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# ACLU CONNECTION

## OUR 2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

*Here's a preview of the key issues ACLU-DE will be focusing on legislatively in 2025.*

JAVONNE RICH, POLICY & ADVOCACY DIRECTOR



## *We The People*


**A**s we look ahead to 2025, having clear legislative priorities is more important than ever if we are to overcome the challenges ahead. We're excited to share our goals and determined to continue building on the work of years prior to create a fairer, more inclusive society here in Delaware.

We aim to continue the fight to modernize our voting laws with a constitutional amendment that allows no-excuse absentee balloting and same-day voter registration. We're also committed to protecting early in-person voting, ending lifetime felony disenfranchisement, and ensuring that people on probation and parole can vote. These changes will make voting more accessible and inclusive for everyone.

Our justice reform work will forge ahead on probation reform. We want to ensure that people aren't sent back to prison for minor technical violations. People need support to succeed while on probation. Our approach promotes rehabilitation and reduces recidivism, helping individuals rebuild their lives.

In a similar vein, our Clean Slate campaign is designed to give people with records a second chance. We will work to ensure that access to record clearance is not impeded by the inability to pay past fines or fees, allowing people to secure jobs, housing, and education without their criminal record holding them back. This will expand opportunities for everyone to move forward.

We are also dedicated to closing the \$600 million funding gap for public schools in Delaware. By advocating for increased funding for pre-K, and programs that support children with disabilities and English language learners, we aim to ensure that every child can succeed. Investing in education is crucial for our future.

Together, these priorities represent our commitment to positive change and a brighter future for all. Thank you for your continued support as we work towards these important goals. **We'll see you in 2025.** 

OFFICERS & STAFF

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- Rachel Blumenfeld** | Vice President
- Jennifer Ying** | Treasurer
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- Jared Silberglied** | Penn Catalyst Fellow
- Vonda Smack** | Campaign Manager
- Donna White** | Paralegal



Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends —

I have gone through a whole range of emotions the past few weeks: sadness, anger, disbelief, and hopelessness.

But as of the writing of this letter, one emotion has taken hold and will not let go. **I am determined.**

I know this moment may feel bleak, but the ultimate power in our democracy lies with the people, not with any single elected official. We have been through a Donald Trump presidency before, and we know what he will try and do to eviscerate the rights of immigrants, transgender people, Black and brown Americans, those seeking reproductive healthcare, and people who he deems “enemies.”

However, I know one thing is true: **The ACLU was made for this moment.**

With our signature strategy of integrated advocacy, we will be in the courts, legislature, school boards, city councils, the media,

and the streets to ensure that our rights are protected.

For over a year, ACLU-DE and our national network of affiliates have planned for what we will do to protect civil liberties if Donald Trump was elected for a second term, and we are ready to act.

Delaware officials can take concrete steps now to protect our civil liberties from a draconian Trump administration. Here is how Delaware can be a **Firewall for Freedom:**

- **Refuse to cooperate.** The Governor and Attorney General can refuse to cooperate if the Trump administration engages in massive anti-civil liberties actions such as information requests on people accessing reproductive or gender affirming healthcare, crackdowns on public protest, indiscriminate immigration raids, and more.

**WINTER '24 // WHAT'S INSIDE:**

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**and more!**



A Look at Delaware's Growing Voting Rights Movement

MEERA DEVOTTA, CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Last March, we launched the Every Vote Counts (EVC) campaign, a multi-year effort to amend Delaware's constitution and ensure Delaware becomes a beacon of democracy and voter engagement. The campaign aims to restore voting rights after felony incarceration, protect and expand early in-person and vote-by-mail, and implement same-day voter registration.

Since then, the campaign has quickly evolved into a strong grassroots initiative fueled by an ever-growing team of volunteers from across the state.

One of the EVC cornerstones has been comprehensive campaign and communications training sessions for volunteers. These sessions are designed to recruit, train, and empower Delawareans to better understand current voting laws and barriers, advocate for EVC priorities, navigate

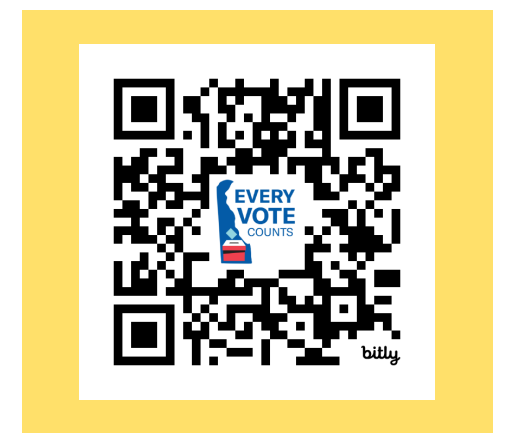
communication challenges, and gain practical skills like drafting op-eds. Since July, our campaign has hosted trainings in Newark, Lewes, Wilmington, and Hockessin for dozens of advocates.

