

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2028

ACLU

Connecticut



Dear Friends and Supporters,

We are excited to share the ACLU of Connecticut's new strategic plan, a roadmap that reflects the values, priorities, and vision that will guide our work in the years ahead. This plan represents the culmination of thoughtful collaboration and a deep commitment to justice, equity, and sustainability.

The strategic planning process was led by a dedicated committee of board and staff, representing a broad array of perspectives across issue areas. These diverse voices ensured that our plan is informed by a wide range of experiences and expertise. Central to our work was a commitment to centering the voices of people with lived experience, grounding our decisions in the realities of those most affected by the issues we seek to address.

We were guided by our values every step of the way, and paid careful attention to the capacity of our staff and organization. We recognize that the work ahead is challenging, and we must care for our people to sustain the fight for justice. This plan prioritizes the well-being of our team as we continue to advance civil rights and liberties across Connecticut. By working together, we will protect Connecticut residents and ensure that our state leads as an example of valuing and expanding people's rights.

The road ahead will not be easy. The threats to civil rights and liberties are persistent and growing, demanding vigilance, resilience, and bold action. We know this work will be difficult, but **we have a plan, and we are ready for the challenge.** With this strategic framework, we are positioned to navigate the complexities of this moment while remaining steadfast in our mission to defend freedom and equality for all. Our plan ensures that we both continue our longstanding proactive commitments while also expanding our work in critical areas that have become necessary given a federal government that is ever increasingly hostile towards civil rights and liberties.

Achieving our goals will require collaboration and coalition building. Our work will rely on strengthening partnerships with allied organizations and communities, ensuring that our collective efforts have the greatest possible impact. At the same time, we remain deeply committed to building organizational sustainability and capacity, ensuring that we have the resources and resilience to meet these challenges head-on.

Thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to the ACLU of Connecticut. Together, we will continue to fight for a more just and equitable state for all.

In solidarity,
Strategic Planning Committee
ACLU of Connecticut



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Mission

The American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut defends, promotes, and expands the civil rights and civil liberties of all people in Connecticut through litigation, community organizing and legislative advocacy, and civic education and engagement. We are an inclusive, nonpartisan, and statewide organization within the nationwide American Civil Liberties Union network, powered by our supporters, partners, staff, interns, cooperating attorneys, and our board of directors.

Vision & Values

The ACLU of Connecticut envisions an equitable, democratic, and anti-racist Connecticut in which all persons are treated with dignity in a thriving society.

We believe in, and aspire to incorporate into our actions, the following six core values:



Anti-racism

eliminating racism and promoting racial justice



Equity

understanding power dynamics and creating opportunities for all to thrive



Dignity

upholding the innate dignity of all human beings



Inclusivity

sharing and building power with historically excluded people



Diversity

valuing the perspective of those with lived experiences different from ours



Partners in Justice

elevating the voices of directly impacted people while working in partnership with, rather than on behalf of, the communities we serve

How Do We Do Our Work?

The ACLU today is the nation's largest public interest law firm, with a 50-state network of staffed, autonomous affiliate offices all with a compelling legacy of success. We are one of few organizations with as deep a national and local presence in all 50 states that works on a multitude of civil rights and civil liberties issues using a variety of strategies to influence change. Our model for movement building includes impact litigation in state and federal courts, public education campaigns, advocating for policy change and lobbying at state and national legislatures, organizing, and building political power, mobilizing impacted communities, and electoral advocacy.



DID YOU KNOW?

Our unique sharing model ensures that **your investment in the ACLU supports both the work locally in Connecticut and in states across the country.**

When you make a gift to the ACLU of Connecticut, you can rest assured your support goes where it's needed most and will be distributed nationally.



The ACLU Was Built For Moments Like This

President Donald Trump has already shown that he is a threat to our fundamental rights and freedoms. Project 2025 is a roadmap for limiting our freedoms at the individual level. States and cities must now build firewalls for freedom: barriers to ensure our state and local officials do not assist anti-democratic forces in attacking our civil liberties and civil rights. And in states like Connecticut – where the political landscape affords us some of the greatest opportunities – the ACLU has already developed state and local policy actions to protect people’s fundamental rights.

