



**ACLU**

Minnesota

**Liberty**  
magazine

# “WE DRIVE BECAUSE WE MUST”

80,000 Minnesotans are now eligible to apply for driver's licenses, regardless of their immigration or citizenship status.

**ACLU OF MINNESOTA'S TOP 10 VICTORIES OF 2023 (PAGE 4)**

**THE EVILS OF DETENTION (PAGE 12)**

# YOUR VOICE MATTERS — CHAMPION FREE SPEECH

January 6 marked three years since an angry mob surrounded and besieged the nation's Capitol, suspending the rule of law set out in the Constitution.

It was a stunningly fragile moment for our country that resulted in several deaths, hundreds of injuries, and more than 1,200 people charged for crimes including trespassing, theft, assault on law enforcement officers, disrupting Congress, and seditious conspiracy.

Yet as terrifying as that day was for our democracy, I want to note that none of the charges stemming from this violent attempt to overturn the presidential election involved prohibited political speech.

Even in this terrible moment, the First Amendment stood firm, demonstrating the resiliency of our constitutional principles in the face of serious threats. The First Amendment protects speech, no matter who is talking or how ugly the words may be, and some of that speech can be hard to tolerate.

**This right shines an irreplaceable spotlight that exposes the bigots, blowhards, and would-be tyrants as well as the dangerous narratives that take hold and move quickly to dehumanize and scapegoat. That builds an informed citizenry to hold our government accountable.**



For over 100 years, the ACLU has fought in this great American tumult, protecting and expanding civil liberties that have seen devastating setbacks in recent years. Whether in the courts, the statehouse or the streets, we find ourselves struggling along familiar fault lines against the rollback of abortion rights, voting rights, and equal rights for LGBTQ+ people.

In all those fights, by protecting speech for all people, the First Amendment creates space for anger and protest, for minority voices seeking justice, and for anyone deemed to be a threat by those in power.

In 2024, we must stand up together against anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, racism, and the targeting of the LGBTQ+ community AND we must also loudly, boldly, and unapologetically stand up for the First Amendment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deepinder Singh Mayell'.

ACLU-MN Executive Director  
Deepinder Singh Mayell

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# 29 Years & Counting

Fighting for our rights with the ACLU-MN remains her dream job

**W**hen Legal Director Teresa Nelson joined the ACLU of Minnesota as a volunteer law clerk in 1995, the organization operated on a shoestring.

There were only three full-time people on staff, crammed into a dank building in Minneapolis. Nelson quickly moved from law clerk to part-timer to legal counsel and then legal director.

Nearly three decades later, the ACLU-MN remains her dream job.

**“There are so many different issues within the idea of protecting constitutional rights that you don’t have to choose just one,” she said. “Free speech is important and so is equal protection, protecting the rights of people of color and LGBTQ+ people. We do all of that.”**

During Nelson’s tenure, the ACLU-MN has grown exponentially. Following Donald Trump’s election, the staff more than doubled in size.

“It was an exciting challenge to figure out how to grow in a sustainable way and maintain our absolute commitment to defending and promoting civil liberties,” Nelson said. “It was great to be able to build our resources and extend our reach. Adding five people to the legal staff since the 2016 election has given us freedom to take more cases.”



Teresa and her father the day she graduated from law school.

One of the many cases that remains memorable to her is a wrongful death lawsuit after Duluth police killed David Croud, a Native American man with four young children, in 2005. She worked closely with former ACLU-MN Board Member and litigation legend Al Goins.

“David was intoxicated, he was shadow boxing with himself, he wasn’t doing anything,” Nelson said. “He just wanted the police to leave him alone. It was completely unnecessary to arrest him, much less tase and brutalize him. We were the only ones really willing to push to get justice for David at the time.”

Nelson also recalls how the ACLU-MN protected the right to protest at the 2008 RNC convention in Saint Paul, which included community outreach to groups planning protests, securing permits to march, recruiting attorneys, and training observers.

Right before the march, then-Ramsey County Sheriff Fletcher raided the protest center and seized books, literature, buttons, banners, signs, and stickers. The ACLU-MN sued and won a temporary restraining order and a settlement for the victims in *Demuth v. Fletcher*. The ACLU-MN also helped get “Democracy Now!” reporters including Amy Goodman released from jail for covering the protests.

Looking ahead, Nelson hopes to see a world that approaches public safety by addressing the root causes of crime, rather than relying on punitive measures like enforcement and incarceration.

**“People are unhoused, they’re living in encampments. Let’s figure out a way to house them instead of sweeping them with bulldozers and police. People are committing acts of violence. What caused that violence?” Nelson said.**

**“Let’s figure out a better way to address what are clearly societal failures instead of enforcing laws against the most vulnerable.”**

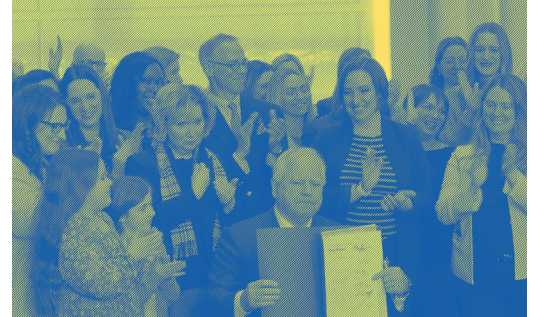
# ACLU OF MINNESOTA'S TOP 10

In the courts, the state Capitol and in our communities, 2023 was a busy year for the ACLU of Minnesota. Here are 10 of our biggest achievements from the year. In no particular order, they are:

## VICTORY 1.

### Repealed abortion restrictions and affirmed abortion rights into state law

Two abortion bills we advocated for became state law. The bills ended many unnecessary restrictions on abortion, and codified abortion rights into state law.



