



# ACLU-VT News Brief

SUMMER 2023

## Rebuilding, Together

In the wake of this summer's catastrophic flooding, we are grateful that our staff and volunteers are safe, and our offices in Montpelier relatively unscathed, though the building was significantly damaged and mail service interrupted. We are committed to supporting our community through this challenging time, and inspired by the collective power of so many Vermonters coming together to rebuild.



**Joel Fowler & Cassandra Keating**  
ACLU-VT Clients

## Taking Bennington to Court – Again

No one should face retaliation for simply trying to hold their government accountable. We filed a lawsuit against the Town of Bennington in July for unlawfully retaliating against an interracial couple after they reported facing racially motivated harassment and intimidation by the Bennington Police Department (BPD). Specifically, the town rejected their complaints and then published extensive and detailed personal information about them.

Publicly shamed for speaking out and fearful for their safety, Joel Fowler and Cassandra Keating were forced to flee Bennington, leaving behind their furniture, clothes, and personal effects. The Town's actions weren't just wrong—they were illegal. We're proud to represent our clients as they seek to vindicate their rights.

**Learn more about the case, and a disturbing history of racial bias and abuse by Bennington officials, at [aclvt.org](http://aclvt.org).**

## Coming to a Town Near You



Our team traveled across Vermont this summer, from Bennington to Essex, to engage community members on the key civil liberties issues facing our state and our country. This fall we'll host "Rights and Bites" events around the state—an opportunity to meet staff and other supporters while learning about our work. Stay tuned for dates and times.

## Defending the Rights of Unhoused Vermonters

Governor Scott and legislative leaders created a humanitarian crisis when they allowed Vermont's emergency motel-voucher program to end in June, eliminating housing for hundreds of people without adequate alternatives in place. The ramifications of this decision are reverberating even more harshly in the aftermath of disastrous flooding events.

While Vermont's municipalities cannot be expected to bear the costs of a statewide policy failure, they must still respect the rights and dignity of all residents. We sent an open letter to Vermont's municipal leaders and agencies this summer, reiterating the legal protections afforded to all, including unhoused residents.

**Read the letter and our "Know Your Rights: Unsheltered in Vermont" guide at [aclvt.org](http://aclvt.org).**



## BURLINGTON PRIDE 2023

The ACLU of Vermont is once again a proud sponsor of Burlington's Pride Festival & Parade on Sunday, September 10.

**JOIN US!**

