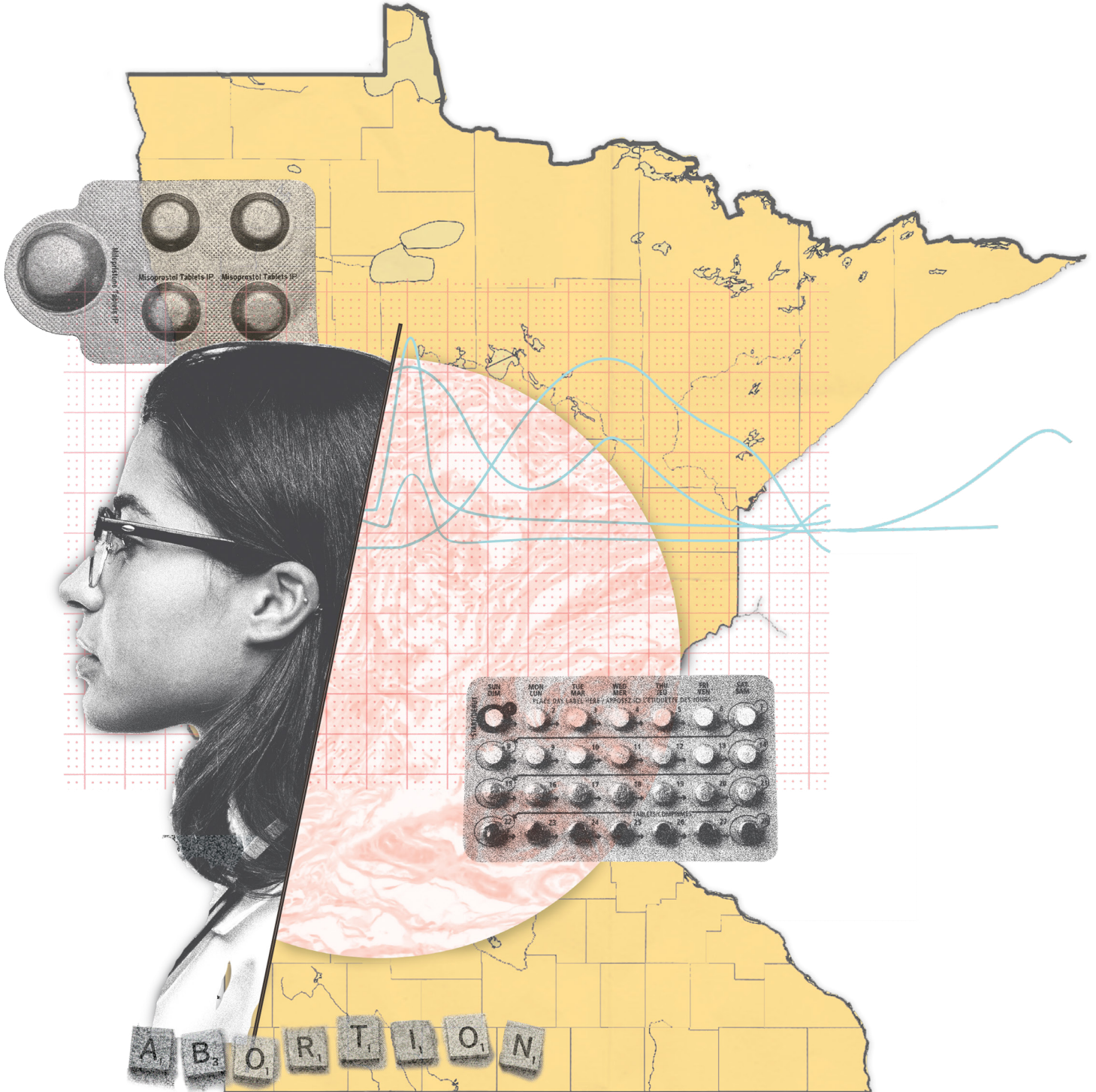


VOTING RIGHTS RESTORED
Legislative victory will let 50K Minnesotans vote
AN ISLAND OF ABORTION ACCESS
Law passes to protect abortion rights



Celebrating a Season of Legislative Wins



Battling for civil liberties means playing the long game. For every handful of losses, we might have one win. That victory is what keeps us going.

