constructive feedback and tracking analytics. ■



**Adam Daugherty**



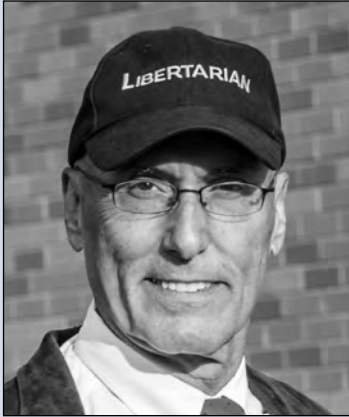
### BY THE NUMBERS

- More than 90 new general volunteers
- 42 new volunteer attorneys and law students
- 16 volunteer attorneys to lead know-your-rights sessions around the state
- 35 volunteer legal observers for protests and rallies



# Fighting for Free Speech Rights

## Free Speech Shouldn't Require a Permit and Three-Days' Notice



**Rick Stewart was doing what he thought it was his First Amendment right to do: standing in a pedestrian area in Marion, Iowa, and holding a political sign in support of a presidential candidate.**

But local police stopped him, saying he needed a special permit and to provide 72-hours' notice—

just to stand in a pedestrian area next to a busy street and hold a sign.

Correctly believing his First Amendment rights had been violated, Stewart contacted the ACLU of Iowa.

The First Amendment does indeed protect the rights of demonstrators, including those with signs, on public sidewalks without a permit, as long as the demonstration doesn't block pedestrians or entrances to buildings.

In this case, there were only three people participating, and they were not interfering with anyone else's use of the pedestrian areas. They even offered to move to a different sidewalk, but the officer reiterated that unless they had a permit, they could not demonstrate anywhere.

The ACLU of Iowa has sent a legal demand letter to the City of Marion on behalf of Stewart. As a result, the city has agreed to cease enforcement of this unconstitutional ordinance while it works on amending it. Meanwhile, the ACLU is negotiating on new language for the city council to consider.

The case is important to Stewart: "The First Amendment protects all of us, and I feel that it is my responsibility to vigorously defend it, not just for myself, but for my children and grandchildren." ■

## Defending Teen Girl's Right to Text Photos

**It is ludicrous that a 14-year-old girl who texted photos of herself to another teen could be charged with sexual exploitation of a minor—under the theory that she exploited herself.**

It's doubly outrageous when those photos don't even contain nudity. But that's what happened in the case of a Knoxville girl, represented by the ACLU of Iowa and cooperating attorney Glen Downey.

The girl, unnamed to protect her privacy, texted flirtatious photos to a teen boy at her high school. When the Marion County attorney found out, he threatened her with charges of sexual exploitation of a child (herself)—which carry possible prison time, placement on the sex offender registry, and removal from her parents' home.

Rita Bettis, ACLU of Iowa legal director, said, "It truly defies common sense to threaten to put a child in jail or prison or place her on the sex offender registry for taking a picture of herself."

To avoid the charges, the girl would have had to sign an admission of guilt and attend classes on sexting created to shame and stigmatize girls.

She would have had to sit out of sports, give up her laptop and phone temporarily, and enroll in a pre-trial diversion program.

The lawsuit also asked the court to affirm the fundamental right of the girl's parents to raise their child without undue interference by the state.

It also asserted that the girl was being treated differently than a boy for taking photos that included her chest, even though her nipples were covered up. A boy photographing *his* chest would be treated differently.

The girl's mother said, "We were concerned that the alternatives she was given to prosecution would do more harm than good. The photos don't reveal any more skin than what you'd see in many swimsuit ads. We wish to deal with this as a family in our own manner and in our own time without government interference. It's our job to raise our daughter; not the county attorney's."

The ACLU lawsuit asks that the county attorney agree not to prosecute the girl.

The family sought no monetary reward, but the county is asked to cover \$40,000 in ACLU legal fees. ■

## Abortion Lawsuit

*Continued from page 1*

America on behalf of Planned Parenthood of the Heartland.

Initially, the district court denied the request for an emergency injunction. But ACLU and Planned Parenthood lawyers worked into the night to file an appeal with the Iowa Supreme Court.

The next morning at 8:30 a.m. Branstad signed the bill into law. But less than two hours later the Iowa Supreme Court put the injunction into effect, effectively reversing the district court. Now the case remains in Polk County District Court.

"This is an example of the ACLU at its finest," said ACLU of Iowa Executive Director Mark Stringer. "Working deftly and feverishly with our ally, Planned Parenthood, after state politicians imposed a devastating burden on women seeking a safe, legal abortion, we were able to execute a legal attack through the courts to defend a woman's fundamental right to an abortion. Even when our initial request was denied, we were able to quickly pivot and file a successful emergency appeal."

