

FLORIDA FRONTLINE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY '26 EDITION



We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common Defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Article I.

Section 1. All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

DISSENT

Section 2. The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature. No Representative shall hold any other Office under the United States, or any State, at the Time he shall be so chosen. When vacancies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies. The House of Representatives shall choose their Speaker and other Officers; and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.

Section 3. The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof for six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote. Immediately after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three Classes. The Senators of the first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Class at the Expiration of the fourth Year, and of the third Class at the Expiration of the sixth Year, so that one-third may be chosen every second Year; but if Vacancies happen, they shall be filled in such Manner as the Legislature of each State shall direct.

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Section 4. The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of choosing Senators. The Senate shall have the sole and exclusive Power of Impeachment. The Senate shall try all Impeachments, and when sitting for that Purpose, shall be on Oath or Affirmation. No Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two thirds of the Members present. In Cases of Impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from Office, and Disqualification to hold and enjoy any Office of Profit under the United States; but the Party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to Indictment, Trial, Judgment and Execution according to Law.

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for deportation

Section 6. The Senators and Representatives shall receive Compensation for their Services, which shall be ascertained from Time to Time by the Law. They shall in all Cases, except Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors, be privileged in their Speeches and Debates in either House, and in going to and returning from their respective Houses, and in going to and returning from their respective Places. No Senator or Representative shall, during the Time for which he was elected, be appointed to any civil Office under the Authority of the United States, which shall have been created, or the Emoluments whereof shall have been increased during such Time; and no Person holding any Office under the United States, shall be a Representative. No Person shall be a Representative who shall not, when elected, have seven Years Residence in the United States, and who shall not, when elected, have been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, have been born in the United States.

MESSAGE FROM THE FRONTLINE

February Edition

More than simply celebrating the resilience, evolution and achievements of our past, Black History Month stands as a warning about what happens when power goes unchecked – and a reminder of the extraordinary sacrifice and courage it takes to push a country towards the realization of its own ideals.

In this moment, we are watching officials weaponize fear and exaggerate divisions in order to concentrate government power in the hands of a few. We are watching protests being treated as a threat instead of a constitutional right. We are watching immigrant communities targeted with cruelty while abuse and dehumanization are normalized. And we are watching violence being waged against Americans and rights infringed in a way that should disturb every person who believes the Constitution and democracy are supposed to mean something.

We have been here before. My commitment to justice is not theoretical. It is my inheritance.

My father worked alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He fought for voting rights at a time when it could cost you your job, your home, your freedom – and your life. After the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing that killed four little girls in Birmingham, he moved to Alabama not to retreat from danger, but to confront injustice directly. After the state-sponsored murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson, he initiated the Selma to Montgomery marches that ushered in the Voting Rights Act of 1965. That history is not distant to me. It is instruction.

And this February, I want to share some lessons from Black history that are directly relevant to the moment we are living through right now:

Progress Requires Disruption.

Disruption is not the threat. The injustice is. And when people are punished for protesting, it is not because protest is the problem – it is because protest reveals what those in power want hidden.

Local Struggles Shape National Change.

This is the part of the movement people romanticize, but rarely sit with honestly. Freedom has always been built by ordinary people showing up anyway. Not because it was easy. Not because it was safe. But because the alternative was unacceptable.

Democracy Must Be Defended Constantly.

Democracy does not survive on its own. It survives because people refuse to surrender it. Or said another way, democracy is not taken; it is given away silently, incrementally.

That is what my father understood. It is what the ordinary people who became the extraordinary foot soldiers of the movement understood. And it is what we must understand now – especially in Florida, where we have seen a relentless barrage of laws designed to silence, punish, and exclude.

Justice Is Indivisible.

Justice cannot be defended in pieces. If we only speak when we are directly harmed, we will always be responding too late – because the systems that target one community do not stop there. They grow. They expand. They test the limits of what people will tolerate.

Black history teaches us that the fight for freedom has always been connected – and it has always been costly. But it also teaches us this: progress is possible. Not because cruelty disappears, but because people decide it will not win.

That is what Black History Month demands of us: not admiration, but action. Not comfort, but courage.

And that is exactly what the ACLU of Florida will continue to practice – in courtrooms, in communities, and alongside the people most impacted by the abuses of power we are seeing right now.

Because this moment does not call for quiet concern. It calls for courage and defense – of dignity, democracy, and the Constitution itself.