And then we have an unprecedented legislative session like 2023, where all that hard work pays off and the gains just keep on coming.

After 20 years of fighting at the Capitol, in the community and in the courts, the ACLU of Minnesota played a pivotal role in passing a bill to restore the vote to people on felony probation. People living in the community, working and raising families will finally get to vote on their own future – and on their children’s future too.

And after two decades of work, the Senate passed Driver’s Licenses for All just hours after Restore the Vote. The new law will provide driver’s licenses to undocumented people in Minnesota, regardless of status, who will now be able to drive to work, get their children to school, and shop for groceries.

And back in the 1970s, we started fighting to protect the rights of women and others who become pregnant to decide whether to remain pregnant. The PRO Act that codified reproductive freedom is now the law too.

You can imagine the hugs, the tears, and even the dancing in the Capitol Rotunda.

Decades of work all became law. Your dedication and support, created justice all within a matter of weeks.

Thousands of lives are now better. Thousands of people can now live with dignity, humanity, and respect for their rights.

We hope you take this moment with us to celebrate. Your support made it happen.

And then we’ll get back to the fight.

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Deepinder Singh Mayell

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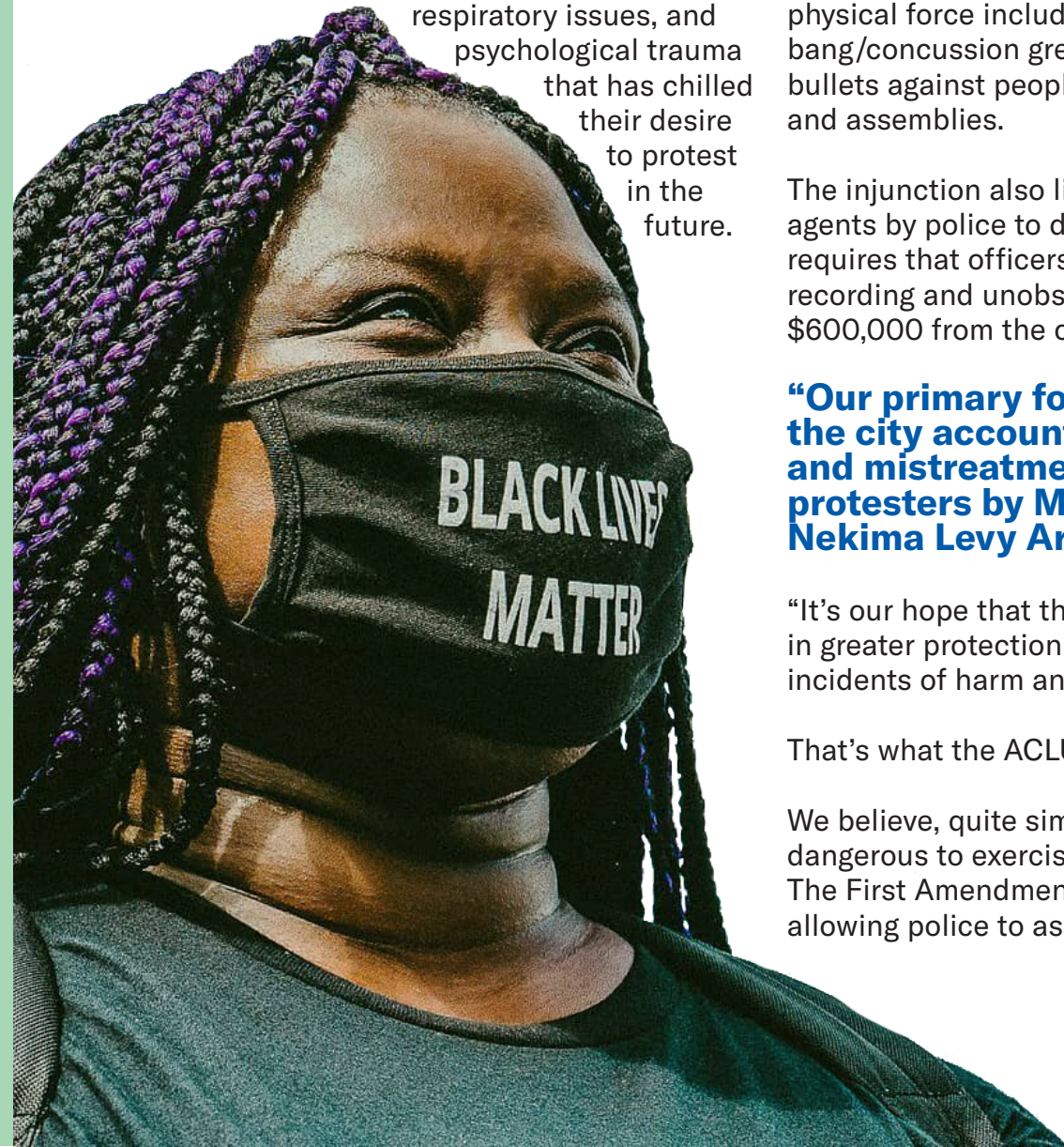
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Lawsuit Win Helps Protect Peaceful Protesters from Police Violence

