



Over the past months, our democracy has been tested in ways it hasn't been for over 150 years. Specifically, we witnessed a sustained effort to overturn the results of a democratic election – one in which record numbers of voters rejected an agenda of bigotry, delusion, and divisiveness – culminating in a violent attack on the seat of our constitutional government.

In the words of Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman, “We’ve seen a force that would shatter our nation / Rather than share it / Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy / And this effort very nearly succeeded.” For now, at least, democracy has prevailed.

As we grapple with the implications of all this for ourselves, our loved ones, and our country, it can seem overwhelming. And there is no question the challenges we face will require new strategies and new solutions. At the same time, however, we do know the way forward, and it remains largely unchanged from generations past.

We know this country will not be whole unless or until we heal the racial and economic inequities and injustices that run to its core. That’s been the work of the ACLU for more than 100 years, and in this historic moment we know we can’t back down – we must double down.

The ACLU is working harder than ever before, in states, cities, and towns across the country, to revitalize our democracy by prioritizing racial and economic justice in our communities. The task ahead for Vermont is no different, and you can count on us to help lead the way: creating a state that invests in the dignity, health, and well-being of all Vermonters through sustained political engagement and advocacy.

Likewise, we know we can count on our incredible network of supporters who make these successes not only possible, but inevitable. “For there is always light, if only we’re brave enough to see it / If only we’re brave enough to be it.” Thank you.

James Duff Lyall
Executive Director

Welcome Our New Board President



Dr. William Boyd

In December, our Board of Directors elected Dr. William Boyd as the ACLU of Vermont’s next president. Bill has had a distinguished career as an educator, including at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, as a founder of the World Institute for Computer

Assisted Teaching, and as a lecturer and research fellow at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government – all part of his “lifelong commitment to improving America’s performance as a haven for those seeking liberty.”

Bill’s prior board service includes his alma mater,

Williams College, the New York Public Library, and a decade at the ACLU of Florida, including two terms as its president. He holds a PhD in political science from UC-Berkeley and is the author of *Desegregating America’s Colleges*.

Legislative Agenda



WE HAVE A BOLD AND AMBITIOUS agenda for the 2021 legislative session to confront the systemic racism and inequities that have brought us to this moment, and to lead freedom forward – for all of us. That includes:

RACIAL JUSTICE

Vermont's criminal legal system has some of the worst racial disparities in the country, with Black adults stopped, searched, ticketed, arrested, and incarcerated at rates that far exceed those of white Vermonters. And yet Vermont does not collect or report adequate data to better identify or address the root causes of these disparities. To create a state that is truly just, equitable, and welcoming to all, we are calling on legislators to **require and fund data collection and reporting statewide**.

POLICE REFORM

We know that the safest communities don't have more police—they have more resources. This session, we are asking the legislature to reimagine and transform policing in Vermont through our **ten-part action plan**, which includes eliminating qualified immunity for police abuse; removing armed cops from schools; and strengthening community oversight of law enforcement.

CRIMINAL LAW REFORM

Vermont has relied on the criminal legal system to respond to substance-use disorder, mental health conditions, and poverty. And, although Black people make

up about 1.4% of the state's population, they accounted for 9.4% of incarcerated Vermonters in 2020. This session, we're building on the momentum of our Smart Justice campaign to create a system that is more just, equitable, and rooted in community-based solutions. That includes bail reform, sentencing reforms, and continued reduction of Vermont's prison population, which now stands at fewer than 1,260 people – **down nearly 30% since the start of our campaign and a twenty-year low**.

VOTING RIGHTS

Our democracy works best when as many people as possible participate. When every active, registered voter receives their ballot automatically by mail, voter turnout increases – and so does the health of our democracy. Together with our coalition partners, we are asking the legislature to make universally mailed ballots a **permanent feature of Vermont elections**.

REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

Reproductive freedom is central to liberty and dignity – every person should have the right to determine their own life course regardless of their race, gender, religion, income, or zip code. This session, we are working to advance Proposition 5 and move Vermont closer to becoming the first state in the country to **safeguard reproductive freedom in its state constitution**.