Bacardi L. Jackson
Executive Director, ACLU of Florida





We are the frontline of
RESISTANCE



LEGAL UPDATE: WHERE JUSTICE MEETS RESISTANCE

THE COURTS ARE A FRONTLINE AND WE'RE MEETING THE MOMENT WITH TRUTH AND COURAGE

Free Speech Under Fire

Since September, the ACLU of Florida and cooperating counsel have been representing Brittney Brown, a biologist who worked for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) for more than seven years before she was summarily terminated for reposting, on her own time and on her personal social media page, a temporary meme concerning Charlie Kirk from a parody account. On February 23, we filed a motion for summary judgment in the case, asking for the court to decide the case and rule in our client's favor before the trial that is scheduled to begin in June. We did so because the record makes crystal clear that Brittney was unconstitutionally terminated for protected speech.

Notably, what the record also makes clear is that the state made material misrepresentations to the federal court during this litigation. For example, as part of this litigation, state officials claimed Brown's speech disrupted agency operations and asserted under oath that FWC received "hundreds" of complaints requiring urgent action. The discovery process revealed that those claims were false. A fraction of that number of complaints was received; agency leadership did not review them before ordering termination; and operations continued without material disruption. So, there was no chaos – only retaliation against protected speech. Yet the First Amendment does not allow the government to manufacture disruption in order to justify punishing speech it dislikes.

FWC's actions make one thing clear: some state officials are willing to protect speech only when they agree with the message. Political pressure from Tallahassee has reached so deeply into state government that agency leaders feel compelled to enforce a preferred ideology. That kind of state-sanctioned suppression creates a culture of fear, corrodes public trust, and has no place in a free society. The First Amendment doesn't exist to protect comfortable or popular speech; it exists to protect dissent and speech that those in power would rather not hear. We honor Brittney Brown's courage, and will continue fighting to ensure that public employment is never used as a tool to silence constitutionally protected expression.



Litigation team from *C.M. v. Noem* (ACLU, ACLU-FL, AID)
Courtroom sketches are courtesy of Jerry Jerome

More Legal Highlights:

- ***C.M. v. Noem*** - In our challenge to barriers to legal counsel at the Everglades immigration detention facility known as "Alligator Alcatraz," we recently filed a motion to supplement the record after troubling testimony emerged at a January 28 evidentiary hearing. For the first time, a government witness testified that detainees can place confidential legal calls by asking staff to use a cell phone and that attorneys may visit the facility without pre-scheduling. These representations had never previously been disclosed and are not reflected in written policy. We submitted sworn declarations from attorneys explaining that these purported policies do not reflect the practical reality at the facility. The evidence raises serious concerns about the accuracy of the government's statements to the court and about whether detainees are in fact able to access counsel.
 - **Why It Matters:** When the government makes representations in court about constitutional access to lawyers, those statements must be truthful and consistent with reality. The right to counsel cannot depend on unwritten policies that exist only in testimony.
- ***Cubanos Pa'lante v. Florida House of Representatives*** - In our ongoing racial gerrymandering challenge to certain South Florida congressional and state House districts, we filed our final post-trial brief on February 27. The case centers on whether lawmakers unlawfully dismantled and redrew districts in ways that dilute the voting power of Black and Latino communities. Our filing asks the court to restore districts that comply with constitutional protections and ensure that voters are not disadvantaged based on race.
 - **Why It Matters:** Fair district lines determine whose voices are heard in Tallahassee and in Congress. This case will shape representation for communities in South Florida for years to come.
- ***Keohane v. Dixon*** - In our case challenging Florida's denial of medically necessary gender-affirming care in state prisons, the state has filed a motion for summary judgment in an effort to have the case dismissed before trial. We will file our response in March. Trial is currently scheduled to begin July 6 in Tallahassee. This case asks whether the state can categorically deny care that medical professionals deem necessary simply because it involves gender-affirming treatment.
 - **Why It Matters:** People in state custody retain constitutional protections, including the right to adequate medical care. The outcome of this case will determine whether Florida can withhold necessary treatment based on policy rather than medical judgment.

WHERE THE PEOPLE MOVE

GRASSROOTS POWER IN ACTION

This February, our Field Team was on the move across Florida. We brought real-time updates from the legislative session directly to our supporters, mobilized communities statewide to push back against harmful bills, and stood alongside volunteers in Tallahassee as they delivered powerful public testimony. We convened in-depth conversations on immigration, government accountability, and reproductive justice, creating space for people to ask hard questions and take meaningful action. We hosted town halls with members of our policy team to break down what's moving in the Legislature and how Floridians can make their voices heard. And we joined Planned Parenthood in Tallahassee to rally in defense of reproductive freedom. Now, as we head into March, the momentum continues.

