





# 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW



## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TAMYA COX-TOURE



As Oklahoma navigates shifting socio-political currents, the ACLU of Oklahoma stands as a steadfast guardian of liberty, confronting evolving challenges with unwavering dedication.

Our annual impact report chronicles a year defined by significant legal and advocacy efforts, reflecting our commitment to defending the fundamental rights of all Oklahomans amidst a period of profound change. This past year has underscored the critical importance of vigilance and proactive engagement in protecting civil liberties against new and persistent threats.

As I begin another year in my role with the ACLU of Oklahoma, I am inspired to reflect not only on the past several months but also on the remarkable legacy of over 60 years that our affiliate has woven into the daily lives of generations of Oklahomans.

Our affiliate is guided by principles of courage, integrity, justice, and a deep dedication to people-centered impact, all of which are boldly articulated in our strategic plan. As we move further into the implementation of this plan, our commitment to our core priorities—restoring abortion access, ending the death penalty, and advancing criminal legal reform—grows even stronger. We recognize the ambitious nature of our plan, yet we are fully prepared to meet

these challenges head-on.

I am profoundly grateful for all we have achieved and eagerly anticipate the successes we will forge in the coming years. Our progress is a testament to the invaluable support of our allies, the unwavering resilience of those for whom we advocate, and the collective strength of our communities. We understand that many challenges lie ahead, and we sincerely hope you will join us in the ongoing fight for civil liberties in Oklahoma. Our dedicated supporters and ACLU members are indispensable to our triumphs, generously contributing their time and energy alongside us.

Our capacity to persevere in these struggles is deeply rooted in the commitment, professionalism, and unwavering determination of our staff, Board of Directors, and interns. Together, we have made significant advancements. With your continued support, we will relentlessly push forward, striving to create lasting and meaningful change for every person in Oklahoma.

Thank you for being an essential part of this work.



### The New Colossus by Carlos Barboza

This piece is about resistance and hope. Though inspired by familiar iconography and the poem The New Colossus, it rejects the notion that American values are inherent or guaranteed. They are not just words etched into monuments, but ideas that must be actively carried, protected, and defended.

In this work, I wanted to pull the torch out of the abstract and return it to its purpose... a real source of heat and light. A beacon of hope held high by a future generation of American hands that believe in the power of knowledge, compassion, and moral courage. These forces are capable of loosening systems built on fear and insecurity, symbolized by the ice beneath her feet. The flame confronts that ice. It refuses stagnation and creates the conditions necessary for progress and dissent.

As an immigrant, the core of this piece lies in the optimism I still hold for the American Dream. It is not always easy to believe in, but I remain committed to the promise of freedom and opportunity. I believe in its people, and in our ability to overcome. I hold hope that the next generation will protect the values that make this country worth believing in. Not by preserving them in stone, but by keeping them alive.

## STEPS FORWARD

### LEGAL DEPARTMENT

This year, the ACLU of Oklahoma has protected the rights and safety of Oklahoma's immigrant communities, fought back against religious extremism in public schools, defended the rights of transgender students to access school restrooms that align with their gender identity, protected the right of the public to advocate for policy change in Oklahoma schools, vindicated the academic freedom of university professors facing classroom censorship, and advocated to end the unconstitutional practice of jailing people simply because they cannot affirm bail. Thanks to the partnership of local advocacy organizations and the leadership of communities directly impacted by government overreach and discrimination, the ACLU of Oklahoma Legal Department has continued to build a more just, inclusive, and compassionate community. We stopped the enforcement of an unconstitutional law attacking Oklahoma immigrants, successfully argued for the dismissal of a frivolous lawsuit by the Oklahoma State Department of Education seeking to silence dissent, limited the enforcement of a law prohibiting robust discussions of race and gender in Oklahoma classrooms, and reached a landmark settlement agreement to end wealth-based detention. Even as non-profit and legal organizations across the country have come under attack for standing up against the Trump Administration and its discriminatory policy goals, our commitment to justice and equity for the people of Oklahoma has never been stronger. We will continue to stand alongside our communities to fight for the future we deserve.