## VICTORY 2.

### Restore the vote passed into law

This law restored voting rights to all Minnesotans on felony probation and parole; that's over 55,000 people!

## VICTORY 3.

### Driver's Licenses for All passed into law

This law means that more than 80,000 undocumented Minnesotans can obtain a driver's license.



## VICTORY 4.

### Legalized adult-use marijuana

Black people in Minnesota are 5.4 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than white people, which leads to ongoing legal consequences. We expect that legalizing marijuana will help reduce these disparities.

## VICTORY 5.

### 364/365 passed into law

By reducing the maximum sentence for a gross misdemeanor by one day, Minnesota ensured that immigrants would not face unintended and drastic consequences including deportation.





# TOP 10 VICTORIES OF 2023

of the ACLU of Minnesota. As we reflect on 2023 and prepare for 2024, we look back on

## VICTORY 6.

**The Minnesota Supreme Court ruled that the smell of marijuana in a car isn't enough to justify a search.** The ACLU-MN filed an amicus brief in support. Allowing searches based on the smell of marijuana alone would give police an incentive to conduct pretextual stops.

## VICTORY 7.

**Kylese Perryman lawsuit filed to challenge flawed facial recognition**

The ACLU-MN and pro bono attorneys at Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP filed a lawsuit on behalf of Kylese Perryman. Perryman spent days in jail, endured house arrest, and paid legal fees for crimes he did not commit. Police didn't take even basic investigative steps.



## VICTORY 8.

**Partnered with the Timberwolves and the Lynx for the Pack the Vote initiative.**

This exciting partnership promoted the importance of voting for people on felony probation or supervision who can now vote thanks to passage of Restore the Vote.

## VICTORY 9.

**Hosted driver's licenses clinics**

The ACLU-MN worked with county judges and attorneys to host driver's licenses clinics. People requested the expungement of convictions and the waiver of outstanding fees and fines so they could obtain a driver's license.



## VICTORY 10.

**Took Bob Kroll off the beat**

For the next 10 years, former MPD union head Bob Kroll agreed to not serve as a police officer anywhere in Hennepin, Ramsey, and Anoka Counties; not serve in leadership in law enforcement agencies in those counties; and to testify in any related trial.

# LESSONS FROM OHIO

## Protecting abortion access through community organizing

by Julio Zelaya, ACLU-MN Director of Community Engagement

For decades now, the ACLU has tirelessly worked to protect reproductive rights across the country.

In the past few years, the battlefield has changed. The U.S. Supreme Court infamously failed to protect a right held fundamental for over 50 years by overturning *Roe v. Wade*, and gerrymandered legislatures jumped on board to pass archaic and inhumane laws to end abortion access.

The ACLU's work hasn't stopped. We've stepped up our efforts in the courts and state legislatures. And we've opened a new front by leveraging our community organizing work in bigger and better ways to push for reproductive rights to be written into state law.

This ACLU organizing effort was on full display in Ohio in November. Staff from national and 20 affiliates, including Minnesota, converged in Ohio to help get the word out about a ballot initiative that would enshrine the right to an abortion in the Ohio state Constitution. It was the biggest deployment of staff to a specific campaign at a pivotal moment in ACLU history.

**Together, ACLU staff from across the nation helped protect people's right to control their own bodies and make decisions about their own reproductive health care.**

Together, ACLU staff knocked on 10,931 doors in the days leading up to the November 7 election. The work paid off when 56.6% of voters elected to protect abortion in the Ohio Constitution.

ACLU staff celebrated when the votes were tallied. But we know that the work isn't done there, and it's not done in the rest of the country, including Minnesota.

Anti-abortion activists in places like Iowa are trying to ban abortion in their state constitutions. Other states are trying to pass laws to protect reproductive rights and codify non-discrimination. These big statewide initiatives will require a lot of canvassing, communication, and dispelling of bad information like we had in Ohio. And that's going to require a lot of effort, resources and strategizing.



Even in Minnesota, where abortion access is protected, we know that we are always one election or one court ruling away from having our rights challenged.

To ensure Minnesotans can always access reproductive care, and to enshrine these rights into law in other states like Iowa, we must continue growing our community outreach.

While it can seem like a big lift to help our fellow ACLU affiliates, we believe that no one in this country should lose fundamental rights. We take comfort in knowing that as we participate in this work, we gain skills to bring back to Minnesota and organize people here.

And if Minnesota ever needs to protect abortion access, we know that we have the community organizing expertise - and support from across the nation - to do it.



# 2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

When the Minnesota Legislature began its session on February 12, the ACLU-MN's legislative team was there ready to go with a critical policy agenda.

This is the second year of a DFL trifecta, meaning a single party controls the House, Senate and governor's office.