On March 28, communities across the country will take part in No Kings Day, a national day of action. If you are ready to stand alongside others who believe in democracy and accountability, find a rally or march near you at nokings.org.

We are also actively recruiting and training legal observers to support protests and rallies throughout the state. Legal observers play a critical role in protecting the right to protest, and we invite you to step into this work with us. We truly need your help.

In the coming weeks, we will host a Know Your Rights While Protesting training to ensure our communities are informed and prepared. More details will be shared soon. Be sure to check our Mobilize page at mobilize.us/aclufl for updates and opportunities to get involved.

The moment calls for action. Join us.



VOLUNTEER WITH US

Stand up for immigrant rights, reproductive freedom, voting access, and free speech.

- Sign up to [volunteer](#) and become part of the movement to defend civil liberties across Florida.
- If you are a registered voter in the City of Miami, print and [sign our petition today](#) and mail it back to us ASAP!

We need to collect over 20,000 signed petitions from registered Miami voters to get on the ballot.



JOIN AN UPCOMING TRAINING OR EVENT

Take part in our powerful in-person and virtual actions this month

Legislative Session

- Legislative Session Town Hall Series [March 5](#), [March 15](#)

Campaign Team Meetings

Learn more and get involved in one of our core campaigns:

- ACLU of FL Banned Book Club [March 3](#)
- Storytelling Planning Team Meeting [March 4](#)
- Floridians for Immigrant Justice Campaign Meeting [March 9](#)
- Free Speech Team Meeting [March 10](#)
- Reproductive Justice Team Meeting [March 25](#)
- Spanish Translators Team [March 25](#)

Community Meet-Ups and Local Activism

Join our teams on the ground across Florida:

- Paint Your Story Tampa Bay [March 4](#)
- Broward Action Team Meeting [March 19](#)
- Orlando Team Meet Up [March 19](#)
- Tallahassee Team Meet Up [March 24](#)

Trainings

Empower yourself and your community:

- Legal Observer Training [March 6](#), [March 20](#)



WHERE POLICY MEETS THE PEOPLE

TURNING OUTRAGE INTO IMPACT

The 2026 Legislative Session is moving fast – and we’ve been [tracking the bills](#) and committee agendas that would reshape life for everyday Floridians, meeting with legislators, testifying in committees, advocating against harmful legislation, and working with allied partners in support of positive reforms.

Many of the dangerous bills are being deceptively framed by bill sponsors as advancing “public safety” or “parental rights.” But what we’re seeing is something entirely different: a coordinated and intentional push to restrict freedom, punish dissent, consolidate power in the Executive at the expense of the people, infringe upon Floridians’ rights, and strip away protections from communities already carrying the heaviest burdens.

Here’s what we’ve been watching this month:

[Voting Rights and Democracy](#)

We’re opposing several voter suppression bills that could make it harder for eligible Floridians to register and vote, purge eligible voters from the voting rolls and manipulate the rules to entrench political power.

[Free Speech, Censorship, and the Right to Learn](#)

We’ve been opposing several government censorship bills that chill speech in K-12 public schools, institutions of higher education, and public and private workplaces. These include efforts to further expand book bans, censor discussions of race and gender, and penalizing local elected officials, educators, students, employers and employees who dare to exercise their First Amendment rights.

[Immigrants’ Rights and Due Process](#)

We’re opposing bills that escalate anti-immigrant discrimination, harassment, and enforcement in Florida and normalize fear, profiling, and dehumanization – threatening the constitutional rights that belong to every person, regardless of immigration status.

[Reproductive Freedom](#)

We’ve been opposing legislation that harms pregnant patients and their loved ones and that deepens Florida’s reproductive healthcare crisis by adding new barriers, increasing legal threats, and empowering surveillance and punishment – instead of protecting Floridians’ freedom to make personal healthcare decisions without government interference.

[LGBTQ+ Equality and Dignity](#)

We’re opposing bills that target LGBTQ+ Floridians and attempt to erase the very existence of LGBTQ’ individuals in schools, workplaces, healthcare settings, and public life – pushing policies that isolate people and erase visibility instead of ensuring safety and freedom.