When people are protesting against police murdering someone, at the very least, they should not face even more police violence. It’s not a high bar.

Yet that’s just what happened to protesters in Minneapolis following the police murder of George Floyd. And that’s why the ACLU-MN sued with pro bono help from Fish & Richardson and Gustafson Gluek.

In summer 2020, peaceful protesters were tear-gassed and shot with hard foam bullets to intimidate them and quash the protests. People trying to hold police accountable instead ended up with bruising, lingering respiratory issues, and psychological trauma that has chilled their desire to protest in the future.



On November 30, the ACLU-MN won a lawsuit against MPD filed on behalf of several protesters.

“People who are demonstrating peacefully should never be met with police violence,” said ACLU-MN Legal Director Teresa Nelson. “Tear gas, foam bullets and pepper spray became weapons for intimidating and hurting protesters, making it dangerous for people to exercise their First Amendment rights. We hope this settlement sends a message to law enforcement across Minnesota that this violation of our constitutional rights will not be tolerated.”

The settlement and injunction prohibits the city from arresting, threatening to arrest, or using physical force including chemical agents, flash bang/concussion grenades, and foam-tipped bullets against people engaging in lawful protests and assemblies.

The injunction also limits the use of chemical agents by police to disperse peaceful protests and requires that officers have body-worn cameras recording and unobstructed. Plaintiffs will split \$600,000 from the city.

“Our primary focus was on holding the city accountable for the abuse and mistreatment of peaceful protesters by MPD,” said plaintiff Nekima Levy Armstrong.

“It’s our hope that the injunction will result in greater protection for protesters and fewer incidents of harm and bodily injury,” she said.

That’s what the ACLU of Minnesota expects too.

We believe, quite simply, that it shouldn’t be dangerous to exercise the right to free speech. The First Amendment does not include an asterisk allowing police to assault peaceful protesters.

Legislature Restores Vote to 50K+ Minnesotans

When the Senate voted to restore the vote to upwards of 50,000 Minnesotans, Jennifer Schroeder saw it on TV and immediately texted her boyfriend the good news.

State law barred anyone on felony probation or supervision from voting, even if they were living in the community, working, paying taxes, and raising families. In the case of Schroeder, who was sentenced to 40 years of probation on a drug charge, that meant not voting until age 71.

That disenfranchisement continued even though she had turned her life around. Schroeder got sober, enrolled in college, and graduated with a 3.8 GPA. She became an addiction counselor, a mom, and an activist who testified before the state Legislature.

“I felt very stripped of my rights,” she said. “I felt like it was very unfair. If I’m going to be doing all the things I’m doing, you can’t tell me I can’t have a say.”