The ACLU-MN had an unprecedented number of victories in the 2023 legislative session. We helped protect reproductive freedom, restore the vote to 55,000-plus Minnesotans, make it legal for undocumented Minnesotans to get a driver's license, legalize adult use of marijuana, and more.

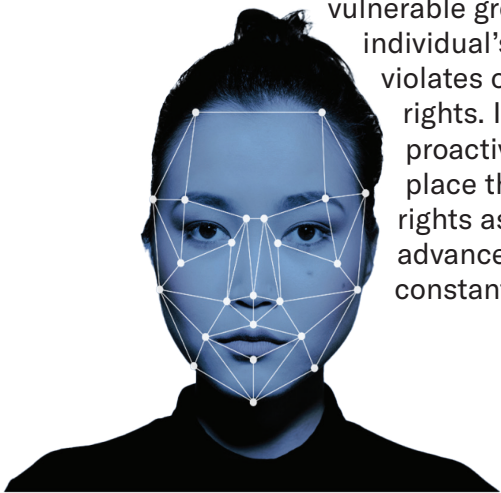
This year, our aggressive policy agenda focuses on strategic priorities such as reforming policing and immigration enforcement, and restricting facial recognition technologies. Our 2024 legislative agenda will include:

## Qualified Immunity Reform

Qualified immunity operates as a shield against holding government agents – including police – accountable for violating a person's rights. Even if an officer's conduct causes serious harm, courts are blocked from finding liability in many cases. The ACLU-MN wants to create a path so Minnesotans can sue for violations of their rights in state court.

## Facial Recognition Ban

The ACLU of Minnesota is pushing to end law enforcement's use of facial recognition technology because it allows for indiscriminate surveillance and intensifies racial and gender biases. It can target vulnerable groups and track an individual's movements. This violates our constitutional rights. It is essential to proactively put policies in place that will protect our rights as new and more advanced technology is constantly being released.



## Forfeiture General Funds

Currently, police can seize, keep and sell any private property alleged to have been involved in a crime. The property owner doesn't have to be convicted or arrested before police can legally take money, cars, and other items. Today, these property seizures by police are often motivated by profit rather than preventing crime. This law would more strictly regulate when property can be taken by law enforcement.

## Reverse Tracking Warrants

Warrants are supposed to be narrow, specific and based on probable cause. But "reverse tracking" lets government entities invade people's privacy just because they were at a specific place at a particular time, or because they entered a phrase or keyword into a search engine. This practice can reveal private information such as someone's medical condition, finances, sexual orientation, religious beliefs and more. This practice subjects large groups of innocent people to scrutiny by law enforcement. The ACLU-MN supports a bill to prohibit government entities from requesting or obtaining this information.

## NorthStar Act

The NorthStar Act would prohibit Minnesota law enforcement from using state resources for federal immigration enforcement. It would bar prisons and jails from contracting with ICE to hold immigrants for possible deportation. There are three jails in Minnesota that detain individuals for ICE. Many immigrants, particularly those who are undocumented, avoid reporting crimes, cooperating with investigations, or seeking emergency services due to fear of detainment or even deportation for doing so.





# 'WE DRIVE BECAUSE WE MUST'

**O**ne cold autumn night, Amanda's 13-year-old son had an asthma attack that was so severe, he had to be rushed to the hospital in an ambulance. Amanda's husband rode with their son while Amanda stayed behind to quickly check in with their older boy and ask him to watch the baby. Then with the sound of her baby's cries trailing behind her, Amanda ran out of the house to follow the ambulance in her car.

On the way to the hospital, blue and red lights appeared in Amanda's rearview mirror. She pulled to the side of the road and rolled her window down to speak with the police officer.

Amanda is an undocumented immigrant. She has lived in Watonwan County for more than 20 years, but Minnesota barred her from getting a driver's license because of her immigration status. The officer gave Amanda a ticket for driving without a license and then informed Amanda that she could not continue driving to the hospital. Instead, she had to sit in her car and wait for someone with a license to pick her up.

Amanda called and woke up her oldest son, who had recently received his driver's license. He got himself ready, called a sitter for the baby, and found his mother on the side of the road 20 minutes later.

**"I was crying in my car because my husband was already in the hospital," Amanda said. "I wanted to run to the hospital. I felt those 20 minutes to be eternal."**

Amanda's experience of being unable to drive in an emergency was not unusual for undocumented people in Minnesota. In 2003, then Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed an order requiring proof of legal residence to obtain a Minnesota driver's license, which took away undocumented people's right to drive overnight.

But this didn't stop people from driving.

"We don't drive because we want to, we drive because we must," said Nelvin, a resident of Watonwan County.

**"As a father, there are many reasons why I am compelled to drive. I have to take my three kids to and from school, take them to the hospital, appointments. And now for work, I have to drive there and back."**

On March 7, Gov. Tim Walz signed the "Driver's Licenses for All" bill into law. With this law, more than 80,000 Minnesotans can now apply for a driver's license no matter their immigration status.



But obtaining a driver's license is still a complicated process for many undocumented Minnesotans. Previous traffic violations and unpaid tickets could obstruct their efforts to get a license. One way that the ACLU-MN has been addressing this challenge is holding legal clinics.