We have the playbook to fight back. We cannot do it without you — and we wouldn’t want to. Together, we, the people, will defend our most fundamental freedoms. In order to best protect and advance our civil rights and liberties, the ACLU of Connecticut has strategically prioritized specific legal, policy, advocacy, education, and public action plans regarding the following issue areas:



Reduce the Scope & Role of the Criminal Legal System



Expand & Enforce Voting Rights Protections



Increase Government Transparency & Accountability



Ensure Access to Reproductive Care & Defend Bodily Autonomy



Defend the Rights of Immigrants



Protect LGBTQIA+ Rights & Freedoms



Preserve First Amendment Rights

Criminal Legal System

We will reduce the scope and role of the criminal legal system with a dual focus on immediate relief and lasting systemic change for an equitable, free, and fair Connecticut. Ultimately, we seek to continue our proven track record of success in our efforts to end mass incarceration, update narratives around what creates safety and for whom, and to eliminate racial disparities within Connecticut's criminal legal system.

REIMAGINE PRETRIAL JUSTICE

(Also known as Bail Reform)

- Conduct education activities around the bail bond industry and proposals for its elimination.
- Highlight the human, societal, and financial costs of the current cash bail system through legislative advocacy and public education.
- Gather and organize information from policymakers, experts, impacted people and community partners to make recommendations for an equitable alternative/replacement for the current cash bail system.
- Advocate for the passage of house resolution that paves the way for a fair and just pretrial system.

DID YOU
KNOW?

1 in 3 people incarcerated in Connecticut have not yet been convicted and are awaiting trial. As trials drag out, people can be left incarcerated for months to years simply because they cannot afford their bail resulting in life-long collateral consequences for people and their families.

ADDRESS HARMS OF THE SYSTEM TO CULTIVATE EQUITY & FAIRNESS

Prison & Jail Conditions

- Monitor, assess, and defend Correctional Ombudsperson implementation.
- Conduct legislative advocacy activities to codify access to gender-affirming health care in the Connecticut Department of Correction.
- Continue impact litigation in conjunction with partner attorneys and allied organizations to end the traumatic practice of in-cell shackling of people with mental illness or those who are at risk of developing mental illness.

ADDRESS COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES

Prison Debt

- Galvanize the public through outreach and education to create political pressure against prison debt as a policy and concept.
- Continue litigation and legal responses regarding prison debt.
- Assess and pursue legislative opportunities to abolish this practice.

Under Connecticut's cruel prison debt law, **the state charges people \$289 for each day they are incarcerated.** That adds up to \$105,485 annually.

FIGHT HOUSING DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RECORD OF SYSTEM-INVOLVEMENT

- Continue to engage and uplift impacted people to participate in the legislative process in support of protections against housing discrimination for people living with a record.
- Conduct a campaign to combat mis and disinformation around language of the bill, and address opposition deal-breakers.
- Increase scope and number of stakeholders in coalition.
- Maintain and expand legislative pressure, media, and relationship-building campaign, resulting in the passage of an equitable and impactful housing anti-discrimination law.

COMMUNITY SUPERVISION & CONVICTION REGISTRIES

- Investigate, support, and operationalize messaging to create narrative change, in conjunction with people with lived experience.
- Build supportive relationships to share expertise and resources with organizations and impacted people to help build power and capacity around the issues of community control and conviction registries.
- Support policy proposals that reduce the scope and impact of community supervision and conviction registries and protect the constitutional rights of people subject to them.

Connecticut currently has **more than 30,000 people on probation, nearly 1 percent of the state's population.** That number has risen over the past three years, after declining for more than a decade, state data shows. 6,000 people are listed on conviction registries.

CREATE A MORE EXPANSIVE VISION OF COMMUNAL & COMMUNITY SAFETY

- Gather, assess, and interpret School Resource Officer (SRO) activity data, public sentiment, political environment, and coalition possibilities to end the criminalization of youth.
- Work to decriminalize low-level traffic violations. This includes working in the Capitol, on education initiatives, and with community partners to expose and remedy the policing practices, racial disparities, and economic inequities that unfairly create a criminalized population.
- Conduct a community safety narrative change campaign to 1) collect and promote input from historically marginalized people on what public safety means to them; 2) identify language that describes a more expansive and equitable version of public safety, and train media, advocates, and public officials on its use; and 3) measure and monitor public discourse about various community safety approaches, mechanisms, and systems of equitable, safe, and thriving communities.



Voting Rights

Within the last three years, the ACLU of Connecticut was instrumental in the expansion of voting rights with passage and successful implementation of early voting and the passage of the Connecticut Voting Rights Act; and we must leverage this work to both secure existing voting rights and further expand voting rights with a focus on the Black and Brown voter access and participation.

We will not have an equitable, democratic, and anti-racist Connecticut until historically marginalized communities have legal protections for voting rights and genuine access to voting.