On February 21, that finally changed. To tears of joy and applause, with ACLU-MN supporters in the Capitol halls and gallery, the Minnesota Senate voted to restore one of the most basic civil liberties, the ability to choose one’s government. On March 3, the Governor signed it into law.

Our democracy and our communities became stronger by correcting this historic wrong.



Jennifer Schroeder can't wait to bring her son Chance with her to the ballot box. She helped the ACLU-MN and our allies change the law so that she and 50K people can legally vote again.

“It’s a big step in the right direction. I am super excited to vote,” Schroeder said.

This fight to end this disenfranchisement took two decades. The ACLU of Minnesota and dozens of other organizations in the Restore the Vote Minnesota coalition advocated at the Capitol for years. People silenced by the law like Schroeder testified, rallied, and wrote letters.

In 2019, the ACLU-MN, national ACLU and Faegre Drinker sued on behalf of Schroeder and others. But on February 15, the Minnesota Supreme Court ruled that our state Constitution does not automatically provide Minnesotans on felony probation with the right to vote upon release from incarceration. The court did note the “deeply disturbing reality” that Minnesota’s denial of the vote had “disproportionate racial impacts.”

That ruling raised the stakes, leaving the decision entirely up to the Minnesota Legislature.

Thanks to the bill’s passage, nearly 50,000 people finally get to choose who represents them. Small business people have a say on policies that protect their employees. Veterans who risked their lives to protect our nation have a voice and a vote. And Schroeder and other parents finally have a say over the school boards that affect their children’s future.

Schroeder already plans to bring her 2-year-old son with her to the voting booth.

“I think I’m going to enjoy most seeing the red ‘I voted’ sticker on my son,” she said. “He gets to start to take part in the voting process from the very beginning.”

Her son’s name? Chance, for second chances.

Legislative Updates

VICTORY

HF 4/SF 27: Immigrant Driver’s Licenses

Driver’s License for All is finally the law after 20 years of lobbying. Thousands of Minnesotans will soon be able to obtain a state driver’s license, regardless of immigration status. This creates safer roads and lets people travel with dignity.

PENDING

HF 100: Legalizing adult use of Marijuana

The ACLU of Minnesota has continuously supported legalization efforts that properly regulate the sale and use of cannabis, and also address the disproportionate impact of the failed War on Drugs on communities of color. We support HF 100, which would legalize the recreational usage of marijuana for adults. It was moving quickly through committees at press time.

PENDING

HF 43/SF 816: Gross Misdemeanor Sentencing Reform

Currently, Minnesota law states that the maximum sentence for a gross misdemeanor is 365 days. Federal immigration law views any sentence of 365 days or more as a felony. That one-day overlap between state and federal law can lead to drastic immigration consequences, including deportation. HF 43 would eliminate that conflict. It had already passed the House at press time.

PENDING

Allowing State Civil Rights Claims

Government wrongdoers shouldn’t be able to evade liability for violating our constitutional rights. Yet it’s very difficult to sue these officials – including police – because of qualified immunity. The ACLU of Minnesota is fighting to change state law to let Minnesotans sue government entities for damages when they violate our state Constitution.

Trying to Access Reproductive Care in Georgia: ACLU-MN Board Chair Faces Repercussions of Post-Roe America

Five months ago, ACLU-MN Board Chair Lariss Maldonado was pregnant when she boarded a flight bound for Georgia. After landing, she began to experience spotting and felt ill, the symptoms of a miscarriage.

Maldonado called her doctor but since she was out of state, they couldn't help. Her next thought was to get to a hospital. But this was after the U.S. Supreme Court had overturned Roe v. Wade, and she knew there would be severe limitations on the reproductive healthcare available to her. Instead, she called Delta.

In Georgia, abortions are illegal after six weeks with few exceptions. Because Maldonado's pregnancy was past six weeks, doctors there couldn't legally provide the healthcare needed for a miscarriage unless she was in mortal danger.