A hearing date has been set for July 17 to consider a permanent injunction, which seeks to block those portions of the law for good. ■

## Legislative Success in Protecting the Rights of Protesters

**In response to Iowa City protesters blocking I-80 during a Trump protest, legislators tried to impose exceptionally harsh penalties.**

Anyone intentionally blocking a roadway in Iowa already faces the potential maximum of two years in prison and stiff fines. But for some in the Iowa Legislature, that wasn't enough.

In an attempt to target recent protests, a bill proposed in the Iowa Senate sought "enhanced penalties" for anyone who blocked a highway. Those enhanced penalties were up to five years in prison and even higher fines. Fortunately, the ACLU was successful in working to prevent passage of this bill.

"Free speech and the right to protest is a keystone of our democracy," said Daniel Zeno, ACLU of Iowa policy counsel. "This bill did nothing to prevent the blocking of roads and promoting safety. Laws motivated by desire to quell political speech are unconstitutional." ■

## Win in Tom Slockett Political Speech Case

**A lawsuit against the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Board is a victory for free speech of officials, their constituents.**

The lawsuit challenged a 2012 reprimand of Tom Slockett, former Johnson County auditor, for making campaign phone calls on his personal cell phone while physically present in his office.

The reprimand asserted that whether in his office, a public sidewalk, in a hall, or other government-owned property, it all amounted to an "improper expenditure of government funds for political campaigning."

But the ACLU argued successfully that the interpretation was so sweeping and restrictive that it cut into critically important political speech, both of officials and the citizens who elect them. ■

## Know Your Rights When Protesting in Iowa



Fotolia/Walenga Stanislav

**With all the recent protests in our state, the ACLU of Iowa has updated and expanded its Know Your Rights materials for protesters and for those photographing police and other public officials.**

**When taking pictures or video, it's important to know the following:**

- You have the right to photograph or record anything that is in plain view when you are lawfully in a public space. This includes photographing federal buildings, transportation facilities, and police/government officials carrying out official duties.
- Police officers cannot search or seize your phone without a warrant. They also need a warrant to view your digital photos or videos. However, if you hand it over willingly, a court is likely to determine that you've given consent to the search. (Never physically resist, but do state that you do not consent to a search.)
- Police may not delete your photos or video or demand that you delete them under any circumstances.
- Police may legitimately order you to stop photographing or recording if you are truly interfering with law enforcement activity. Officers are subject to public scrutiny when carrying out their official duties, but your recording should not physically interfere with an officer's actions.
- You do not have the right to photograph or record on private property without the consent of the property owner.

**For more information and a printer-friendly flier, go to [www.aclu-ia.org](http://www.aclu-ia.org).**

# New Director Moves from Ministry to Civil Liberties

**My experiences as a Unitarian Universalist minister have been good preparation for leading the fight for civil liberties as the new ACLU of Iowa executive director.**



**Mark Stringer**  
Executive Director  
ACLU of Iowa

Over the past several years, in my work as a minister and in the Des Moines community, I have seen firsthand many of the problems the ACLU of Iowa addresses: The war on drugs, the school-to-prison pipeline, the disproportionate incarceration of people of color, infringements on voting rights, ever-present threats to reproductive freedom, and continued violations of the rights of our LGBTQ and immigrant communities.

I have also had the honor of officiating at Iowa's first legally recognized same-sex marriage back in 2007. For the following eight years,

until the U.S. Supreme Court made same-sex marriage the law of the land, our state was a wedding destination for same-sex couples.

As a Unitarian Universalist minister, I presided at dozens of these ceremonies. Many of the couples I served had traveled here for weddings that would not be legally recognized in their home states.

And yet they came anyway. They came because, for a day at least, they would not be treated as second-class citizens. They came because they wanted the rights that should have always been theirs affirmed and honored at last. They came because their love demanded that they do.

## **Civil Liberties are Interconnected**

As I officiated at these weddings, I had to grapple with how, as a heterosexual, I had taken my own right to marry for granted. And now that I had become a part of these couples' lives, I could see that their rights were inextricably connected with mine.

In my other community work, too, I have learned again and again how threats to the

rights of our neighbors are inevitably threats to everyone's rights. That's why I'm so honored to now lead the ACLU of Iowa.

## **Carrying on an 80-Year Tradition**

For more than 80 years, the ACLU of Iowa has understood how important defending and protecting our rights is and has fought for us all, even when doing so was risky and unpopular. The ACLU of Iowa has been the organization we can count on to defend our freedoms.

With our excellent staff, dedicated board, and devoted supporters, I am confident that we will continue to defend and protect the rights and liberties that we should never take for granted.

Together, we will make a difference. I look forward to getting to know you and growing an ACLU of Iowa that makes us all proud. ■

**Mark Stringer**

*Executive Director, ACLU of Iowa*

**AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION of IOWA** 

505 Fifth Avenue, Suite 901  
Des Moines, Iowa 50309-2316  
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since 1935*



**SAVE THE DATE!**

## **The ACLU of Iowa Bill of Rights Brunch**



**Saturday, September 23**  
from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden  
Questions? Email [events@aclu-ia.org](mailto:events@aclu-ia.org)