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Thank you for all you do to support the ACLU!

James Duff Lyall, Executive Director

Photo credit: Glenn Russell

Want to take action and get breaking news?
Join our email action alerts!

✓ Get critical updates on our work inside and outside of the State House.
✓ Learn about opportunities to impact the political process.
✓ Hear the latest on our case docket.

Head to action.aclu.org/vt-takeaction to sign up today.

Save the Date:
Smart Justice Advocacy Day
March 19, 2020
Details at acluvt.org
2020 Legislative Priorities

In January, legislators returned to Montpelier for the 2020 session and got right to work on some of the ACLU of Vermont’s top priorities.

Championing Criminal Justice Reform Vermont’s prison population is increasing. One reason is that our community supervision system — a system designed to facilitate re-entry into the community — returns people to prison at the highest rates in the country. A staggering four out of every five admissions to Vermont’s prisons are for people revoked from community supervision, 70% of those for “technical violations,” like lack of housing or curfew violations.

We are advocating for an overhaul of community supervision, better data collection for more effective oversight, and greater investments in transitional housing and other supports.

Protecting Access to Public Records In September 2019, we scored a major victory in the Vermont Supreme Court when it affirmed that government officials cannot require Vermonters to pay fees to inspect public records. In Doyle v. Burlington Police Department, the Court reinforced the principle that government transparency and accountability are vital to a democratic society. Already, some state officials want to roll back the Doyle decision by restricting the public’s right to know. We and our allies are working to ensure that the Doyle decision stands and access to the public’s records is not put behind a paywall.

Investing in Vermonters The systemic underfunding of core functions of our state government has created a situation where many of the most marginalized Vermonters cannot meet their basic needs. We are urging the Legislature to make increased investments in social services that are essential to Vermonters, including our mental health system, support for young families and children, and programs that prevent and address trauma and substance-use disorder across our state.

Defending Vermonters’ Civil Liberties And, as always, we will be testifying, lobbying, and fighting for a host of other ACLU priorities — advancing racial justice, enacting stronger privacy protections, and bringing greater accountability to police departments, among other initiatives.

You make this work possible Please consider making a gift today.

- Give online at acluvt.org/give
- Mail a check to ACLU Foundation of VT PO Box 277, Montpelier, VT 05601
- Call 802-223-6304

THANK YOU!

Case Docket

Featured Case: Migrant Justice v. McAleenan

In January, we settled our lawsuit against the Vermont DMV for unlawfully targeting Migrant Justice and its leaders in coordination with federal immigration agents. As a result, Vermont immigrant communities will be safer, and Vermont DMV will be more accountable for its actions.

The ACLU and our allies filed this lawsuit in 2018, following years of harassment, surveillance, and arrests of immigrants’ rights leaders in Vermont. This campaign of repression was in direct retaliation for Migrant Justice’s successful activism.

The DMV has a long history of bad acts — including violating state privacy laws and coordinating with federal immigration agents to target our clients. We are hopeful this settlement will bring much needed changes to the DMV, and we will continue monitoring the agency to hold it accountable.

Homeless Rights: Burlington settles with ACLU Over Rights of Homeless Residents

In December, our client Brian Croteau Sr. reached a settlement with Burlington in his lawsuit challenging the City’s policy of confiscating and destroying the property of homeless residents.

This is the third ACLU lawsuit Burlington has settled in just over two years relating to its unlawful treatment of low-income residents. Combined, these cases have resulted in numerous policy reforms to protect the rights and dignity of all community members.

For further details on our current docket, please visit acluvt.org/cases.
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Police Accountability:

Vermont Supreme Court to Hear Case Testing Limits of Border Patrol’s Search Powers

In December, we filed an appeal to the Vermont Supreme Court on behalf of a Vermont couple who were prosecuted following an August 2018 “roving patrol” stop by a U.S. Border Patrol agent in Jay, Vermont.

State v. Lena-Butterfield & Walker-Brazie will set important legal precedent and is part of the ACLU’s ongoing efforts to rein in Border Patrol abuse and overreach.

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