To secure existing voting rights, we will work to solve the impediments that prevent voting and to ensure that when a voter's rights are restricted, there is a legitimate and accessible legal remedy for that voter. We will further work to expand the existing rights by increasing voting access and methods.

ENSHRINE OUR RIGHT TO VOTE

- Ensure that the right to vote is recognized as a fundamental right under Connecticut law by working to identify a plaintiff with a claim related to voting in which a fundamental rights argument can be made in the courts.

ENSURE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONNECTICUT VOTING RIGHTS ACT

- Work to ensure funding resources exist from the State of Connecticut to fully and actively protect voting.
- Identify with partners in justice possible claims and plaintiffs to bring litigation to force full enactment of the CTVRA.



REMOVE BARRIERS TO VOTING ACCESS

- Restore the right to vote to those who are disenfranchised while incarcerated with felony conviction by:
 - Identifying partners in justice in this area, and participating in coalitions to fully understand the problem and form a strategy;
 - Ensuring that people who currently have voting rights are not prevented from accessing those rights by the Department of Correction; and
 - Implementing an education campaign to ensure clarity about voting and accessing voting rights.

EXPAND ABSENTEE VOTING

- Remove barriers to voting by establishing no-excuse absentee voting.
- Ensure implementation of no-excuse absentee voting prioritizes access for marginalized communities by:
 - Lobbying legislature to ensure any amendment will be as expansive as possible and will permit all voters to vote by mail; and
 - Educating voters about the right to no-excuse absentee voting, and how to vote by mail.

WHAT IS THE CONNECTICUT VOTING RIGHTS ACT?

The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of Connecticut (“CTVRA”) is the **most comprehensive state-level voting rights act in the country** and sets a new standard for voting access everywhere.

In 2023, the ACLU of Connecticut and coalition partners led the effort to pass the CTVRA, which makes democracy more accessible, especially for Black and Latine voters. This act creates new protections against voter intimidation, obstruction, deception, and racially discriminatory voter suppression. Scan the QR code to learn more about the CTVRA.



Government Transparency & Accountability

Injustice thrives in the dark, which is why the ACLU of Connecticut seeks to create accessible government transparency as a way to ensure independent accountability through state law and state courts and create further recourses for those who are harmed by government action or lack thereof. This takes shape in advocating for civil rights laws and protections, exposing, and challenging inequitable systems, and participating in emergent methods of incorporating technologies into civic life.

PUSH FOR A CONNECTICUT CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

- Advocate legislatively for enactment of the Connecticut Civil Rights Act, comparable to the federal Section 1983, allowing for legal claims against state actors for violating Connecticut Constitution or state law.
- Collect data in areas where there are gaps in accountability – for instance, where a right exists, but there is no way to vindicate it (i.e., the statute does not contain a right of action to bring a lawsuit, like the Trust Act).
- Educate the public on the need for the Connecticut Civil Rights Act.

EXPAND PROJECT FLASHLIGHT

- Continue to expand freedom of information and add use of force and updated data to the Project Flashlight policing transparency database through FOI requests and data aggregation and visualization.
- Educate the public on Project Flashlight, the need for the data, and the information it contains on municipalities.

WHAT IS PROJECT FLASHLIGHT?

Project Flashlight shines light on the ways Connecticut's more than 100 police agencies operate in the shadows, because information is power.

At minimum, **people deserve transparency about what their town and state governments are doing in their name.**

This project centralizes, summarizes, and maintains information, for everyone to access, about the powers that town and state governments have chosen to trade away to police and the ways in which police have harmed people across Connecticut.





IMPROVE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW

- Work with allies to get FOI statute improved legislatively.
- Collect information internally amongst policy, legal, and communication teams about FOI practices and threats.
- Increase public education on issues in the current FOI system, including delays and exemptions that swallow the rule.

RESTRICT & REDUCE USE OF QUALIFIED IMMUNITY BY THE COURTS

- Educate the public on the impact of court-created federal qualified immunity doctrine (federal law).
- Continue to broaden types of behaviors for which government agents cannot get qualified immunity (federal law).
- Monitor governmental immunity claims in Connecticut courts (CT law).
- Engage in legislative action where possible to narrow the scope of qualified immunity/governmental immunity in Connecticut in arenas other than policing (CT law).

At the federal level, qualified immunity means that a police employee can only be held accountable for violating someone's constitutional rights if they have violated "clearly established" law. This means that even if a police employee intentionally violates the law, **qualified immunity can shield them from accountability.**

Ending qualified immunity means giving a fair chance for people whose rights have been violated by public employees to see those people held accountable in civil court.

