

ACLU
Minnesota

Liberty
magazine

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WE THE PEOPLE DECIDE

The ACLU's work has just begun, and it is already unflinching, inspiring, and most importantly highly effective.

As the nation faces an unprecedented attack on civil rights and civil liberties, the ACLU has not hesitated to act in courts, in legislatures, and in communities to protect the rule of law and disrupt and delegitimize the Trump administration's unconstitutional agenda.

In the first 100 days of the Trump administration, the ACLU filed 110 legal actions including lawsuits challenging the illegal use of the Alien Enemies Act, the deportation of students for political speech and the targeting of the trans community. We've filed 53 cases against the Trump administration and we've won some form of preliminary or temporary order in 27 of those cases.

The ACLU does not hesitate or waver when it comes to our constitutional rights.

That's why we hit the ground running on day one challenging the President's inauguration day attack on birthright citizenship, one of the pillars of American freedom and a testament to ensuring there is justice and liberty for all. In this first salvo, the President struck at the fundamental question of who belongs in our society and attempted to redefine America.

As the administration continues to strike out at immigrants, the LGBTQ+ community, the free press, and political opponents, the ACLU is here to remind them that the president doesn't get to define who belongs in America.

Executive orders do not rewrite the Constitution or the laws of Congress.

Judicial orders cannot be ignored.

There is no shortcut around our constitutional rights – be it due process, the right to counsel, or the right to equal protection – whether it be for immigrants like Mahmoud Khalil, Rümeysa Öztürk, Mohammed Hoque, or the millions of other people deeply impacted by inhumane policies, damaging budget cuts and a culture of chaos and fear.

RE OR GOOD

The president alone cannot decide. We the people decide.

Some of the most troubling attacks have been on the right to free speech, including here in Minnesota. We have witnessed threats from the President towards elected officials, judges, law firms, private companies, higher education and the arts. We have witnessed attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion and basic facts about history and biology.

Make no mistake, the erosion of our free speech rights will lead to the erosion of our most fundamental values including the ideal that the rule of law should apply equally to all people.

That's why, here in Minnesota, the ACLU sued the St. Francis Area Schools District in March for what some have called one of the most draconian book bans in the country. We filed a habeas petition in federal court for the release of two students detained for their advocacy for Palestinian rights. We also sued the Carver County jail and sheriff's office for unconstitutionally holding immigrants for ICE.

Our rights need defending.

This moment requires all of us to act boldly and unapologetically. It requires all of us to forge new alliances and affinities across the community and to create novel and innovative ways to push back. We have already seen a remarkable response that is only getting stronger. It is on us to remain inspired, to remain hopeful and to fully engage. The ACLU stands ready to take on this moment alongside all of you.