Read more about our legislative agenda at acluvt.org/legislativesession2021

Your Voice Matters

The ACLU is working to advance an ambitious civil liberties agenda in Vermont. To succeed, we need

our supporters to be more engaged than ever before. Take action now at acluvt.org: **1)** Sign up for email alerts so we can call on you to take action; **2)** Sign our Smart Justice petition to help meet our goal to end Vermont's reliance on mass incarceration; **3)** Use our online form to contact your legislators and demand meaningful police reform today.

TAKE ACTION

Featured Case: Bombard v. Riggen

Retaliatory Arrest Another Example of Overpolicing

VERMONTERS HAVE SEEN countless examples of police abuse in recent years. Excessive force, racial profiling, and hyper-aggressive enforcement – these aren't just problems in “big cities”



and other states. Too often, Vermont police escalate routine encounters, overreaching and abusing their authority in ways that threaten the rights and safety of all of us. Take the case of ACLU client Gregory Bombard, for example.

In 2018, Vermont State Trooper Jay Riggen stopped Gregory Bombard's car – not because of a traffic violation, but because he believed Bombard had given him “the finger” – something that is not, in fact, a crime. Bombard denied making any such gesture but was detained and harassed by Riggen for several minutes. He was finally released, but he was upset at being stopped without reason, and it was at that point Bombard did in fact display his middle finger.

Riggen then stopped Bombard again and arrested him for

disorderly conduct – despite having no valid or lawful basis to do so. Bombard's car was towed, he was briefly jailed, his name and picture were released to the media, and it was almost a year before the charge was finally dismissed.

In February, we filed a lawsuit on behalf of Gregory Bombard for violation of his constitutional rights, including his right to be free from unreasonable seizure and false arrest, as well as his constitutionally protected right to protest the actions of police.

Gregory Bombard's experience is yet another example of the many ways in which Vermonters are overpoliced. A recent study of Vermont traffic stops found that in 2019, police in Vermont stopped residents at a rate nearly four times higher than the national average. Stops by sheriff's deputies have increased by 86% since 2015. The study also showed that Black and Hispanic drivers continue to be stopped, searched, ticketed, and arrested at much higher rates. As part of a nationwide movement for police reform, we are calling on Vermont lawmakers to reimagine policing. That includes preventing unnecessary police interactions, like the one experienced by our client and so many other Vermonters, and limiting the broad powers of police in our communities.

Read more about our litigation docket at www.acluvt.org/cases.

Meet Our Development Director: Tori Jones



“I'm proud to live my values everyday as we fight for the Vermont where everyone can have a safe & just place to call home.”

Tell us a little bit about yourself:

I grew up in Silver Spring, Maryland and graduated from UVM. My first job was working for Congressman Welch in Burlington. I met Vermonters from across the state and advocated for them on federal issues. My interest in higher education and development led me to work at Vermont Law School and Middlebury College. Most recently, I was the Inside Sales Manager at SunCommon in Waterbury.

Why should we support the ACLU of Vermont?

We have an outsized impact nationally and especially here in our brave little state. There is no other organization with the national presence we have, and the breadth of issue areas on which we work. In Vermont, we are leading the way forward to reimagine policing; to invest in people over prisons; to dismantle systemic racism; and to advance the rights and liberties of all of us.

What's one thing people can do right now?

Visit acluvt.org to learn about our work, how you can get involved & consider making a gift in support of this critical work. Thank you!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

ACLU
Vermont



Please consider giving and help ensure the ACLU of Vermont remains a vibrant and vital force for change. There are many ways to give:

- Give online at acluvt.org/donate
- Mail a check to:
ACLU of Vermont Foundation
PO Box 277
Montpelier, VT 05601
- Make a gift of stock, bonds or mutual funds
- And if you're 70 1/2 or older, you can make direct transfers from your IRA without a tax penalty. Call 802-223-6304 or visit acluvt.org/give to learn more.