On Sunday, October 15, the ACLU-MN and our partner Convivencia Hispana hosted a legal clinic in the Watonwan County Library in St. James. County residents looked up tickets and traffic violations on their record and worked with a lawyer to write a letter to a county judge, requesting the expungement of convictions and the waiver of outstanding fees and fines.

About 80 families took part in the legal clinic, which cleared 300 infractions. So many people came seeking help that some had to be turned away when the clinic ended. And the demand for assistance isn't limited to Watonwan County, it's great throughout the state. The ACLU-MN is working with judges and attorneys in numerous counties to host more clinics in early 2024.

The ACLU-MN is also working to ensure that newly licensed drivers know their rights if they are pulled over by police.

**“Driver’s licenses for all means that the ACLU of Minnesota is committed to making sure all Minnesotans, regardless of immigration status, have their rights protected,” said ACLU-MN Community Engagement Director Julio Zelaya.**

“These clinics help us reach people that might not know about their rights and assist them in getting their driver’s licenses. It allows them to do the routine, day-to-day things that all Minnesotans take for granted – drive to the grocery store, bring their kids to school, and watch their children play football or take part in a school play.”

For Amanda, like thousands of other undocumented Minnesotans, a driver's license means she can travel farther from home with tranquility.

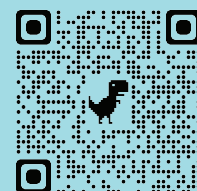
Currently, Amanda is working on getting her license so she and her children can have peace of mind when they are going to school, work, and traveling throughout the state. And if there is ever an emergency, Amanda will be able to rush to the hospital without fear of being forced to sit and wait on the side of the road.



ACLU of Minnesota staff at legal clinics.

**Visite nuestro sitio web para obtener más información sobre las licencias de conducir para todos!**

**Visit our website to learn more about driver's licenses for all!**



# BIASED TECHNOLOGY

Facial recognition remains largely ungoverned - and dangerous - in Minnesota

Facial recognition technology is everywhere. We use it to unlock our phones, prove our identity before boarding a plane, and send money from our virtual wallets to buy groceries and baseball tickets. Because this technology is nearly unavoidable in today's world, it is logical to assume that it is rigorously monitored and regulated. It is not. In fact, the technology is deeply flawed and mostly unregulated.

Technology does not exist outside of the biases and racism that are prevalent in our society. Studies show that facial recognition is least reliable for people of color, women, and nonbinary individuals. And that can be life-threatening when the technology is in the hands of law enforcement.

## Facial recognition automates discrimination

The ACLU-MN is fighting to end law enforcement's use of facial recognition technology in Minnesota. More than a dozen large cities have banned the technology, including Minneapolis, Boston, and San Francisco. If Minnesota adopts a policy to ban the technology, it would be the first state to do so.

Here's why the ACLU-MN will fight this legislative session to ban facial recognition tech:

- 1** It gives blanket and indiscriminate surveillance to authorities to track you.
- 2** It is inaccurate and intensifies racial and gender biases that already exist in law enforcement, which lead to disparate treatment.
- 3** It can be used to target and identify vulnerable groups, such as immigrants and refugees.
- 4** It can be used to track your personal movements, including going to abortion clinics or drug treatment.
- 5** Facial recognition technology violates our constitutional rights.

## Indiscriminate Surveillance

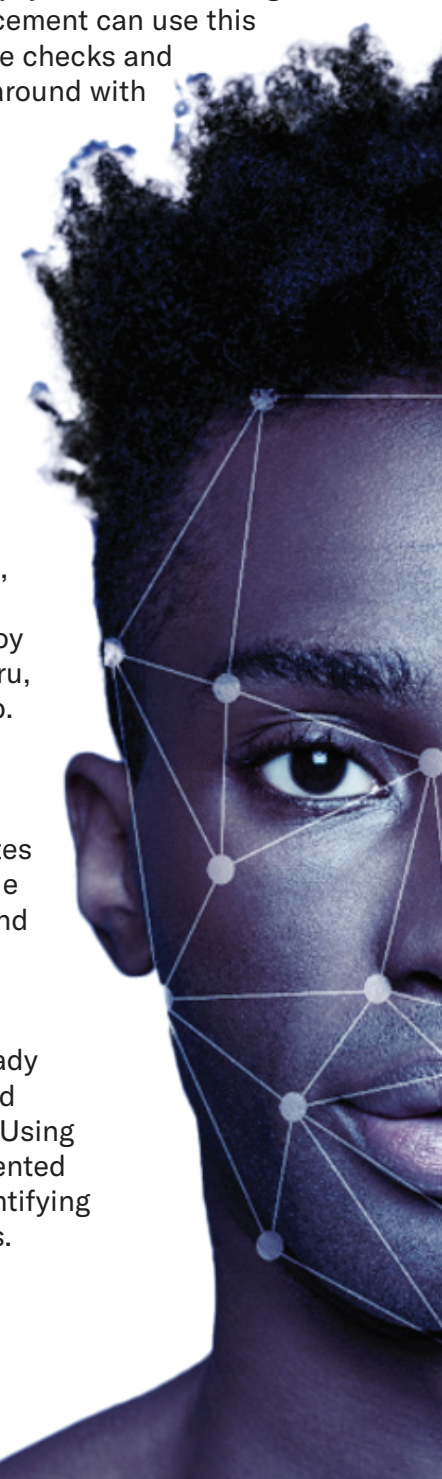
Minnesota state law controls how data is collected, created, stored, used, and released by the government. However, data collected from facial recognition technology is not included in the Government Data Practices Act.