GOVERNMENT USE OF DATA COLLECTION & ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

- Determine the types of information Connecticut maintains and collect information on potential harms caused by such collection.
- Interrogate stated goals and actual use of AI by Connecticut state actors, including government contracts, in policing, and public-private partnerships.
- Identify and expose biases built into AI and potential for civil rights infringements in government use of AI (employment, healthcare, housing, education, criminal legal system).
- Create guidance for the public and advocates on eliminating inequitable AI-based practices. AI is an emergent method of interacting with and constructing our world, and civil rights and liberties frameworks must be top of mind to guide governmental use and educate the public.

Reserving Organizational Capacity

The ACLU of Connecticut strives to ensure that every person in our state can enjoy the full spectrum of their constitutional rights and protections. We reserve capacity for proactive campaign work in intentional coalitions, and for defensive work to ensure that civil rights and liberties are at the forefront of state policy. Within this work, we have an ongoing commitment to reproductive justice, LGBTQIA+ rights, immigrants' rights, and free speech. Below is a summary of our planned initiatives and commitments in these vital areas:

Reproductive Justice

Nationwide, we are facing the most serious assault on access to reproductive healthcare in decades, including threats of a federal abortion ban and rollback of protections for routine fertility treatments. This represents an acute threat to public health and personal freedom. In Connecticut, we must focus on [ensuring these attacks don't spill into our state while ensuring and enshrining access to and expansion of our reproductive rights](#).

We will:

- [Fight back against any attacks on reproductive rights](#) by identifying threats, monitoring legislative activity, bringing impact litigation when necessary, and fully participating with partners to deploy and support strategic activities, communication, and responses.
- Support coalition partners in [expanding accessible and affordable reproductive care](#) for everyone, including contraception, birth control, and maternal health.
- Work in coalition to help [promote efforts that seek to enshrine and expand reproductive rights](#).

LGBTQIA+ Rights

The ACLU of Connecticut works tirelessly to ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and all other individuals can live openly without discrimination and enjoy equal rights, personal autonomy, and freedom of expression and association.

We will:

- [Amplify and support efforts of allied partners](#) in the legislature, courts, and community for policies that protect LGBTQIA+ individuals from discrimination in all areas of life, including employment, housing, and healthcare.
- [Support the rights of transgender and non-binary individuals](#) to live authentically and access medical care through impact litigation, narrative change, and outreach support.
- Develop, distribute, and amplify educational materials to [promote inclusive and affirming environments in schools, workplaces, and communities](#).





Immigrants' Rights

Immigrants to the United States who live in Connecticut frequently face discrimination, with undocumented immigrants particularly vulnerable to government abuse. The fundamental constitutional protections of due process and equal protection, embodied in our Constitution and Bill of Rights, apply to every person, regardless of immigration status.

We will:

- [Defend the rights of immigrants and protect against government harassment](#) and cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) through legal action and support of power-building activities.
- Provide technical support, advocacy amplification, and legal expertise to allied partners to [advance policies and narratives that promote the integration and well-being of immigrant communities](#) in Connecticut, such as HUSKY healthcare for immigrants and equal access to educational opportunities.
- Provide resources and amplification to coalition partners and people with lived experience.
- If threats present themselves, advocate and press the Executive Branch to protect the rights of immigrant communities.

First Amendment Rights

The ACLU of Connecticut steadfastly protects the freedoms of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: freedom of speech, assembly, association, petition, and the press. Protecting free speech means safeguarding a free press, the democratic process, diversity of thought, and more.

We will:

- [Defend individuals' rights to express their opinions and assemble peacefully](#) through litigation, advocacy, and narrative change.
- Challenge censorship such as book bans and school curriculum control through legal work, education tools and communications activities to [promote the free flow of information](#).
- Conduct communications, legislative advocacy, and legal activities to [ensure that journalists can report the news without fear of retribution or violence](#).

Organizational Sustainability

We will focus on the long-term health of our organization and the spaces in which it operates, deepening our collaborative work and partnering with others to realize a shared vision for a more just and equitable Connecticut – in every part of the state.

To do so, we will:

- Work to strengthen our role within coalitions to assist and, where appropriate, lead efforts that advance the civil rights and civil liberties of people across Connecticut.
- Build deeper relationships and trust with issue-impacted communities and organizations.
- Activate our supporters by creating meaningful ways to engage them in our mission.
- Commit to being an information hub for civil rights and civil liberties in Connecticut, providing accessible, reliable resources that empower individuals and communities.
- Continue to sustain and strengthen our fiscal health by increasing and diversifying our funding base and deepening relationships.