Deepinder Singh Mayell

Deepinder Singh Mayell
ACLU-MN Executive Director

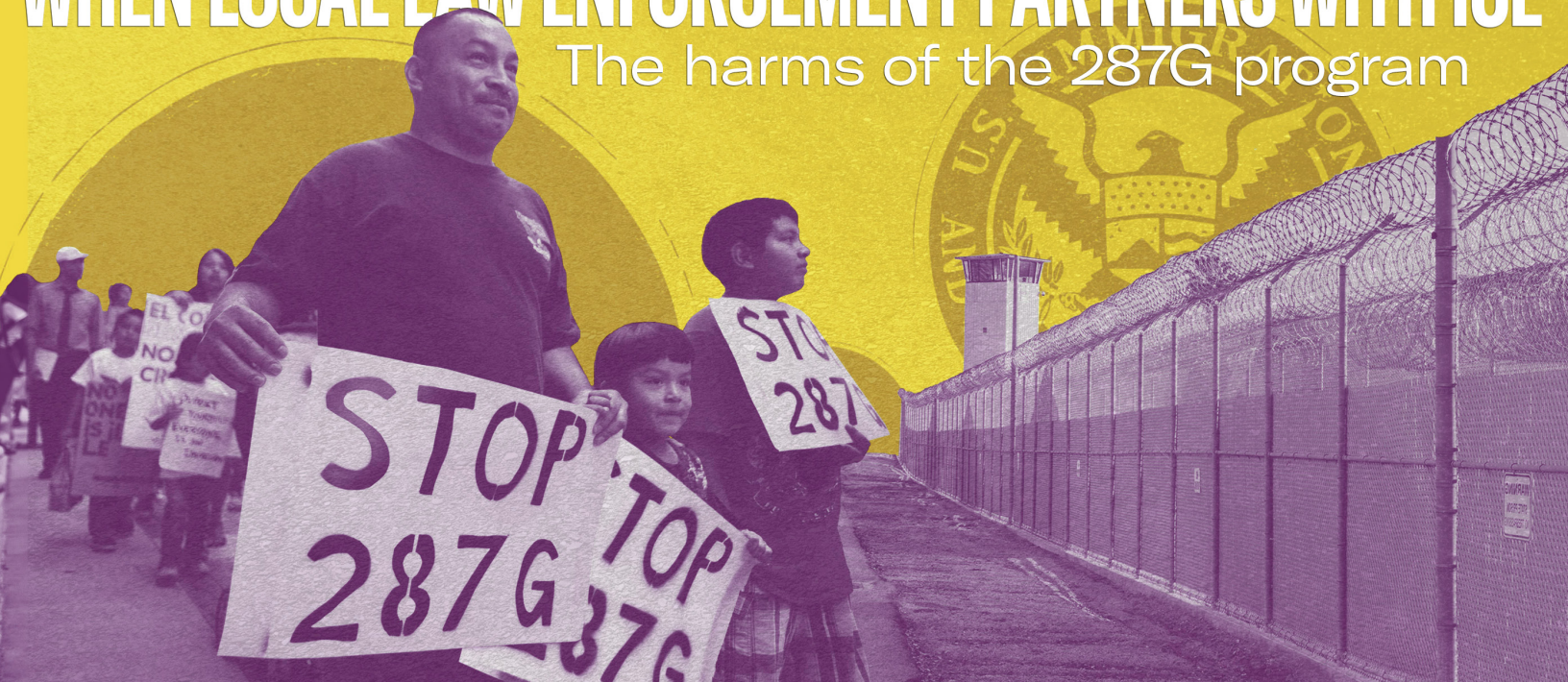
KNOW YOUR RIGHTS CARDS AVAILABLE NOW

LGBTQ+ Know Your Rights
K-12 Students Know Your Rights
Immigrant Drivers Know Your Rights
College Students Know Your Rights
<https://www.aclu-mn.org/en/know-your-rights>



WHEN LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERS WITH ICE

The harms of the 287G program



One of Immigration and Customs Enforcement's most powerful tools is the 287(g) program. This program taps state and local law enforcement agencies to assist ICE in identifying people for arrest and potential deportation.

According to ICE there are three models participating agencies can choose from:

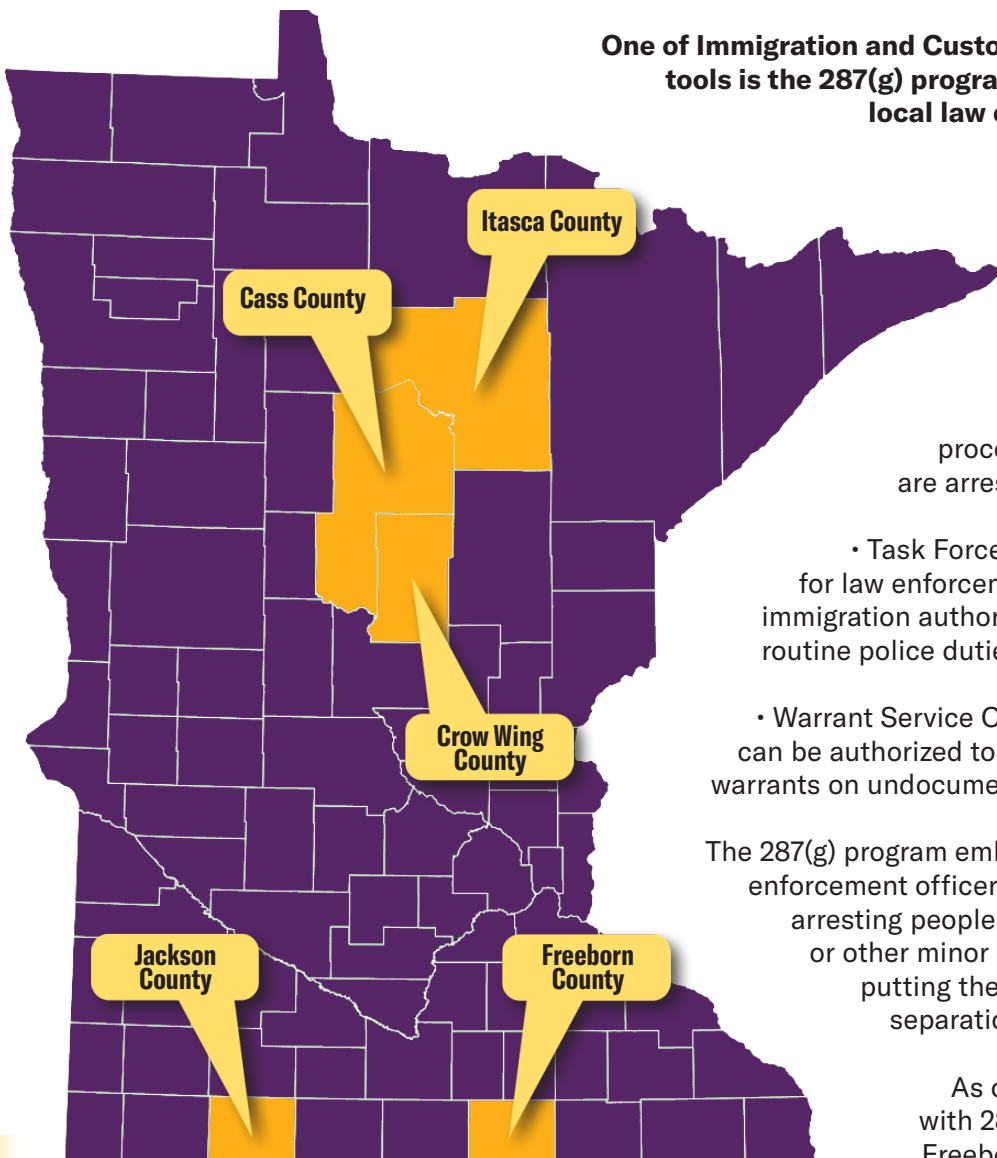
- Jail-Enforcement Model: Local law enforcement can "identify and process" undocumented individuals who are arrested.

- Task Force Model: "serves as a force multiplier for law enforcement agencies to enforce limited immigration authority with ICE oversight during their routine police duties."

- Warrant Service Officer: State and local law officers can be authorized to serve and execute administrative warrants on undocumented individuals in their jail.

The 287(g) program emboldens state and local law enforcement officers to racial profile – stopping and arresting people on the pretext of traffic violations or other minor offenses – for the actual purpose of putting them in a pipeline to deportation and separation from their families.

As of May 1, Minnesota had five counties with 287(g) agreements: Cass, Crow Wing, Freeborn, Itasca and Jackson counties.



“I was under the **false** impression that if I was compliant... I was safe.”

Luis Islas was driving a rental car to his hotel in Houston, Texas, his mind on what to get for dinner, when he saw flashing lights behind him.

Luis is the senior director of development for the University of Minnesota Duluth, a job that requires frequent travel around the state and country to meet with donors. In March, the job sent Luis to Texas.

When he saw the lights behind him, Luis' first thought was “oh, they're probably pulling me over because I was going slower than I'm supposed to go on the highway.” He didn't worry, expecting to simply explain it was his first time in Houston.

Luis – a United States citizen – pulled into a Walmart parking lot and rolled down his window. The officer informed Luis he was stopped because the officer had run the car's plates and nothing came back. Luis quickly explained that the car was a rental and based on the odometer, it was very new.

Despite Luis' explanation, the officer asked to search the car.