People generally do not opt in to being tracked by facial recognition technology; you aren't able to give consent. And yet, law enforcement can use this software without appropriate checks and balances. "It's like walking around with your driver's license stuck to your forehead," said ACLU-MN Policy Associate Munira Mohamed.

## Racial and Gender Biases

Studies show that facial recognition technology is biased. **The error rate for light-skinned men is 0.8%, compared to 34.7% for darker-skinned women**, according to a 2018 study titled "Gender Shades" by Joy Buolamwini and Timnit Gebru, published by MIT Media Lab. A 2019 test by the federal government concluded the technology works best on white men. The accuracy rates weren't impressive for people of color, women, children, and elderly individuals.

Law enforcement and the criminal justice system already disproportionately target and incarcerate people of color. Using technology that has documented problems with correctly identifying people of color is dangerous.





The ACLU-MN has an appalling firsthand example here in Minnesota: We sued on behalf of Kylese Perryman, an innocent young man who was falsely arrested and detained based solely on incorrect facial identification.

The injustice does not stop there. A 2020 ACLU study found that since Black people are more likely to be arrested than white people for minor crimes, their faces and personal data are more likely to be in mugshot databases. That makes them more likely to be misidentified as suspects and forced to sit in lineups – despite the documented lack of accuracy behind all these means of supposed identification. The ACLU found that police surveillance cameras are disproportionately installed in Black and Brown neighborhoods, which again exacerbates systematic racism.

It is a common assumption that technology is unbiased, and thus infallible. This simply isn't true. All technology is created by people and people are biased.

### Targeting Vulnerable Groups

It's no secret that the Department of Homeland Security and its sub-agencies ICE and Customs and Border Protection have already committed horrific abuses – the ACLU sees the tragic consequences. With facial recognition, these agencies could potentially pinpoint the location of immigrants across the country, marking them for detention and deportation on an unprecedented scale.

**In 2017 alone, ICE, DHS and other government agencies used this technology to locate and arrest 400 family members and caregivers of unaccompanied migrant children, separating families and leaving children in detention.**



### Constitutional Rights Violations

The First Amendment ensures the right to protest and make your voice heard. Facial recognition technology could have a chilling effect on democracy: People may decide not to protest out of fear they'll be documented by this technology.

“The criminal justice system can really trap people into false arrest, false identification,” said Mohamed. **“You have to prove that you're innocent because a computer said that you're guilty.”**

Facial recognition technology isn't all bad. For example, it's been helpful in missing persons cases, and identifying victims of natural disasters and at crash scenes.

But technology is developing much more quickly than the laws we need to protect our rights. Anyone with a smartphone or social media account knows how rapidly technology changes, while legislating can take a long, long time. It is essential to proactively put policies into place that will protect our rights as new and more advanced technology is constantly released.

Especially when that technology – and law enforcement members using it – have been shown over and over to be biased toward marginalized groups.

**Help us combat facial recognition abuse!**



# OUR WORK WON'T STOP

Thousands of Minnesotans can now vote, and we're going to let them know it

Tens of thousands of Minnesotans celebrated on March 3 when Governor Tim Walz signed the Restore the Vote Act into law. With his signature, more than 55,000 Minnesotans on felony probation and parole had their voting rights restored.

This huge milestone was 20 years in the making, but the work doesn't end there. Many of these Minnesotans have no idea they now have the right to vote. They don't know they have a say in who is elected and in the policies that affect them and their families.

The ACLU of Minnesota is working alongside our allies to change that. We've partnered with the Minneapolis NAACP and T.O.N.E.U.P. to host a Smart Justice Fellowship.

The Smart Justice Fellowship will provide a cohort of 10 justice-impacted Fellows with the training they need to become leaders among the Minnesotans who regained their right to vote.

**“Voting is a precious and powerful right,” said ACLU-MN Organizer Paul Sullivan. “We know that voting helps people feel more connected to their communities. People who are on probation, living in their communities, paying taxes and raising families deserve a say in their own future.”**

“The beauty of this campaign is that a big part of it is literally just going to be awareness,” said Sullivan. “On the most basic level, it's simply letting people know, ‘Hey, you can vote now!’”

With the vote restored, Sullivan said the next step is making sure people know they can not only vote, but they can also make a difference on the issues that uniquely affect them. The Fellows will play a pivotal role in helping this new group of voters recognize their own power.

## What is Smart Justice?

Smart Justice is a national ACLU campaign designed to end mass incarceration throughout the country.

This work has played a leading role in the passage of more than 450 laws, which have resulted in tens of thousands of fewer people incarcerated.

The ACLU-MN is part of this effort. We have two main goals: Cut Minnesota's incarcerated population in half and combat racial disparities in the criminal legal system.

**“Minnesota is no exception to the trend of mass incarceration,” Sullivan said. “In some ways, Minnesota is actually particularly egregious, especially when it comes to the historical overreliance on probation.”**

Currently, Minnesota has the fifth-highest probation rate for adults in the U.S.

