



JOIN US

Help the ACLU-DC
protect and advance civil
liberties in the District

WHO WE ARE

The ACLU of the District of Columbia (ACLU-DC), with more than 13,000 local members, fights to protect and expand civil liberties and civil rights for people who live in, work in, and visit D.C. We are a local affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), a nationwide non-profit, non-partisan, membership organization devoted to ensuring free speech, equal rights, and other civil liberties. The ACLU-DC pursues its mission through legal action, legislative advocacy, organizing, and public education.

ABOUT OUR WORK

The ACLU-DC strives to achieve long-term, systemic changes for the communities of D.C., alongside and in coalition with many grassroots and nonprofit partners in the District. Our issue areas include (but are not limited to) criminal justice reform, disability rights, equal protection/discrimination, freedom of speech, immigrants' rights, LGBTQIA rights, police practices and police misconduct, privacy, racial justice, religious liberty, reproductive freedom, voting rights, women's rights, gender equity, and youth/childrens' rights. Some examples of our work include:

- **Student Fair Access:** The ACLU-DC advocated for and supported the passage of the Student Fair Access to School Act of 2017 as a critical step in addressing inconsistencies and biases in D.C. public schools' disciplinary practices. Those practices have resulted in the disproportionate discipline and exclusion of students of color and students with disabilities, perpetuate the school-to-prison pipeline, and have resulted in poorer outcomes for all students.
- **Pierce v. the District of Columbia:** The ACLU-DC represented William Pierce, who is deaf but received virtually no accommodation for his disability while he was an inmate at the D.C. Jail. The lawsuit asked the court to require D.C. to provide proper accommodation for deaf inmates, such as qualified ASL interpreters for meetings with attorneys, classes, and medical visits; video interpretation services when live interpreters are not available; adequate access to videophones; and visible alarms for emergencies. This case was a victory—Pierce was awarded substantial damages and D.C. changed its practices to provide better accommodations for deaf inmates.
- **The Right to Demonstrate:** The Trump administration proposed to dramatically limit the right to demonstrate near the White House and on the National Mall (which included closing most of the White House sidewalk, limiting spontaneous demonstrations, and charging higher fees). With the national ACLU, we led a public campaign to oppose this plan. NPS dropped the plan after receiving more than 140,000 public comments.



- **Stop & Frisk Data Collection:** The ACLU-DC, together with Black Lives Matter DC and Stop Police Terror Project DC, filed a lawsuit against the MPD to



force them to comply with the stop-and-frisk data collection provision of the Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results (NEAR) Act. The D.C. Superior Court granted the ACLU-DC's motion for a preliminary injunction and ordered the District to comply with the three-year-old law, marking a huge win and step forward in achieving transparency and accountability from MPD.

- **Fare Evasion Decriminalization:** The ACLU-DC organized and advocated for the passage of the Fare Evasion Decriminalization Act of 2017, which reduced punishment for fare evasion in D.C. on WMATA Metrorail and Metrobuses to a civil offense with a fine of no more than \$50. The law recognizes that no one should have to face arrest or jail time for not affording a fare. The punishment does not fit the offense, and enforcement of such laws disproportionately impacts poor communities and communities of color.

- **Statehood for DC:** The ACLU and the ACLU-DC have officially endorsed the D.C. Statehood bills, which would grant full voting representation, self-government, and equal civic participation for D.C.



- **Inauguration Day 2017 protests and arrests:** The ACLU-DC is pursuing a lawsuit against the District of Columbia, MPD officers, and D.C. Police Chief Peter Newsham for making unconstitutional arrests of protestors exercising their First Amendment rights on Inauguration Day, using excessive force, and denying those in custody access to food, water, and access to toilets.

HOW WE DO OUR WORK

Litigation

Lawsuits are one of the key tools available to protect individual rights. We litigate cases, both directly and as amicus curiae (friend of the court), that will broaden and strengthen civil liberties and civil rights.

Legislative Advocacy

Alongside local grassroots, nonprofit, and community partners, we testify and lobby the D.C. Council regarding legislation that impacts the civil rights and civil liberties of everyone who lives in, works in, or visits the District.

Organizing & Public Education

Educating, engaging, and mobilizing the public throughout the District is key to the mission of the ACLU-DC. This involves speaking in public on civil liberties and civil rights, providing Know Your Rights trainings (such as, for police encounters and current marijuana laws) and mobilizing community members to advocate on issues impacting their rights.

For legal intake, please email intake@acludc.org or leave a message at (202) 601-4269

