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LEADING FREEDOM FORWARD

2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Racial Justice

The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated systemic inequities that exist both in Vermont and around the country. When it comes to Vermont's criminal legal system, we know that Black people are more likely to be stopped and searched than white people, and seven times more likely to be incarcerated by the state. These disparities are unacceptable and need to be addressed, and for that to happen we must start with the data.



- Fund data collection and analysis to identify and address racial disparities in the criminal legal system.
- Fund other important racial justice initiatives such as additional staffing for the office of the Executive Director of Racial Equity; addressing equity and reparations in Vermont's retail marijuana law; and promoting land access for people who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

Police Reform

Last year, the legislature passed some of the strongest police reforms in the country, increasing oversight and accountability when officers use force and prohibiting the use of facial recognition technology. As part of a nationwide reckoning over police brutality and demands for greater accountability, the ACLU of Vermont joined with more than a dozen partner organizations to advance a ten-point plan to reimagine policing in our state. In the coming year, we hope the legislature will build on those accomplishments and work to advance the ten-point plan to reimagine policing in Vermont.



- Advance important elements of the ten-point plan to reimagine policing in Vermont including eliminating qualified immunity; removing police from schools; and strengthening community oversight of law enforcement.

Criminal Law Reform

Vermont has made significant progress toward creating a criminal legal system that is more just, equitable, and rooted in community-based solutions. Since 2019, we reduced our prison population by more than 450 people (roughly 25%), passed legislation to overhaul our broken community supervision system, and began the work of addressing persistent racial disparities in our criminal legal system. As we start a new biennium, it is essential that we continue this progress.



- Fund the recommendations of the Justice Reinvestment Working Group including data collection and analysis; adequate housing for people reentering their communities; and better preventive services and supports for people with substance abuse disorder and mental health conditions.
- Advance reforms under consideration by the legislature prior to the pandemic including increasing Vermont's felony threshold; ending the use of cash bail; eliminating life without parole; decriminalizing sex work; and allowing older people to apply for compassionate release.

Voting Rights

One of the few positive changes brought by 2020 and the global pandemic was the implementation of universal vote by mail in Vermont. Our last election saw more Vermonters vote than ever before, all while protecting the health and safety of everyone involved in the process.



- Ensure that universal vote by mail becomes a permanent fixture in all of our elections moving forward.

Reproductive Liberty

In light of new and continuing threats to reproductive healthcare across the country, it is critical that we act now to guarantee reproductive liberty for all Vermonters.



- Pass Proposition 5 as an amendment to the Vermont Constitution that would explicitly protect reproductive freedom and move Vermont closer to becoming the first state in the country to explicitly protect reproductive freedom in its constitution.