The Minnesota Smart Justice report highlighted numerous areas for improvement in Minnesota's incarceration system. In 2024, there is still need for change. The Sentencing Project Reported that:

- In 2021, Minnesota had an imprisonment rate of 140 per 100,000 people. This is one of the lowest rates in the country.
- While Minnesota's imprisonment rate is lower than most states, Minnesota's prisons have some of the worst racial disparities. In 2020, the Black to white imprisonment rate was 9.9 to 1. This was the fourth highest in the country and over twice the national average (4.8 to 1).
- Minnesota relies on probation and parole more than most states. According to the National Institute of Corrections, Minnesota had 1,927 people on probation in 2021. The average was 1,300. Only Ohio, Rhode Island and Georgia had more people on probation.
- Minnesota budgeted \$639 million from its general fund on corrections in 2023.

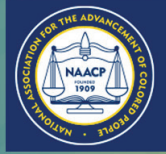


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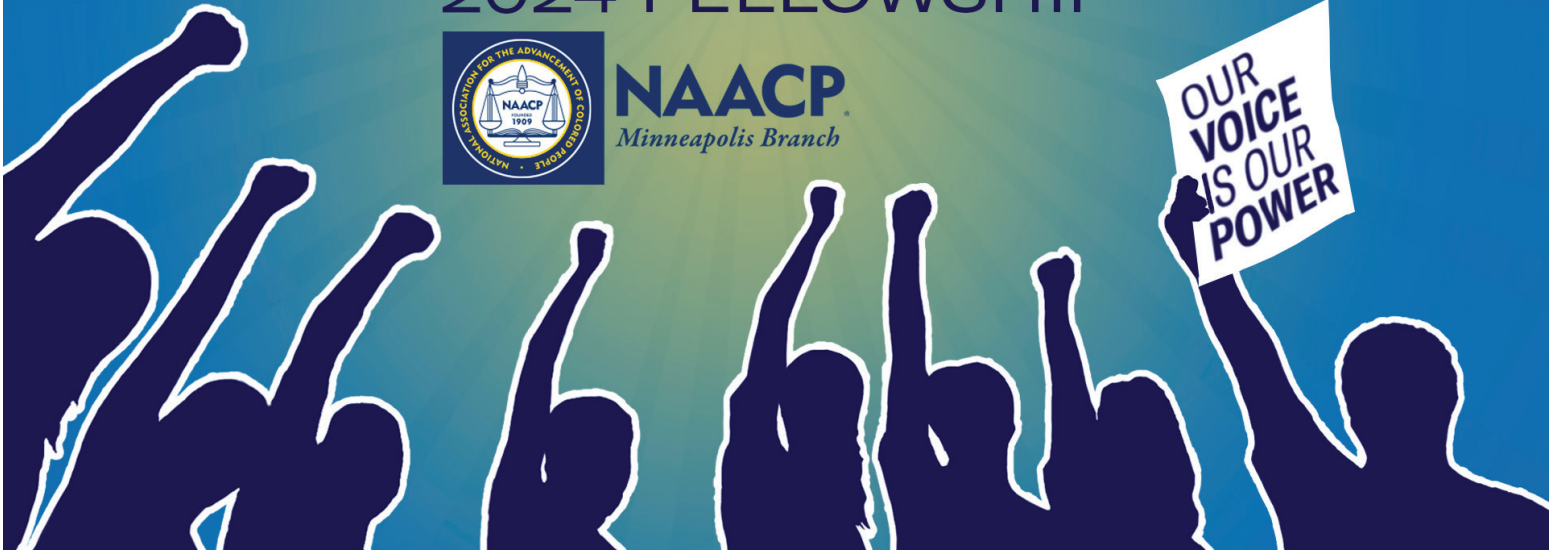


# SMART JUSTICE

## 2024 FELLOWSHIP



NAACP  
Minneapolis Branch



Smart Justice Fellows are pivotal to changing this system.

“There are over 55,000 folks who can vote now,” said Sullivan. “How do you get them to vote? One way is by appealing to these folks on Smart Justice issues because they’ve been directly impacted. Perhaps this is something that people would be more likely to come out and vote for, rather than simply a person with an ‘R’ or ‘D’ next to their name.”

The Smart Justice Fellowship program began in 2020. What’s different this year is the focus on voting.

We plan to recruit one fellow from each of Minnesota’s 10 judicial districts. That allows us to begin cultivating a greater footprint outside of the Twin Cities metro — which is where most formerly disenfranchised voters live. It will also allow the ACLU-MN and partners to build relationships with judicial officials in each district, hopefully leading to greater influence in sentencing patterns.

Ideally, fellows will be individuals who are justice-impacted or have a close relationship with a justice-impacted individual whose incarceration has affected them personally.

The Fellowship will run for 10 months (February–November 2024) and will consist of 10 modules aimed at training fellows to become organizers and leaders in their communities.

Modules will mostly be remote, with certain in-person modules either in the Twin Cities or in Fellow’s judicial districts. Community experts will teach the modules and focus on topics including:

- ACLU-MN’s Smart Justice platform
- Organizing
- Interacting with elected officials and policy makers
- Communications
- Canvassing/phone banking
- Community event planning
- Building relationships with judicial officials

Fellows will be paid a \$1,000 stipend.