[Racial Justice and Criminal Legal Reform](#)

We’ve been opposing bills that increase criminal penalties and reinforce a criminal legal system that already disproportionately harms Black and Brown communities and people with fewer resources – while doing little to actually address the root causes of harm or holds powerful elites accountable for their wrongdoing.

What’s clear is this: what happens in Tallahassee doesn’t stay in Tallahassee. These bills will shape how our communities live, what freedoms we have, who is forced to suffer harms, and which special interests are immune from liability for their actions.

That’s why every day we fight to do more than simply hold the line – we show up, speak out, and push Florida’s legislative leaders to recognize the dignity, safety, and constitutional freedom every person deserves. We could not do this without you. Thank you for rising together with us on the Freedom Frontline. Want to plug in this session?

[Track the bills](#) we’re watching, use our [legislative toolkit](#) to contact lawmakers, and [sign up](#) for action alerts so you can show up with us – all session long.



WHERE POLICY MEETS THE PEOPLE

TURNING OUTRAGE INTO IMPACT

✗ OPPOSE

ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY AND VOTING RIGHTS

HB 991/SB 1334 — Voter Suppression Legislation

Lawmakers are advancing legislation that would impose in-person “show-your-papers” requirements for voter registration — effectively disenfranchising eligible voters who do not have easy access to a valid passport or certified copy of their birth certificate. This would most impact elderly Floridians, students, voters with disabilities, rural and low-income communities, and women whose married name does not match the name on their birth certificate. Similar laws in other states have blocked tens of thousands of eligible citizens from registering before being struck down in court.

The right to vote is foundational. Efforts like this are not neutral administrative updates — they are intentional barriers that risk widespread disenfranchisement.

✗ OPPOSE

FREE SPEECH

HB 1471/SB 1632 - Expanded “Domestic Terrorism” Designation Authority

Under this legislation, a small number of government officials could claim sweeping authority to “designate” groups - including nonprofits operating for religious, charitable, and social justice purposes - as “domestic terrorists” without notice, clear standards, independent and meaningful oversight, or basic due process. The bill’s vague and overbroad language opens the door to arbitrary enforcement and political targeting. The bill also purports to expand criminal liability and civil penalties for individuals employed by, associating with, or “promoting” designated groups. No matter where Floridian civil society organizations and activists might fall across the ideological spectrum, nonpartisan to partisan, religious or not, everyone’s rights could be at risk.

HB 945/SB 1712 - Expanded Public Surveillance Authority

This legislation creates a powerful new state intelligence unit with authority to surveil and conduct “direct action missions” against individuals and organizations based on their “views or opinions.” That is not targeted counterterrorism - that is unchecked government power. The bill’s definition of who can be targeted is so broad it could include journalists, activists, nonprofit leaders, political organizers, and everyday Floridians exercising their First Amendment rights. Floridians should not be subjected to military-style intelligence tactics without probable cause and judicial oversight. Constitutional protections do not disappear at the state level.

HB 1071/SB 1090 - K-12 Education Expression Restrictions

This legislation seeks to silence students and educators by treating civic participation and political expression as threats rather than core components of education in a democratic society. The bill’s vague and sweeping language invites over-enforcement, confusion, and self-censorship - discouraging students from engaging with real-world issues that shape their lives and communities. It sends a dangerous message to students: that speaking up, organizing, or engaging with social and political issues is something to fear rather than a fundamental part of learning how democracy works. When students are discouraged from expressing their views, asking hard questions, or organizing around issues that affect their lives, schools stop being places of learning and become places of silence and complicity.

WHERE POLICY MEETS THE PEOPLE

TURNING OUTRAGE INTO IMPACT

✗ OPPOSE

RACIAL JUSTICE AND CRIMINAL LEGAL REFORM

HB 1001/SB 1134 - Restrictions on Local Diversity & Equity Initiatives

This legislation poses a serious threat to local governance across the state. If enacted, this bill would void local ordinances and resolutions related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, prohibit public funding for initiatives that address barriers to opportunity, and further entrench the governor's expanded use of executive power to remove duly elected local officials.

Florida governors have constitutional authority to suspend certain local officials for malfeasance, neglect of duty, or incompetence — a power reaffirmed in the 1968 Constitution. Historically, this authority has been used sparingly and primarily in cases involving criminal or serious misconduct. This power was not intended as a political weapon or a tool to override policy disagreements.