“I knew that I could have declined it,” said Luis, “but in my head I thought, ‘I have nothing in the car but my luggage. This is going to be really quick, especially if I'm compliant and agreeable.’” So, Luis got out of the car.

Over the next two hours, Luis watched from the back of a squad car as more police and K9 units arrived, as they spread out all his possessions and work documents on the pavement, and as the car was lifted by a tow truck to inspect the undercarriage.

Police returned to the squad car again and again, demanding Luis tell them where the car came from and if he was involved with the Mexican cartel. At one point, Luis was let out of the backseat, only to be pushed against the car to be handcuffed, his lip splitting in the process.

After two agonizing hours, the search suddenly ended. Luis was told the police would confiscate the car and drive him to his hotel.

“It seemed like such an abrupt end,” said Luis. “As I was getting loaded up into the new vehicle to be driven to the hotel, I saw all the officers joking with each other and having a grand old time.”

It has been weeks since the arrest. Luis is back home in Duluth with his wife and daughter, but he still continues to think about his experience in Texas.

“I was under the false impression that if I was compliant, if I just tried to do everything that I could to balance out complicity and also my rights that I was safe,” said Luis. “And the fact of the matter is I wasn't. And If I wasn't safe, there's so many people that aren't going to be so lucky. And to call my experience ‘lucky’ is absurd, because I'm going to have to deal with the aftermath of this event for years.”



Luis Islas and his family



STUDENTS MUST NOT BE SILENCED

DEFENDING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN MINNESOTA AND BEYOND

On March 8, the Trump administration and Department of Homeland Security illegally arrested and detained Mahmoud Khalil, a legal permanent resident of the U.S., in direct retaliation for his advocacy for Palestinian rights at Columbia University. Shortly thereafter, DHS transferred Khalil 1,400 miles away to a Louisiana detention facility, ripping him away from his wife – who has since given birth to their first child – and legal counsel.



Mahmoud Khalil

The ACLU, NYCLU and ACLU-NJ are all part of Khalil's legal team.

As of April 29, a district court judge ruled that Khalil's lawsuit can move forward in federal court. The lawsuit claims the government is unlawfully detaining Khalil for his political views.

In a letter dictated over the phone from ICE detention in Louisiana, Khalil said, "Students have long been at the forefront of change – leading the charge against the Vietnam War, standing on the frontlines of the civil rights movement, and driving the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Today, too, even if the public has yet to fully grasp it, it is students who steer us toward truth and justice."

Minnesota Habeas

The ACLU-MN filed a habeas petition on behalf of an international student on April 18. Mahommed Hoque was studying at Minnesota State University, Mankato, when his student visa was terminated and he was detained by ICE.

The termination of Hoque's student visa and his detention can be directly tied to his public support of Palestinians in Gaza. Hoque has openly expressed his political views, which are protected under the First Amendment.



After being detained for almost two weeks, an immigration judge ruled that Hoque was "not a danger to the persons or property" and ordered that he be released on bond in the amount of \$7,500. However, ICE refused to release Hoque.

The government's detention of Hoque is extraordinary and unlawful. In retaliation for Hoque's speech the government has now detained, silenced, and initiated removal proceedings against him. This detention serves as a way to scare hundreds of other lawfully present international students to self-deport.

DEFEND TRANS RIGHTS



Ray Simpson is an activist within the local queer community and recently attended the ACLU of Minnesota's Defend Trans Rights event.

Ray Simpson has one main goal: to make people feel loved and accepted. "We don't have enough of that," he said.

Ray is an advocate for the trans and disabled communities. He came out in 2018 and shortly thereafter, he went from working at Target and teaching Zumba to healing from a surgery that resulted in multiple hospital visits, a depleted immune system and nerve damage. Ray was then diagnosed with disc degeneration.

The social isolation and loneliness that accompanied a slow healing process damaged Ray's mental health.

"I decided I had to do something," said Ray. He asked a friend in his apartment complex if they knew of any community spaces or support groups for the LGBTQ+ and disabled communities. His neighbor introduced him to the Rainbow Support Group.

"They welcomed me like I was their family," said Ray.