The Legislature and governor’s decision to restore the vote gave us great hope for more reforms.

“Restoring the vote shows that Minnesotans believe in the power of redemption and rehabilitation,” Sullivan said. “Fellows will work to channel that belief and use it to fuel change in the criminal legal system and help end mass incarceration.”

***Are you interested in applying for the Smart Justice Fellowship? Do you know someone who might want to participate? Learn more and apply on the ACLU-MN’s website!***



# MEET THE STAFF

**The ACLU of Minnesota challenged members of our legal community to join the fight and become the next generation of leaders in the fine tradition of the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg. We are delighted to introduce three new staff attorneys who will help light our way on the path ahead.**



## **Alicia Granse**

Alicia joined the ACLU-MN after four years at the Hennepin County Public Defender’s Office. “Helping my clients find new hope, get resources they needed, and just giving them a voice was incredibly rewarding,” Granse said. “In particular, I’m proud of the cases in which I was able to expose the injustices inherent in the system and get better outcomes or even dismissals for my clients. One case resulted in extensive media coverage of a Minneapolis police officer who lied in a search warrant and under oath — and saved my client from 10 years in prison.”

Granse joined the ACLU-MN to continue the work of challenging the root causes of injustice. “I’m excited to be part of systemic change, particularly in policing, criminal legal reform, and inequality across society,” she said.

## **Ben Casper**

Ben came to the ACLU-MN after a decade at the University of Minnesota Law School. Casper worked with law students and colleagues, clients, nonprofit partners (including the ACLU-MN), and more to launch the James H. Binger Center for New Americans at the U of M Law School. “Ten years on, no other law school in the country has an immigration-focused clinical program that compares to the Binger Center in terms of the depth of education, advocacy, and impact,” said Casper.



“Moving to the ACLU-MN was an exciting opportunity and pretty logical transition following my stint at the U of M Law School. The ACLU-MN and ACLU’s National Immigrant Rights Project were among the most important partners advancing the collaborative immigration advocacy of the Binger Center during my decade there. Over several years, the ACLU-MN co-led successful litigation campaigns with the center to block unlawful federal and state detention of noncitizens in Minnesota, and the chance to carry forward that kind of work with friends here at ACLU-MN is a real honor.”



## **Catherine Ahlin-Halverson**

Catherine has more than two decades of experience as an attorney, partner and litigation practice group leader. Most recently, she was the public interest counsel at Maslon LLP. She said a career highlight was helping overturn the death sentence for her client, Tyrone Armstrong, in Texas.

“Every system in which Tyrone had existed since childhood had failed him, including systems in schools, child protection, health care, policing, courts, and prisons,” Ahlin-Halverson said. “Helping him successfully assert his constitutional right to a fair sentencing trial, and knowing that at the very

least, he would not be unjustly executed, was profoundly rewarding. Because that small measure of justice could not undo so many of the injustices that had impacted Tyrone, it was also profoundly unsettling.”

Ahlin-Halverson came to the ACLU-MN to continue the work of defending the civil liberties of the most marginalized and underresourced members of our community. “I believe that our society’s effectiveness in protecting our civil rights is measured in how we protect the rights of those most vulnerable,” she said.



# IN MEMORIAM

## Honoring Chuck Silverman



The ACLU of Minnesota is remembering and mourning former Board Member Charles M. Silverman, who passed away on October 23, 2023.

Silverman had a deep commitment to civil liberties and to the ACLU of Minnesota. He served in offices including Union Board treasurer, secretary and finance chair, and Foundation Board treasurer.

“He was a very honorable, sweet human being,” said former ACLU-MN Executive Director and friend Chuck Samuelson. “He had a delightful sense of humor.”