Beyond training, EVC has made its way into the community through an active presence at events like candidate town halls, panel discussions, community festivals, and other local events. These opportunities, led largely by campaign volunteers, aim to raise awareness of campaign efforts, offer educational resources, and encourage Delawareans to share their personal voter experiences to better inform our campaign goals.

It's these face-to-face conversations that are at the heart of our on-the-ground efforts and the motivation being the campaign's statewide canvassing events during the

2024 election season. EVC volunteers knocked on doors from Hockessin to Lewes to ensure that Delawareans were equipped with the information they needed to cast their ballots confidently. "I was inspired to join the Campaign's canvassing effort because it's these small conversations that have the power to bring about larger positive change," said Carolyn Diehl, an EVC volunteer who canvassed in Hockessin.

We're just getting started but as we look ahead to 2025, one thing is certain — **we can't do it without you.**



# NEW STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

*We asked our newest staff members what they're most excited to be working on at the ACLU-DE!*



**DANIELLE LEVREDGE**  
COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

As the ACLU of Delaware's new communications coordinator, I'm most excited about connecting Delawareans with tools to become more informed, active citizens.

Creating clear, accessible content makes civil rights information easier to understand, empowering more people to engage in issues that impact their lives. I believe this approach expands accessibility into our most rural and disenfranchised populations, leading to long-term positive effects on Delaware's voters, policies, and communities.



**JARED SILBERGLIED**  
PENN CATALYST FELLOW

I'm excited to be jumping in to work on civil rights and civil liberties issues for all people.

I'm focusing now on lots of issues related to Delaware's FOIA law, as well as various First Amendment issues. I'm also excited to work on police-related issues and assisting on various issues related to voting rights and prison reform. I'll be focusing primarily on litigation in these areas.

The first few months with ACLU DE have already been great, and I'm looking forward to furthering my work over the next year!

**ACLU** Delaware

## SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IS MORE THAN A PUNISHMENT

*It's torture.*

We need you to send a message to your elected officials, urging them to end solitary confinement and invest in health treatment services.



[bit.ly/end-solitary](https://bit.ly/end-solitary)

HOW DELAWARE CAN BE A

# FIREWALL FOR FREEDOM: PROTECTING CIVIL LIBERTIES IN A SECOND TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

1. REFUSE TO COOPERATE.
2. GUARANTEE EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION.
3. ENSURE ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTHCARE.
4. PROTECT IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES.

LEARN MORE AT: [ACLU-DE.ORG/FIREWALL-FOR-FREEDOM](https://aclu-de.org/firewall-for-freedom)

- **Guarantee equal access to education.** The Attorney General can clarify that Delaware law protects vulnerable students, such as families of immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, pregnant students, and more who all may be targets of the Trump administration.
- **Ensure access to reproductive healthcare.** Delaware can follow the lead of other states that have created a Reproductive Equity Fund to ensure that providers, abortion funds, patients, and others have reliable and stable funding to continue to provide reproductive healthcare.
- **Protect immigrant communities.** Delaware officials can refuse to

cooperate with dragnet immigration raids that the Trump administration may begin. In addition, the Attorney General can release guidance to prosecutors to ensure they are aware of the consequences of minor criminal convictions on a person's immigration status, and coordinate relief to families that may be targeted by mass raids.

The ACLU-DE stands ready to work with any elected official who wishes to help establish our Firewall for Freedom.

You have a role in this work too. We plan to host a series of volunteer training events in January across the state to engage people who will help us advocate for our rights, and

stand against the actions of the Trump administration.

I hope you join us.

**“**  
*The ACLU was made for this moment.*

# ACLU-DE Wins Long-Fought Battle in the War to End Criminalization of Homelessness

## Wilmington Food Not Bombs v. Jennings

JARED SILBERGLIED, PENN CATALYST FELLOW

Homelessness, hunger, and poverty are brutal challenges for many cities across America, and Wilmington is no exception. Low-income individuals and families are struggling to get their basic needs met in an economy that has priced so many out of housing and affordable groceries.

Several local community leaders have attempted to rise to these challenges and support their neighbors in their time of need – only to be met with backlash from the law.

Since 2018, the Wilmington chapter of Food Not Bombs (FNB) has held protests to raise awareness and combat issues of impoverishment. They've done this in part by distributing free food near Wilmington's train station - a common area where people impacted by homelessness congregate. The work of FNB has helped feed many of our community members, in addition to offering resources that are vital for people in dire circumstances. While many commend these efforts, local law enforcement has instead created more barriers for those seeking to offer and receive help.