At the same time, we will:

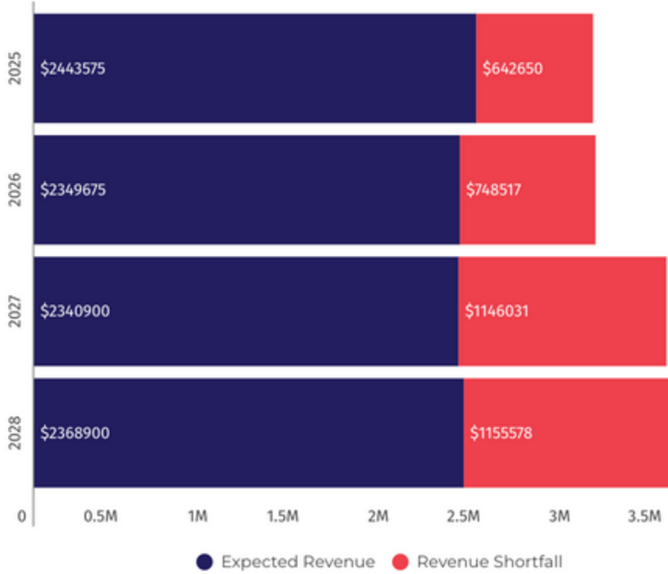
- Continue to make sure that our internal practices and external work are fully aligned with our values, sustaining and strengthening a culture that reflects our commitment to equity and inclusivity.
- Cultivate a supportive and equitable work environment that prioritizes staff and board well-being, growth, and contributions.



Organization Financials 2025-2028

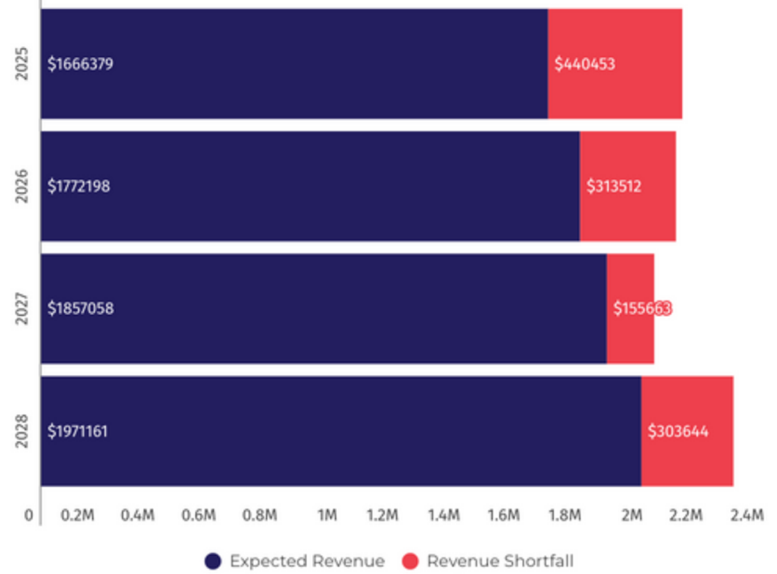
Our budget to accomplish this work over these 4 years includes a planned deficit that we are working to fill through contributions from individual donors in Connecticut like you.

ACLU FOUNDATION OF CT (C3)



Revenue Shortfall: \$3,692,775

ACLU OF CT (C4)



Revenue Shortfall: \$1,213,272

We are comprised of three nonpartisan, nonprofit organizations: the ACLU of Connecticut, a 501(c)(4) organization which does legislative and organizing advocacy work; the ACLU Foundation of Connecticut, a 501(c)(3) which does litigation and public education work; and the ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC, a nonpartisan PAC committed to defending and expanding civil rights by building relationships, public awareness, and the political power of those directly impacted to create political change.

How Can YOU Help?

Stay Informed and Educated on the issues you care about at www.acluct.org.

Volunteer and Take Action with the ACLU of Connecticut and other like-minded organizations. Look for our volunteer and action opportunities at www.acluct.org/volunteer.

Stay Connected with the ACLU of Connecticut, amplify our messaging on socials (@acluct), and sign up for our newsletter on our website.

Invest in This Work in a way that is meaningful to you!

- **Become a Member:** Your non-tax-deductible monthly membership contribution supports the ACLU's lobbying and advocacy work at the national, state, and local levels.
- **Join our Impact Society:** Make a tax-deductible gift of \$1,000, \$2,500, or even \$5,000 to protect civil rights and liberties across the nation.
- **Consider a Leadership Investment:** A gift of \$10,000 or more has a tremendous impact on our ability to do this work now and in the future.



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