Now, Ray partners with the Rainbow Support Group to visit group homes around Minnesota to teach staff about how to better care for LGBTQ+ individuals who have intellectual disabilities.

He has also been a panelist at OutFront Minnesota events, led mindfulness workshops, presented on voting rights with Rev Up Minnesota, teaches monthly classes at Queermunity and more.

"I spread myself out with different organizations so that I can help people. That's all I want to do," said Ray. In his work and personal life Ray has seen a drastic increase in trans and disabled people worried about their safety. One of his friends from Tennessee is planning to move to Minnesota.

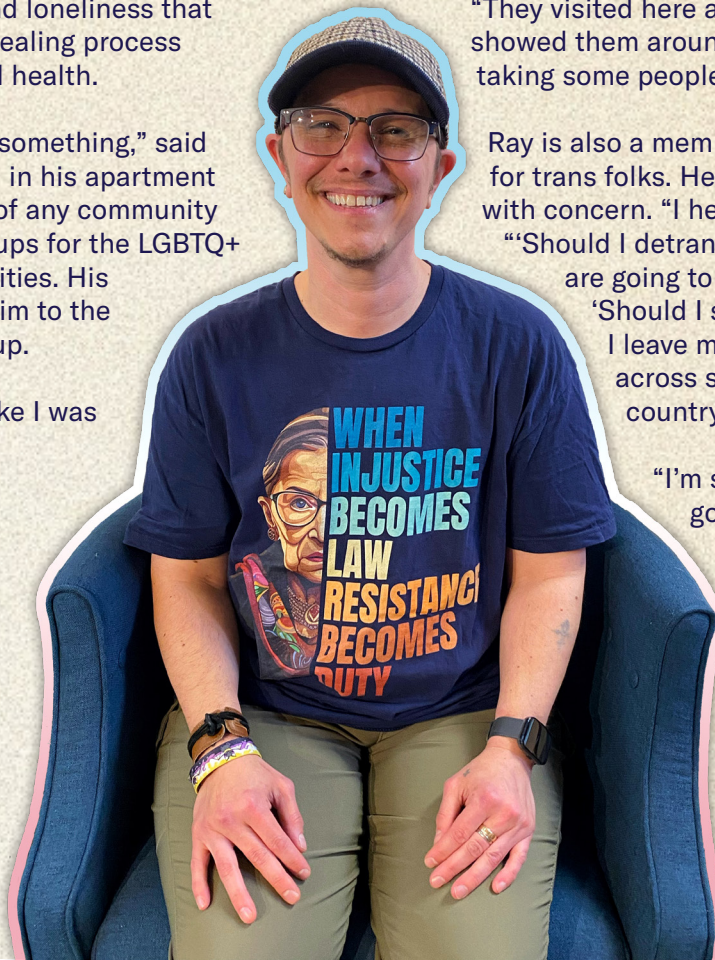
"They visited here a couple weeks ago," said Ray. "I showed them around and they're leaving Tennessee and taking some people with them."

Ray is also a member of a few online community groups for trans folks. He said those groups are now flooded with concern. "I hear so many stories," said Ray.

"Should I detransition?" "I'm scared of what people are going to do to me if they find out I'm trans." "Should I stop taking hormones?" "Should I leave my community?" "Should I move across state?" "Should I move to a different country?"

"I'm so informed about what's been going on that my stomach hurts," said Ray. "And my heart hurts for our communities."

But despite the darkness, Ray continues his work. "I keep going for my child who's in the LGBTQ community, my mother who's disabled and elderly," said Ray. "I have so many friends in the LGBTQ and disabled communities, and we all inspire each other."



A letter to the editor (LTE) is a brief opinion piece published in a news outlet. LTEs are helpful tools for advocacy as they reach a large audience, are often seen by elected officials, can cover information not addressed in news articles, and can create an impression of widespread support for or in opposition to an issue.

Here are five steps to write and publish an LTE.

1. Keep it succinct. Make sure that your LTE addresses only one issue. Most papers require LTEs to be under 200 words and that doesn't leave room to cover multiple topics.

2. Make it legible and traceable. Use clear handwriting or type your LTE. Make sure you include your name and contact information so the editor can get in contact with you if they have questions. Many newspapers will also only print an LTE after calling the author to verify their identity and address.