#### *Padres Unidos, et al. v. Drummond, et al.*

When the change in presidential administrations meant that the Department of Justice dismissed their challenge to HB 4156, we stepped up to ensure the law remained unenforceable. HB 4156 is Oklahoma's attempt to empower state law enforcement officials to arrest, detain, and expel noncitizens from the state. It is a blatant attack on the safety of Oklahoma's immigrant communities, is preempted by federal immigration law, and therefore violates the Supremacy Clause of the United States Constitution. The United States Congress has enacted a comprehensive federal immigration scheme, and the State of Oklahoma is without the authority to implement their own by criminalizing undocumented people in our state. In June of this year, the district court preliminarily enjoined the law once more, finding that we demonstrated that HB 4156 is likely preempted and therefore unconstitutional. The injunction is statewide and prevents the state from enforcing the law against anyone while we fully litigate the case. Oklahoma appealed the injunction to the Tenth Circuit, and we are currently defending our injunction before the appeals court. The injunction remains in place during the appeal.

#### *Walke, et al. v. Walters, et al.*

When former Superintendent Walters mandated that all Oklahoma public schools incorporate the Bible into classroom instruction, we sued to ensure students have access to education free from religious indoctrination. When Superintendent Fields took office, he indicated that he does not intend to pursue Walters' Bible Mandate and confirmed for the court that he has rescinded and nullified Walters' policies. As a result, the Oklahoma Supreme Court dismissed the case, as Fields' actions mean that now Oklahoma teachers, families, and students – not politicians – decide if and how they engage with the Bible.

#### *Bridge, et al. v. Oklahoma State Department of Education, et al.*

We sued the state for segregating school restrooms based on sex assigned at birth because the law discriminates against people who are transgender by denying them access to restrooms consistent with their gender identity. While the district court dismissed our challenge to SB 615, we appealed to the Tenth Circuit. This year, we concluded our appeal and are now awaiting an order from the appeals court. This case is a crucial step in recognizing constitutional and federal protections against discrimination on the basis of gender identity.

#### *Oklahoma State Department of Education, et al. v. Freedom From Religion Foundation*

In March of this year, the State Department of Education (OSDE) sued the Freedom From Religion Foundation for sending advocacy letters to Oklahoma school districts. We defended the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) from OSDE's frivolous attempt to silence the non-profit's protected speech. The district court granted our motion to dismiss, agreeing that FFRF's advocacy letters did not harm the Department. In a win for free speech, the court upheld the principles that government actors responding to the public does not qualify as an injury and that the public enjoys the right to speak out against school policies and advocate for change.

#### *Black Emergency Response Team, et al. v. Drummond, et al.*

We continue to litigate the constitutionality of HB 1775, a classroom censorship law that severely restricts teaching about race and gender in Oklahoma public schools from K-12 through the university level. Last year, the district court partially granted our motion for preliminary injunction, stopping enforcement of parts of the law while we litigate the case, and certified questions to the Oklahoma Supreme Court about the meaning of the law. This year, the Oklahoma Supreme Court responded by declining to answer the district court's questions about the meaning of the K12 prohibited concepts because the statute provided insufficient context to determine the meaning of those provisions without functionally deciding the federal question of whether the provisions were unconstitutionally vague. The Oklahoma Supreme Court did answer the district court's question about the meaning of the university provision, finding that HB 1775 does not reach university classrooms. This decision is a win for free speech and academic freedom in Oklahoma, as university curricula can no longer be restricted by HB 1775. With Oklahoma Supreme Court's response to the certified questions, we were able to proceed with our appeal of the partial denial of our motion for preliminary injunction. We ask that the Tenth Circuit enjoin the law in its entirety to ensure that Oklahoma students and educators are free from politically motivated censorship in public education.

#### *White, et al. v. Hesse, et al.*

Back in 2019, we filed a class action challenge to Canadian County' bail practices, arguing that the county's lack of individualized consideration when setting conditions of pretrial release results in a wealth-based pretrial system where the people who can afford their bail are released and the people who cannot are detained solely because of their poverty. This year, we reached a landmark settlement agreement that, if approved by the court, would put an end to the unconstitutional practice of jailing people simply because they cannot afford bail. Under the agreement, judges in Canadian County must determine a person's ability to pay before imposing cash bail. The agreement also prohibits conditioning release on paying cash bail unless the court finds that doing so is necessary because nonfinancial conditions will not adequately ensure future court appearance or protect the public. This marks a major step toward ending wealth-based detention in Oklahoma.