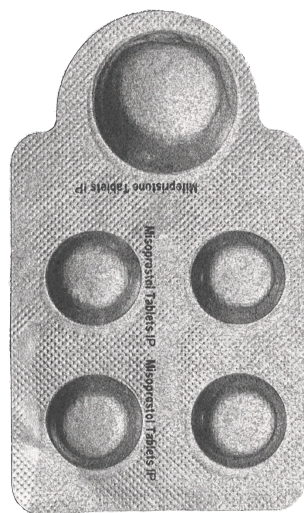
“I was facing the exact predicament that pregnant people and doctors across the country are now facing as state lawmakers make blanket decisions about reproductive care, regardless of what individuals want or what is best for their health.”



Following the U.S. Supreme Court's Dobbs ruling, abortion rights and care now begin and end at state lines. Georgia is one of 24 states that bans abortion, severely restricts it, or is likely to do so.

Obtaining an abortion there means traveling out of state and taking time off of work, something that is impossible for many people.

“This is not just a healthcare issue,” she said. “It's also a social mobility issue. It's a social justice issue. It's one more thing to pile on to make people's lives difficult.”



Maldonado flew back to Minnesota the next day and went straight to her doctor. “In the midst of the pain and the loss and the stress of the entire experience, I couldn't help but be thankful that I made it home to Minnesota, where I could have a full range of options of choices for my care,” she said.

Experiencing a miscarriage in Georgia post-Roe was not the first time that Maldonado needed abortion-related healthcare. When she was 17, Maldonado had an unplanned pregnancy and got an abortion.

“Having that choice empowered me to take control and build the life that I wanted to have,” she said.

Reproductive healthcare freed Maldonado to attend Smith College and the University of Minnesota Law School. Since graduating, Maldonado has headed the Minnesota Hispanic Bar Association, and is now a lead counsel in the banking industry and the mother of two.

The ACLU-MN, including board members like Maldonado, has fought for decades to ensure that all Minnesotans keep our reproductive freedom.

Most recently, we helped pass the PRO Act. It codifies the fundamental right of Minnesotans to make their own decisions about abortions. The ACLU-MN also supports a bill to repeal unjust and unnecessary abortion restrictions that are still on the books.

Maldonado stresses that we cannot be passive observers of the destruction of Roe.

“It's time to take matters into our own hands,” she said. “We have seen how quickly the tides can turn, and we are all responsible for continuing to protect our fundamental freedoms and support our neighbors who must escape to states like ours that still have reproductive rights for now.”



74%

of Minnesotans agree:
People should be able to access abortion care without government interference.

Data from PerryUndem Research via Unrestrict Minnesota

Abortion Victory

Minnesota has taken a leading role in ensuring abortion rights are protected, and the ACLU of Minnesota has been there every step of the way.

This session, the Legislature passed the PRO Act and the Governor signed it into law on January 31.

The PRO Act codifies the fundamental right of Minnesotans – not politicians – to make individual decisions about reproductive health care, including contraception, abortion, and pregnancy. It ensures Minnesota can remain an island of access for reproductive freedom as states around us restrict abortion.

The ACLU-MN also is fighting alongside our allies to pass a bill to repeal unjust and unnecessary abortion restrictions that are still on the books in Minnesota.

The Looming Threat

While abortion is protected in Minnesota, a baseless lawsuit filed by anti-abortion extremists could halt the distribution of a safe and effective abortion medication called mifepristone. It's one of two medications used together in more than half of all U.S. abortions.

Even though the suit was filed in Texas, it would stop providers from using mifepristone across the U.S., including in Minnesota. While losing an effective medication would be a blow, abortion will remain legal in Minnesota.

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2023 ACLU-MN ANNUAL MEETING

Are you an ACLU of Minnesota member?

Please join us for the 2023 annual member meeting on **Saturday, April 22nd @ 9am via Zoom**. Registration is required.

<https://www.aclu-mn.org/en/events/join-2023-aclu-mn-annual-meeting>

DONATE TODAY



Restoring the vote, protecting free speech, and defending abortion rights are just a few examples of the crucial work the ACLU of Minnesota does every day. Please help keep us strong in the fight for civil liberties. <https://action.aclu.org/give/support-aclu-minnesota>

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