3. Reference previous articles or topics covered in the paper. While some papers print general commentary, many will only print letters that refer to a specific article. Here are some examples of easy ways to refer to articles in your opening sentence:

- I was disappointed to see that (Paper)'s (Date) editorial "(Title)" omitted some of the key facts in the debate.
- I strongly disagree with (author's name)'s narrow view on (Topic). ("Name of Op-Ed," date)
- I am deeply saddened to read that (Topic). ("Title of Article," date)

4. Fact check and proofread.

5. Submit. Visit the newspaper's website or look at the opinion page for submission instructions. You can follow up with the newspaper after a couple of days if you don't receive submission confirmation.



Letters are an extremely effective way of communicating with your elected officials. Many legislators believe that a letter represents not only the position of the writer but also many other constituents who did not take the time to write.

A few tips for writing your elected representatives:

The letter should never be longer than one page.

State who you are and your goal for writing up front.

Write only about one to three topics.

Personalize your letter by telling the recipient how the legislation/issue impacts you and/or your community.

To find your elected representatives at every level of government, visit sos.mn.gov/elections-voting/get-involved/contact-your-elected-representatives



LEGAL UPDATES

Lawsuit: Unlawful Punishment of Detainee

Ramsey Kettle was locked in solitary confinement for days without food, water, or appropriate medical and mental health care.

In December, the ACLU-MN and pro bono co-counsel Norton Rose Fulbright filed a lawsuit on behalf of Mr. Kettle, who was unlawfully punished by Otter Tail County correctional officers while housed as a pre-trial detainee on charges that were later dropped.

This horrendous abuse was carried out by 11 different correctional officers, including two acting sergeants. Mr. Kettle's condition was known to the acting jail administrator, who expressly approved of withholding food and water from Mr. Kettle as punishment. These officers did not feed Mr. Kettle for nearly 60 hours. They turned off the water to his cell so that he could not even flush his toilet or drink from his sink.

Mr. Kettle's shocking mistreatment was only uncovered when an Otter Tail County Jail staff member blew the whistle and reported the abuse to the Department of Corrections. A subsequent investigation by the Department of Corrections confirmed the extent of Mr. Kettle's abuse, although those responsible have yet to be held accountable for the devastating impacts they have had on Mr. Kettle and his physical and mental well-being.

Lawsuit: Carver County Illegally Holds Man for ICE

The ACLU of Minnesota filed a lawsuit in district court in March on behalf of Maikol Javier Suarez Varela, who was illegally detained by the Carver County Sheriff's Office. The sheriff's office acted outside their clearly defined statutory authority and the bounds of the Minnesota Constitution by holding Suarez Varela for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) after he paid bail.

Suarez Varela's bail was paid by the Minnesota Freedom Fund on February 13. As soon as bail was paid, the Carver County Sheriff's Office had no legal basis to continue to detain him — but they did so anyway. Instead of releasing Suarez Varela, the sheriff's office illegally held him based on a request (not a judicial warrant) from ICE and then transferred him to federal custody.

Carver County staff and Sheriff Kamerud know that Minnesota law prohibits state and local law enforcement agencies from holding people for ICE, but they decided to ignore the law.


Habeas Corpus *"You shall have the body"*

A legal process where a detainee requests a court to determine if their confinement is lawful.

A person in custody can petition a court for a *writ* (a formal legal document) of habeas corpus which orders the custodian (jailer) to present the detainee in court.

Habeas corpus aims to ensure that individuals are not held without due process of law.

OVERCOMING ST. FRANCIS



Last November, the St. Francis School Board changed its library policy. Previously, librarians and educators determined which books would be available on district bookshelves. The updated policy removes local professionals from the process of approving books and replaces them with a website called “Book Looks.”

At least 46 books have been removed or are in the process of being removed from bookshelves.

In March, the ACLU-MN and pro bono co-counsel Lockridge Grindal Nauen PLLP filed a lawsuit in district court on behalf of parents of children in the St. Francis Area School District. The lawsuit seeks to end this illegal banning of books.

“The freedom to read is fundamental to our democracy, and the ACLU of Minnesota stands with St. Francis students demanding that their school board stop violating their constitutional right to access information,” said ACLU-MN Staff Attorney Catherine Ahlin-Halverson.

“The fears of a few should not affect our education.”

Rowan’s Story

Students, parents, teachers and community members crammed into the St. Francis School District Office on March 24 for the school board meeting. People sat on the floor, stood against walls, lined the hallway and gathered in the building’s foyer to voice thoughts about the board’s new policy to restrict which books are allowed on school shelves.

Rowan was one of the students to speak against the new policy. She told the board, “The St. Francis School District should refuse to let the fears of a few people affect the education of all of us.”

Rowan is a senior at St. Francis High School. She is the captain of the speech and debate team, DECA club president, an officer of the school’s National Honor Society, and she unequivocally believes that reading books by diverse authors helps students to become better thinkers. “Book banning takes away people’s ability to see both sides of a story,” said Rowan.

Many of the books that have been pulled or are in danger of being pulled from St. Francis’ shelves are texts used in AP classes. “The Handmaid’s Tale” and “Brave New World” are some of the books that Rowan and her classmates have read in AP Literature.

“I gained a lot from that course and my understanding of literature,” said Rowan. “And it helped me to become a significantly better writer.”

“I don’t think I would have as well-developed of a voice as a writer if I had not read books that were made available to me in my AP lit course,” Rowan said.

CIS SCHOOL DISTRICT BOOK BANS

While reading helps writers develop their voice, Rowan also emphasizes that “by censoring the content that’s in books, it can take away from students’ own voice because they don’t ever see it represented.”

Many students, Rowan included, write to explore challenging themes. This can be difficult when texts that offer meditations on complex topics are unavailable in the school district. Memoirs have not been spared from bans and challenges. For example, “Night,” by Elie Wiesel, a slim volume that recounts Wiesel’s time in Auschwitz and Buchenwald, has been challenged.

After Rowan learned that “Night” might be removed from school shelves she said, “I have no capacity to understand how [the subject matter] is more harmful in the form of literature than it is in a lecture.” She added, “I think it’s additionally important to hear first-hand accounts rather than historical recollections of things. I think that helps contextualize history for a lot of people and makes it more real than a date in a textbook.”

Now, weeks away from graduation, Rowan is beginning to turn her attention to college. She plans to pursue a degree in international relations to work in developmental aid or global security. Rowan credits the books she read in high school for helping her to determine her future.

“Reading diverse perspectives in literature definitely steered me in this direction,” said Rowan. “Being able to engage with and learn about people and experiences who I otherwise didn’t have the opportunity to interact with in St. Francis, seeing the differences in lived experience from people around the world, gave me a better idea of what I want to do and what issues I think are pressing and should be at the forefront of our minds.”

Take Action

How To Fight Book Bans

Purchase or check out a banned book.

The ACLU of Minnesota is proudly partnering with independent bookstore Moon Palace Books for our Pride weekend celebrations. Scan this QR code to view commonly banned books.



Support organizations that fight book bans.

In addition to the ACLU of Minnesota, ACLU affiliates across the country have been actively trying to end book bans.

Details on how to donate to the ACLU of Minnesota can be found on page 15.

Speak out about book bans in person and on social media.

Attend a school or library board meeting or share your story on social media.

Write a Letter To The Editor (LTE) to your local newspaper or contact your representatives.

Details on how to write an LTE and how to contact your rep can be found on page 8.

Stay up to date and informed on the issue by signing up for emails.

Head to our website <https://www.aclu-mn.org/> and sign up for our emails on the home page.







Restore the Vote Turnout Report



Key Result

In the first statewide election since the Restore the Vote legislation was passed, **turnout for the 55,000+ newly re-enfranchised voters reached by our efforts was almost 20%**, far surpassing our 11% goal, which was based on outcomes from similar legislation in other states.

Background

In 2023, the Minnesota state legislature passed HF28, which restored the right to vote for individuals with felony convictions who are no longer incarcerated. **In addition to successfully defending this legislation before the MN Supreme Court, the ACLU-MN team worked with partners including The League of Women Voters, Minnesota Voice, The MN Secretary of State, and T.O.N.E.U.P. to reach and inform these newly re-enfranchised voters.** Due to systemic racism, these voters are disproportionately people of color.

Collaborative Efforts

- 90,000+ mailers sent
- 7,000+ phone calls
- 5,000+ doors knocked
- 34,000+ texts sent

Outcomes

19.8%

voter turnout for
re-enfranchised
voters

29.6%

of contacted voters
registered to vote

The ACLU-MN also participated in **vote tripling on election day, mobilized our Smart Justice Fellows for community outreach, and hosted the Our Voices Restored event** in Bemidji, MN, together with local organizations and Native nations. These efforts helped us to connect directly with affected communities.

The Work Continues

Data shows that racial and geographic disparities in voter participation among this group persist. **As we look forward, we will continue our efforts to tailor programming to bridge this gap, building on this past year's enormous success.**

WHY I GIVE



Doug Hepper sat in a small St. Paul coffee shop drinking coffee and reading the morning paper. When I sat down across from him and asked why he decided to become a member of the ACLU of Minnesota, he didn't need to think about his answer. Doug simply flipped the newspaper open, revealing snippets of articles he had circled,

and said matter-of-factly, "it's because I open the paper every day."

Doug began donating to the ACLU-MN after President Trump's first inauguration. "I felt that a lot of the things he stood for needed to be pushed back on," said Doug. "And I felt that the ACLU was one of the best organizations for doing that."

Now, over eight years later, Doug has increased his donations to the ACLU-MN. One main reason is because the ACLU monitors government actions in order to protect and expand constitutional guarantees. Recently, much of this work has been focused on immigrant rights, which includes ensuring that the right to due process is not infringed upon.

"Trump has talked about sending American citizens to El Salvador if they're 'bad ones' — to be defined by him — which means that it could be you or me. I find that terrifying," said Doug.

"The other reason I give to the ACLU," said Doug, "is a number of the other organizations that I give to benefit from the actions of the ACLU. Whether it's NPR, MPR, Meals on Wheels, Planned Parenthood, there are a number of organizations that are under attack where ACLU activities can help push back on this administration and support important nonprofits."

SUPPORT OUR WORK

The ACLU of Minnesota is supported by passionate individuals whose donations help us protect and expand civil liberties in Minnesota and across the country. You can join them by:

- Making a tax deductible donation: <https://action.aclu.org/give/support-aclu-minnesota>
- Becoming an ACLU member: <https://action.aclu.org/give/minnesota-join-renew-today>
- Giving stock: <https://www.aclu-mn.org/en/stock-donations>
- Leaving a legacy: <https://www.aclu.org/legacy/bequests-will>

You can also support our work by:

- Becoming a volunteer: <https://www.aclu-mn.org/volunteer>
- Taking action: <https://www.aclu-mn.org/act>



Questions about giving to the ACLU-MN? **Contact** support@aclu-mn.org

JOIN THE ACLU OF MINNESOTA FOR PRIDE WEEKEND

*booth in a new location at the festival

**The ACLU of Minnesota presents:
Drag Story Hour at the Rainbow Stage
Saturday, June 28 at 10:30am**



**Visit our booth
all weekend!**

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Loving v. Virginia

June 12, 1967

It's been almost 56 years since the ACLU won *Loving v. Virginia*, legalizing interracial marriage across the country. But the legal reasoning that Supreme Court Justice Alito used to overturn *Roe v. Wade* could be applied to undo *Loving*, too. Despite the apt name, Mildred and Richard Loving's case is about even more than love, and connects directly to *Roe*. "It's about being able to create a family if, when, and how one desires, and for one's family not to be subjected to discrimination," said Michele Goodwin on the ACLU's podcast, *At Liberty*. Goodwin is a constitutional law scholar at the University of California, Irvine School of Law, and board chair of the ACLU Foundation of Southern California. She added: "Those kinds of protections are still needed." The ACLU continues to celebrate the right to marry whomever one chooses—and remains its vigilant defender. —TOM VELLNER