### POLICY DEPARTMENT

In 2026, the Policy and Advocacy Department achieved major victories. The Policy Department introduced a groundbreaking bill, SB 601, to pause executions statewide, which passed the first committee. This is a significant step toward addressing wrongful convictions and systemic flaws in the death penalty.

We fought back against attempts to roll back State Question 780, helping preserve historic criminal legal reforms, and defeated numerous anti-immigrant legislation. We also successfully helped pass HB 2235, which increases the settlement cap in cases of wrongful convictions. Moreover, no anti-reproductive freedom and anti-religious

### VISION AND MISSION

*We envision a fair and equitable Oklahoma that recognizes all Oklahomans.*

*The ACLU of Oklahoma works to secure liberty, justice, and equity for all Oklahomans through advocacy, litigation, and legislation, leading by example and fueled by people power.*

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### JOIN THE FIGHT

Every day across the nation, the ACLU is called on to defend all freedoms guaranteed in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. There's never been a more important time for freedom-loving people to support the ACLU and our successful work to protect civil liberties. Take your stand and help us defend people's rights. For more information on ways to give, contact our Development Director, Sara Jane DelMonte, at 405-659-0581 or [sdelmonte@acluok.org](mailto:sdelmonte@acluok.org).

freedom bills passed the state legislature, further reflecting the strength of our advocacy and coalition efforts.

Across the state, our Advocacy Team helped host and participated in more than 150 community events with the goal of building people power and defending civil liberties for all.

Our Advocacy Department worked alongside Tremane Wood's family, legal team, faith leaders, and community organizers to stop his execution through social media outreach, phone calls, and thousands of letters sent to the Pardon and Parole Board and the Governor. We proudly marched for the first time in the Fiestas de las Americas Parade and Tulsa Pride, further expanding our presence in diverse communities. This year also marked our first ever youth engagement nights, empowering high school and college aged students with tools to fight for their rights.

2026 was a year of historic victories for our Policy and Advocacy Department.

### ACLU OF OKLAHOMA & FOUNDATION COMBINED OPERATING BUDGET

The ACLU of Oklahoma is comprised of two organizational entities: the ACLU of Oklahoma and the ACLU of Oklahoma Foundation. Together, these two entities allow the ACLU to advance civil rights through a three-pronged approach, using litigation, public education, and advocacy.

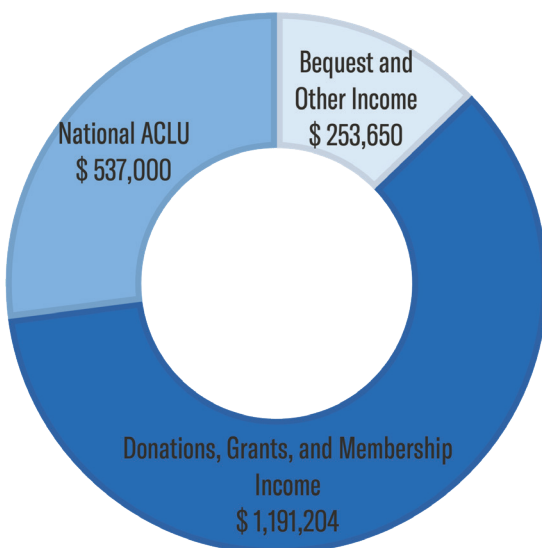
#### American Civil Liberties Union

ACLU membership dues fall under Union funding, so when you receive your trusty ACLU membership card, those dues have supported legislative advocacy and lobbying. The Union is registered as a 501(c)4, and as such donations to the Union are not tax deductible.

#### American Civil Liberties Union Foundation

All of the ACLU's litigation work and public education falls under the Foundation. The Foundation is registered as a 501(c)3, therefore all gifts to the Foundation are tax deductible.

#### COMBINED SUPPORT AND REVENUE



#### COMBINED EXPENSES