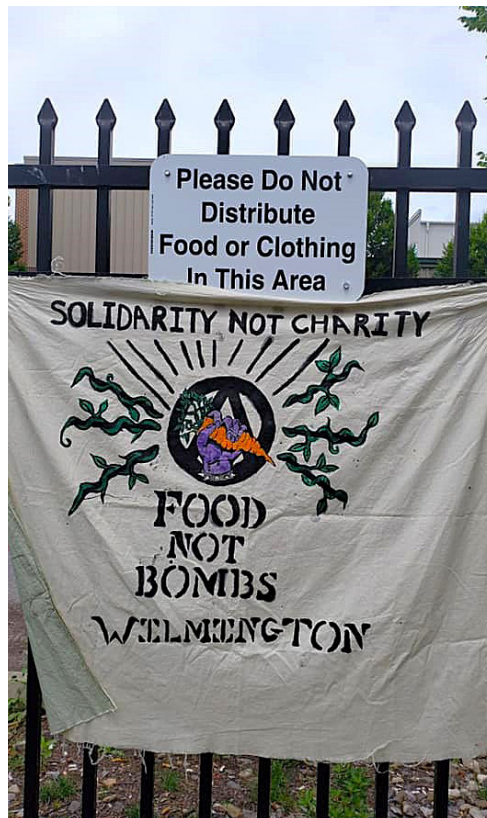
In January of 2023, Wilmington Police Department (WPD)

officers approached members of FNB and told them that they could not conduct their protest or distribute food because they were "loitering." A few weeks later, a "No Parking" sign was placed at the protest area, essentially blocking any ability to gather there. These intimidation tactics caused FNB to cease their protests out of fear that they would be arrested under the loitering law. Organizers also feared that if they continued to distribute food, they would be arrested under Delaware's solicitation law.

As defenders of civil rights in Delaware, we understood immediately that both the loitering and solicitation laws obstructed people's constitutional rights to gather and protest. The loitering law violated the Fourteenth Amendment, which prohibits criminal laws from being too vague and arbitrarily enforced. The solicitation law violated the First Amendment, which prohibits governments from regulating speech based on its content.

After months of negotiations, our legal team reached a settlement agreement with both the Attorney General (AG) of Delaware and the City of Wilmington. The AG agreed that she would 1) not prosecute either law, 2) seek

efforts in the upcoming 153rd General Assembly to reform the laws, 3) conduct trainings with all Delaware state police officers to not arrest people under these laws, and 4) inform all local police departments throughout the State of this decision. Wilmington similarly agreed that it would not enforce its local ordinance against solicitation and that WPD would train all its officers to not arrest people under the state laws.



NEW SIGNS HAVE GONE UP AROUND WILMINGTON IN RECENT YEARS TO DISCOURAGE FNB ACTIVIST GATHERINGS.

CON'T ON NEXT PAGE...

This was a huge win for FNB, which can now continue to organize locally without fearing arrest. Here at the ACLU-DE, we are planning to contact all police departments across the State to ensure that they have received the AG's notice and will not enforce these unconstitutional laws against any resident of Delaware.

While the work is never truly complete, we're incredibly proud to have succeeded on behalf of all those in Wilmington looking to speak up for their community and

lend a helping hand to their neighbors. We will continue to combat the criminalization of homelessness and poverty in our state. Delaware and all its residents deserve better, and we'll keep fighting for a future where equity and compassion can flourish.

*We hope you'll fight with us.*



**THANK YOU!**  
2024 marks yet another excellent Kandler Awards Ceremony.

Use the code or link here to see a special message to all our attendees and supporters!

[bit.ly/m/acludelaware](https://bit.ly/m/acludelaware)

## Supercharge Your Support With a Donor Advised Fund

Did you know there is a simple way to support the ACLU of Delaware that also gives you an immediate tax benefit? If you've never heard of a Donor Advised Fund (DAF), now is the time to learn if it's for you!

**A DAF is a powerful giving tool that often requires little to no minimum amount to get started.**

Using a DAF to manage your giving allows you to make a tax-deductible contribution of your choice, which can then be distributed to your chosen non-profits over time. This flexibility enables you to be strategic in your giving, manage multi-year gifts with ease, and align your donations with your values

and the timely needs of your community. All that while your fund continues to grow for maximum impact!

We encourage you to consider utilizing a Donor Advised Fund as a way to manage your giving to ACLU-DE and to plan your support for our Every Vote Counts (EVC) campaign.

The EVC, our multi-year campaign to pass voting rights amendments in our state's constitution, requires great community support spanning multiple years. A DAF is the perfect tool to plan your giving and enable us to better plan long-term strategy for a successful campaign.

Together, we can create lasting change in support of civil liberties for years to come.

**Contact Melissa Bryson to learn more and open your DAF this giving season:**  
[mbryson@aclu-de.org](mailto:mbryson@aclu-de.org)



**MELISSA BRYSON**  
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR