

FLORIDA FRONTLINE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

SUMMER '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

When vacancies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive 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, the Legislature may fill such Vacancies until the next Meeting.

is not grounds

And no Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two thirds of the Members present. Vacancies 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. 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. They shall assemble at least once in every Year, and such Meetings shall be on the first Monday in December, unless they provide by Law for some other Day.

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Section 6. The Senators and Representatives shall receive Compensation for their Services, as well as Expenses in going to and returning from their respective Houses, and in going to and returning from any other Place. 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 Senator or Representative.

MESSAGE FROM THE FRONTLINE

Summer Edition

This summer, America marked 250 years of independence, though for many, it was difficult to celebrate. We are living under an administration that has harmed our immigrant neighbors by turning cruelty into policy, censored comedians and state employees for exercising their freedom of speech, and allowed incompetence and cronyism to decimate some of our nation's most cherished institutions.

Nearly every day, we are met with a political firehose of controversy and chaos that overwhelms our news feeds and dominates the headlines. But even in the face of these challenges, we the people have not backed down — we have shown up. We have honored the truth-tellers and movement builders who came before us by continuing their work to create a nation where freedom belongs to all of us, not just a privileged few.

We have sued. We have marched. We have organized. We have protested. And, together, we have held those in power accountable.

Last month, Florida's notorious Everglades immigration detention center—cruelly dubbed "Alligator Alcatraz"—was finally shut down, cementing its legacy as a failed and inhumane experiment. In July, after years of litigation, a federal appeals court upheld a core truth in its ruling on Florida's "Stop W.O.K.E." Act: academic freedom doesn't bend to the political winds. The state cannot dictate which viewpoints professors are allowed to teach.

These victories were hard fought, but they also reveal something deeply hopeful: our movement for justice is gaining momentum.

Every victory creates new opportunities to slow down the march of authoritarianism. Every victory expands our reach into communities where rights are most under attack and creates new allies. Every victory brings us one step closer to solidifying the movement that will reclaim and rebuild a democracy that truly belongs to all of us. And, even losses in this difficult climate, propel us forward and help us reimagine more boldly the world we want.

Now, another pivotal moment is on the horizon. Election season is just around the corner, and our responsibility to participate and protect the integrity of the process has never been greater. Every vote is a declaration that our voices matter. Every ballot cast is an act of faith in the future we are building together—and a refusal to surrender our democracy to those in power who seek to silence and divide us.

Freedom has never been inevitable. It has always depended on ordinary people who refuse to stop fighting for it. Progress may be delayed, but it is never beyond reach when people organize, vote, and stand together. All of us here at the ACLU of Florida remain committed to that work and invite you to join us.

Because together, we form the frontlines of resistance.



Bacardi L. Jackson

Executive Director, ACLU of Florida





We are the frontline of
RESISTANCE



LEGAL UPDATE: WHERE RESISTANCE DEFIES INJUSTICE

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

Shutting Down Alligator Alcatraz

After months of advocacy, litigation, and public pressure, Florida's notorious Everglades immigration detention center — cruelly dubbed "Alligator Alcatraz" — officially closed in June. The hastily built facility, constructed on an abandoned airstrip in the Everglades, became a symbol of the state's inhumane approach to immigration detention, with people held in dangerous conditions while facing barriers to legal counsel and due process.

Last summer, the ACLU of Florida, the ACLU, and Americans for Immigrant Justice challenged the facility in court, arguing that people detained there were being denied their constitutional rights. While this closure is an important step toward accountability, our work is far from over. As detainees are transferred to other ICE facilities, we will continue fighting to ensure their rights are protected and that abusive detention practices are not simply moved out of public scrutiny. This momentous win is a reminder that sustained advocacy, litigation, and community action can drive change—and we'll keep showing up until every person's rights and dignity are respected.



Stopping the Stop W.O.K.E Act

In a major victory for free speech and academic freedom, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit struck down the higher education provisions of Florida's Stop W.O.K.E. Act, ruling that the law unconstitutionally censored what professors could teach in public university classrooms. The court made clear that the government cannot ban ideas simply because it disagrees with them, reaffirming that colleges and universities must remain places where students and educators are free to explore, debate, and challenge ideas without political interference.

The decision marks a significant milestone in our years-long legal challenge to the law and sets an important precedent for students and educators across the country. As lawmakers continue introducing classroom censorship bills nationwide, this ruling reinforces a fundamental principle: the First Amendment protects the free exchange of ideas, and politicians cannot dictate what can—and cannot—be taught in our classrooms.

Fighting for the Most Vulnerable

After nearly two years of litigation, our clients fighting for basic healthcare from the Florida Department of Corrections (FDC) finally had their day in court. We represent a class of transgender inmates who had been receiving gender-affirming care for many years before much of it was summarily taken away in Fall 2024. Contrary to the medical mainstream, the new policy suggested that those seeking hormone therapy may have endured “short-termed delusions or beliefs which may later be changed and reversed” and recommended against providing any gender-affirming medical care unless extensive barriers were overcome. That same day, at prison facilities across the state, transgender inmates were rounded up and informed that FDC policy had been changed, “up to and including hormone therapy.”

They were specifically told that they would no longer have access to clothing and grooming standards that accord with their gender identity and would have 30 days to comply. Prior to this abrupt change in policy, our previous litigation on this issue had secured protections for hormone therapy and access to social transition accommodations to FDC inmates with gender dysphoria—protections that lasted for six years. Following the change in policy, our new litigation has so far secured continued access to hormone therapy, and in early July we held a trial concerning the provision of social-transition accommodations. Over the three days of trial, our clients and other witnesses testified to the real harms caused by this new policy and the deliberate indifference that FDC officials have shown to those harms. The new policy has no basis in medicine, and our clients bravely stood up to share their stories with the court.



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More Legal Highlights

Naples Pride v. City of Naples — In our case challenging unconstitutional restrictions on our client Naples Pride's annual Pride festival, we have continued our line of depositions of current and former government officials so that we can hold the City accountable for its discriminatory conduct.

- **Why It Matters:** Pride is something to celebrate. When our First Amendment freedoms are threatened, we fight back. Our communities are resilient, and our commitment is unwavering. We will fight to ensure that every person has the inalienable right to live fully, freely, and visibly.

The Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc. v. Attorney General, State of Florida — On Friday, July 31, we presented oral argument in the Eleventh Circuit to defend our preliminary injunction against Section 10 of 2023's SB 1718. That law, codified at Florida Statutes § 787.07, criminalizes transporting certain immigrants into Florida. We filed the lawsuit in July 2023 on behalf of FWAf and several individual plaintiffs, arguing that the law is preempted by federal immigration law and is unconstitutionally vague. In May 2024, the district court granted a preliminary injunction after finding that we were likely to prevail on our preemption claim. The court later issued additional orders addressing the scope of the injunction. The State appealed the preliminary-injunction and scope orders in May 2025. The appeal has been pending for more than a year, and, following oral argument, we now await a decision.

- **Why It Matters:** Under Section 10 of SB 1718, Floridians found traveling with any immigrant that the federal government has not "inspected" face up to 15 years in jail for human smuggling. This policy makes no exceptions for minors, family members, or co-workers. This lawsuit seeks to challenge a law that unfairly penalizes Floridians for assisting their communities.

UnidosUS v. Byrd — we are continuing the discovery process in our case challenging a law requiring new and current voters to have "evidence of citizenship" on file, such as a passport or birth certificate, to register to vote or remain on the voter rolls. Thousands of Floridians don't have ready access to these documents, but starting on January 1, 2027, local election officials will cancel the voter registration of anyone who cannot provide "evidence of citizenship" to satisfy this law. We represent numerous organizations across Florida who represent the many people who will be impacted by this law: UnidosUS, League of Women Voters of Florida, Florida Rising, Hispanic Federation, Florida Immigrant Coalition, and Common Cause.

- **Why It Matters:** These additional documentation requirements will make it significantly harder for eligible voters — especially naturalized citizens, low-income voters, married women who've changed their name, voters of color, students, voters with disabilities, transgender people, and seniors — to register and participate in elections. Since the law applies retroactively to currently registered voters, it is even likelier that eligible voters will be both wrongly prevented from registering and/or erroneously removed from the rolls.



FIELD UPDATE: WHERE THE PEOPLE MOVE

GRASSROOTS POWER IN ACTION

This summer, our supporters and volunteers came together at a range of events. We hosted “Paint Your Story” in Miami where participants shared their stories of reproductive justice. We wrote postcards in Tallahassee to remind voters to get out the vote and gathered with volunteers in Orlando to plan the road ahead. Volunteers all across the state joined us in making vote-by-mail re-enrollment calls to remind voters they are due for renewal. Miami community members mobilized to speak with elected officials and oppose voluntary 287(g) agreements that harm immigrant communities and divert scarce local resources, making our communities less safe.

Volunteers also collected petitions for Stronger Miami to make districts more representative, prohibit political gerrymandering and move elections to encourage greater participation. In addition, ACLU of Florida volunteers hosted trainings like “Rights We’ve Lost: Free Speech”, led by our storytelling and detention advocacy volunteer teams, participated in our Banned Book Club, and learned how to be a RAISE observer to help protect our communities from overzealous immigration enforcement. It was a busy summer, but we are so grateful for the support of the vast ACLU of FL volunteer and supporter community – you are the people power that makes our work impactful!

We have so much more to do, and each of you can play an important role – take a look at some of the opportunities to get involved.

VOLUNTEER WITH US

We need volunteers to join us, if you’d like to learn more about what volunteering looks like at the ACLU of FL, sign up at aclufl.org/volunteer, and we’ll invite you to our next new volunteer orientation!



JOIN AN UPCOMING TRAINING OR EVENT

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

Team Meetings

Learn more and get involved in one of our core volunteer teams:

- Floridians for Immigrant Justice Team Meeting [8/18](#)
- Detention Advocacy Team [8/19](#)

Community Meet-Ups and Local Activism

Join our teams on the ground across Florida:

- Tallahassee Judicial Races Neighborhood Canvass [8/15](#), [8/16](#)
- RAISE Distribution Day - Miami [8/22](#) + [8/29](#)
- Tallahassee Action Team Meeting [8/25](#)
- Tampa-Bay Action Team Meeting [8/26](#)

Trainings

Empower yourself and your community:

- Become a poll monitor for the primary and general elections, sign up for the next ACLU of FL poll monitor training: [8/5](#) + [8/10](#)
- Our Rights! Our Power! Know Your Rights While Voting Training [8/6](#)

Take Action

- Join our Vote-By-Mail re-enrollment phonebanks [8/13](#), [8/19](#), [8/20](#), [8/24](#), [8/26](#), [8/31](#)
- Join us in collecting petitions for Stronger Miami [here](#)

Take Action

- Join our phone bank to alert City of Miami constituents about 287(g) agreements [8/4](#)
- Sign up to speak against 287(g) agreements for the City of Miami [here](#)
- Interested in becoming a Raise observer? Contact us at RAISE@aclufl.org



POLICY UPDATE: WHERE ADVOCACY MATTERS

TURNING OUTRAGE INTO IMPACT

It's been a very busy summer building power and expanding our capacity in Florida to meet the moment.

We are thrilled to announce our new Policy and Advocacy Director, Kara Gross. For the past 9 years, Kara has been serving as our Legislative Director and Senior Policy Counsel, and brings to this position over a decade of legal and public policy experience advocating for our priority issue areas of reproductive freedom, LGBTQ+ rights, voting rights, free speech, immigrants' rights and criminal legal reform.

Additionally, in June we hired an Electoral Engagement Campaign Manager, Chris Smith, to lead our proactive power-building campaign across Florida, Chris is an experienced political operative who has managed and consulted on national, statewide, and local campaigns and races. Chris was most recently National Campaigns Director for March On and was deputy campaign manager for Stacey Abrams historic Governor's primary race.

This month, we also hired a new Policy Strategist, David Arreola, to lead our Immigrants' Rights strategy, as well as expanding and supporting our strategic work in our other priority issue areas. David is a former Gainesville City Commissioner, serving two terms in that role, and brings over a decade of experience in drafting and passing policies with grassroots coalitions and working closely with community stakeholders.

The above team, along with our Senior Campaign Strategist, Abdelilah Shkir, and our Senior Research and Data Strategist, Mackenzie Kushner, have been working to ensure that Floridians rights are protected and that legislators are held accountable to the public.

This summer we expanded our Stronger Miami Campaign to include four additional Steering Committee Partner Organizations. Our Steering Committee now consists of the following nine organizations: ACLU of Florida, Engage Florida, Florida Rising, GRACE, Inc., Miami Freedom Project, NAACP South Dade and Miami-Dade Branches, One Grove, and Southern Poverty Law Center. Our Stronger Miami campaign accomplishes three goals in one charter amendment: banning drawing districts to favor one political party over another, expanding from a five-member City Commission to nine members so communities that have previously been left out will have a stronger voice at the table, and moving city elections to even-numbered years when federal elections are held to expand voter turnout and civic engagement. We hosted a partner Meet & Greet at Red Rooster in Overtown to gather Miamians in the fight for greater representation in City Hall and invited over 100 local neighborhood organizations and community leaders to join our Stronger Miami Campaign.

Additionally, among many other priorities, we've been working in coalition with several partner organizations to protect immigrant communities and recently provided public comment at a Miami City Commission meeting advocating against the City's harmful anti-immigrant 287(g) Agreement. We've also been very involved in Election Safeguarding work ahead of the August primaries, and have been working in partnership with our voting rights coalition to ensure that eligible voters have access to the polls and that every vote is counted.

There's so much work to be done in Florida and it takes a village - we are thrilled to have new staff members join our team and help meet this moment.



FUELING THE FIGHT

DEFENDING FREEDOM AND EXPANDING OUR FUTURE

For a limited time, supporters who include the ACLU in their estate plans through the Freedom for All Legacy Challenge can unlock an immediate cash gift, at no cost to you. By simply naming the ACLU as a beneficiary in a will, trust, retirement account, life insurance policy, or other qualifying designation and notifying the ACLU of that commitment, donors activate a matching contribution made by Challenge sponsors.

This is a rare opportunity to create both a future and an immediate impact. Depending on the value of the planned gift, Challenge sponsors will contribute up to 10% on gifts up to \$1 million and 5% on qualifying amounts above that, generating significant funding that can help defend civil liberties today while preserving the movement for generations to come. The matching funds are available only while the Challenge lasts.

One of the greatest advantages of planned giving is its flexibility. A legacy gift costs nothing today, can be modified if circumstances change, and allows supporters to make one of the most meaningful commitments to the future of democracy without affecting their current financial plans.

There are several simple ways to participate. You can:

- Include the ACLU in your will or living trust.
- Name the ACLU as a beneficiary of a retirement account, life insurance policy, or brokerage account.
- Designate the ACLU Foundation as a successor beneficiary of a donor-advised fund.
- Tell us about your gift by filling out the form [here](#).

Every generation inherits the responsibility to protect the rights and freedoms of the next. By making a legacy commitment today, you help ensure that future advocates will have the resources they need to defend democracy, challenge injustice, and safeguard the liberties that define our nation.

If you would like to learn more about the Freedom for All Legacy Challenge or discuss how a legacy gift could align with your personal and family goals, please contact us at (786) 363-4432 or email kgelok@aclufl.org.



Join the resistance.

WE'RE HIRING!



Spread the word within
your networks.

- [Deputy Legal Director](#)
- [Senior Policy Counsel](#)
- [Senior Digital Strategist](#)
- [Senior Communications Strategist](#)
- [Field Organizer - Miami](#)
- [Field Organizer - Tallahassee](#)
- [Various Internship Opportunities](#)

All positions will remain open until filled.

ACLU
Florida

APPLY NOW

aclufl.org/jobs