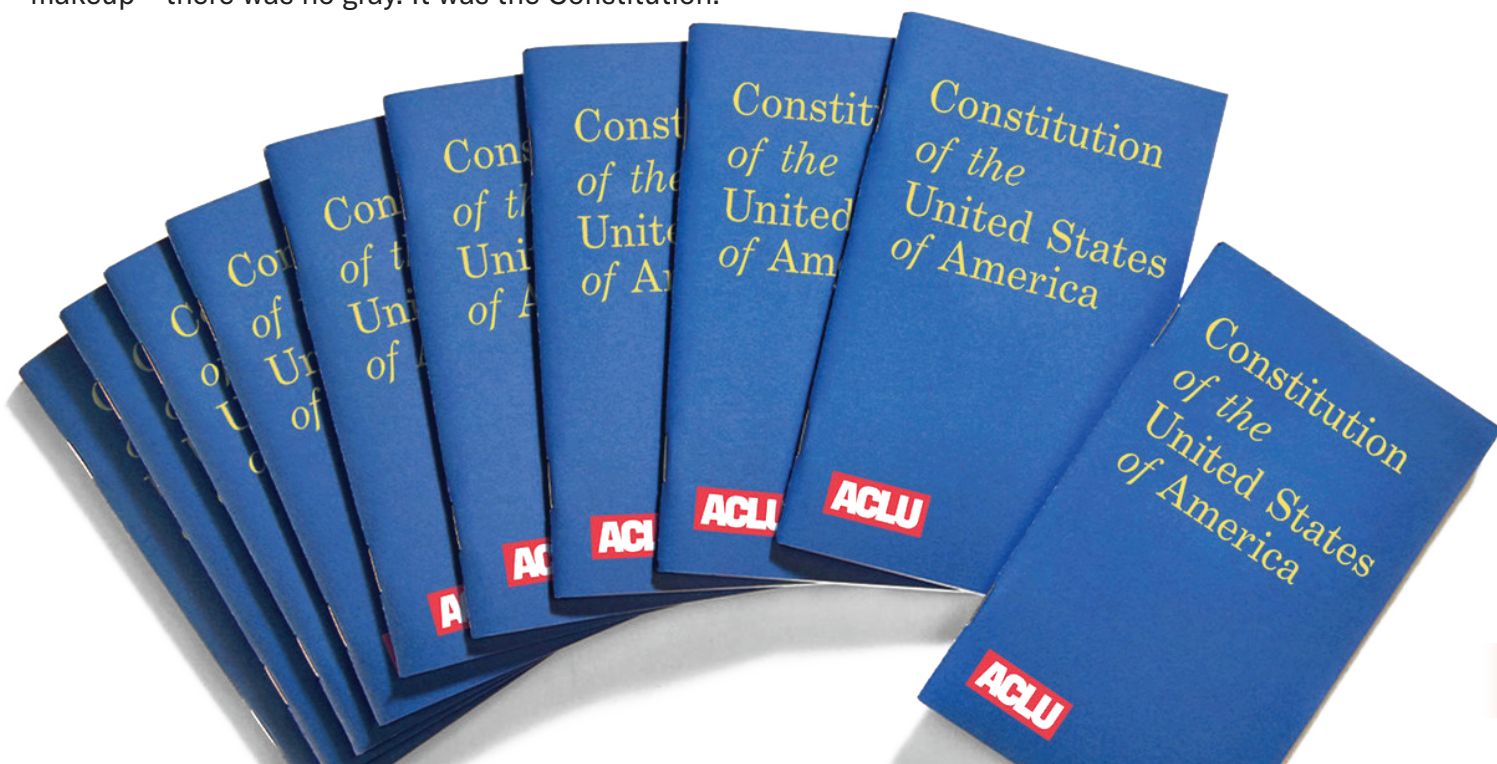
Silverman owned Johnson Printing & Packaging Corp., where he started working 50 years ago. For the past four decades, he printed and donated thousands of pocket Constitutions to the ACLU-MN each year. He also donated countless Know Your Rights cards, which proved especially invaluable at protests and community events following the police murder of George Floyd.

“Chuck had four loves besides his family and his wife: The first was the ACLU, the second was the Boy Scouts, his next great love was the Democratic party, and the last was his synagogue,” Samuelson said. “He was a diehard ACLU guy, the Bill of Rights, the Constitution.”

People who came to sit shiva repeatedly remarked on how kind he was, said Silverman’s wife of 48 years, Anna.

Even after his sons David and Scott aged out of the Boy Scouts, Silverman stayed involved for more than a decade, helping others earn Eagle Scout. He also was a longtime Little League assistant coach. When he stepped down from a DFL leadership position in his senate district, people kept coming to him with constitutional questions.

He saw the Constitution in absolutes, in black and white, Anna Silverman said. “That was literally Chuck’s makeup – there was no gray. It was the Constitution.”



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# WHY I GIVE



If you ask Craig Coleman when he first became a fan of the ACLU of Minnesota, he'll tell you it was during the Dukakis-Bush presidential race, when being a "card-carrying member" of the ACLU was treated as a pejorative.

"Supporting the defense of constitutional rights always sounded more like a badge of honor than an indictment to me," said Coleman (above left). That's why three decades later, Coleman has spent hundreds of hours working as a pro bono attorney for the ACLU-MN.

Coleman did not intend on a career in litigation. Instead, he planned to pursue academia after law school. That changed when Coleman joined Faegre Baker Daniels (now Faegre Drinker) and discovered he not only enjoyed litigation, he was passionate about his cases.

In 2017, Coleman connected with the ACLU-MN to help protect voting rights and defend democracy: "The lack of a common commitment to basic democratic values is deeply distressing," he said. "I want to do what I can to help with that fight."

In 2019, Coleman and other pro bono attorneys at Faegre Drinker worked with the ACLU-MN to file *Schroeder v. Minnesota Secretary of State*, a lawsuit designed to restore the vote to tens of thousands of disenfranchised Minnesotans.

While the Minnesota Supreme Court decided against our case, its ruling ultimately proved a victory: The court found that the Legislature clearly had the power to restore the vote. Mere weeks later, an emboldened Legislature passed the bill and Gov. Walz signed it, restoring the right to vote to over 55,000 Minnesotans.

This work earned Coleman and his colleagues "Attorneys of the Year" awards from Minnesota Lawyer. The winning team included Coleman, Jeffrey P. Justman, and Kirsten L. Elfstrand of Faegre; Tom Prior of Public Health Law Center; and David McKinney and Teresa Nelson of the ACLU-MN.

"Since the law was passed, there have been challenges, and each time Craig's immediate response has been to join us in fighting to uphold the law," said ACLU-MN Staff Attorney David McKinney, who has worked closely with him. "Craig really owns Restore the Vote. It's an absolute pleasure to work with him and learn from such a great pro bono partner."



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