✗ OPPOSE

REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

HB 289/SB 164 - Abusers' Bill of Rights

This legislation would allow anyone who impregnates another person to file a lawsuit over a miscarriage or an abortion. If enacted, this bill would invite frivolous, punitive lawsuits against healthcare providers, hospitals, and even friends and family members who help someone access reproductive care. The bill's dangerously vague language would create unnecessary legal risks, making it harder for pregnant patients, and especially high-risk patients, to receive medical care. This bill also would discourage OB-GYNs from working in Florida, creating additional barriers to all OB-GYN care - particularly in rural and low-income areas - where access to essential prenatal and emergency healthcare is already limited.

Florida law already allows someone to sue if a third party negligently causes the loss of a pregnancy. This bill is not about helping families — this legislation empowers abusers to harass doctors, hospitals, and the loved ones of those who help someone access abortion care. By pushing this bill forward, legislators are subjecting pregnant patients to irreparable harm.

HB 173/SB 166 - Youth Healthcare Access Restrictions

This legislation endangers young people by placing dangerous and unnecessary barriers between minors and essential health care, including contraception, treatment for sexually transmitted infections, and crisis mental health intervention. This bill doesn't protect children - it abandons them. By requiring health care providers to turn away minors seeking time-sensitive and medically necessary care, this legislation jeopardizes the health and safety of Florida's children. Under this bill, if a medical professional determines that a minor has an STI, they would be required to withhold treatment that could quickly treat the STI.

HB 173 would also make it significantly harder for young people to access contraception. Given the state's extreme six-week abortion ban, we should be doing everything we can to help young people protect themselves against unintended pregnancies. This bill does the opposite. This bill is so extreme that it even prohibits doctors from providing contraceptive information to minors, regardless of whether the doctor believes the minor may 'suffer probable health hazards if such services are not provided.

libraries, U.S. Commissioner of Education Lawrence G. Derthick said "I've read those books. . . ." Mr. Derthick has informed an ACLU member that the pro-quoted him and that while "it had not been my good fortune to read them, hardly have lived through the past few decades "without having heard reference to

FUELING THE FIGHT

DEFENDING FREEDOM AND EXPANDING OUR FUTURE

Because Freedom Work Doesn't Fund Itself

For 70 years, the ACLU of Florida has fought to protect the constitutional rights of people across our state – not just in theory, but in real life, where laws can be weaponized and freedoms can be stripped quietly and quickly.

And if the last few years have made anything clear, it's this: Florida is not just a battleground for policy. It is a testing ground for how far the government can go without checks and balances.

When lawmakers push censorship, criminalize protests, target immigrants, erase LGBTQ+ people from public life, attack reproductive freedom, and undermine access to the ballot, the harm doesn't stay in Tallahassee. It reaches into families, classrooms, workplaces, courtrooms, clinics, and communities.

That is why giving matters.

Because movements don't survive on hope alone. They are powered by people willing to invest in sustained work – the kind that lasts long after the headlines fade.

Black history reminds us that every major turning point in the fight for justice required more than courage. It required structure. It required strategy. It required staying power. From voter registration drives to courtroom battles to organizing campaigns led by everyday people, progress has always been fueled by communities who understood that freedom demands both bravery *and* resources.

That same truth applies now.

This work to protect the borders of our Constitution requires constant vigilance and is only possible with your support. Because defending civil liberties is not a one-time fight — it is a daily one. It is the emergency filing. The rapid response. The staff attorney ready to go to court. The organizer mobilizing communities before harm becomes irreversible. The communications work that helps Floridians understand what is happening and how to fight back.

Each year, individuals and institutions – including foundations, unions, and corporations – demonstrate their commitment to those shared constitutional values through steady gifts and grants to the ACLU Foundation of Florida. Those contributions help ensure we can meet this moment with the strength it demands – and remain prepared for what comes next.

Your support makes the work possible.

Your support keeps us on the frontline.

Your support helps ensure that freedom is not just promised – but protected.

Interested in Learning More

Members of the ACLU of Florida's development team are available to share more about current priorities and ways to deepen your impact in the year ahead. We welcome the opportunity to connect and explore how your support can help advance justice and liberty across Florida. Please call [786-363-4432](tel:786-363-4432) or email kgelok@aclufl.org.






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AND GRADUATES** *




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- Manager of Electoral Engagement and Power Building Campaigns
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MEETING THE MOMENT WITH TRUTH AND COURAGE

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This movement is powered by people who refuse to back down. With your continued support, we'll keep holding the frontline to freedom.

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