FLORIDA FRONT LINE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER ‘26 EDITION

ACLU Florida 70

We The People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish

Article. I.

DISSENT

is not grounds

for deportation

MESSAGE FROM THE FRONT LINE

October Edition



Democracy Is Not a Spectator Sport. It Belongs to Us.

There is a dangerous misconception about democracy: that it is something we have, rather than something we do.

We are taught that democracy lives in our Constitution, in the halls of government, and in the elections that determine who holds public office. And while each is essential, none alone can guarantee the freedoms we cherish or the future we deserve.

Democracy lives in us. In our willingness to speak, to question, to organize, to participate, and, when necessary, to demand better from those entrusted with power. On the heels of the most consequential election of our lifetimes, I want to remind every Floridian of a fundamental truth: Voting matters. Your voice matters. Your participation matters. But democracy does not begin or end at the ballot box.

Voting is our first step, not our final responsibility.

Across Florida and throughout our nation, we are witnessing troubling efforts to concentrate power, silence dissent, and govern through fear rather than public trust. We see it when government officials threaten funding for communities and organizations because they disagree with the ideas they express or represent. We see it when immigration enforcement tears at the fabric of families and communities, betraying the spirit of a nation that once welcomed the world's tired, poor, and those yearning to breathe free. We see it when people fear that speaking their minds, standing up for their neighbors, or exercising their constitutional rights might invite retaliation. And we see it when the distance between the people who govern and those they supposedly represent grows so wide that everyday Floridians struggle to recognize their own needs, hopes, and priorities in the policies enacted in their names.

These are not simply political disagreements. They are questions about the character of our democracy, the limits and responsibility of government power, and whether the promises of freedom, equality, and justice will extend to all of us.









MESSAGE FROM THE FRONT LINE

Our Constitution does not promise a government free from disagreement. It guarantees us the freedom to disagree. It does not require us to surrender our convictions to those in power. It protects our right to challenge them. Those protections belong to everyone, regardless of political affiliation, immigration status, faith, identity, economic situation, or ideology. And defending them is a responsibility we share.

Nearly 170 years ago, abolitionist Frederick Douglass offered a warning that remains as relevant today as it was then: “Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”

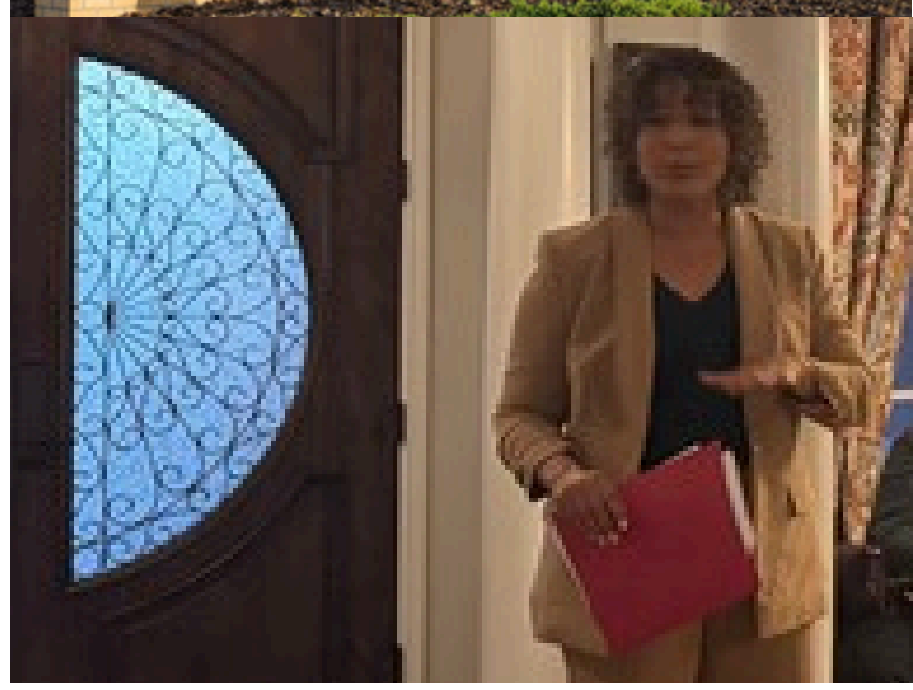
Today, as we prepare for Election Day, the final day of voting in the 2026 midterms, I urge you to think beyond November 3. Ask not only who will represent you, but how you will hold them accountable. Ask whose voices are missing from the conversation and how you can help make room for them.

This is our work. And this is our time. Let’s use it wisely.

In solidarity,







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

Free Speech Wins Again

The ACLU of Florida is now three for three in favorably resolving disputes involving government employees disciplined for speech related to Charlie Kirk. We have previously highlighted our work on behalf of 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 a meme about Charlie Kirk on her personal social media page — and the settlement we were able to secure for her. In just the last month, we secured settlements in the remaining two cases related to speech concerning Charlie Kirk. One was on behalf of Erika Santos, a former grant accountant at Eastern Florida State College who was fired after a perfunctory "investigation" into her speech. The other was on behalf of Steve Cody, a Palmetto Bay Councilmember who was removed from a committee and had related representative roles rescinded because he posted political satire critical of Charlie Kirk's views on gun rights.

In each of these three cases, it would have been easier for our clients to walk away. But we celebrate their courage. These settlements again make clear that there is a cost to the government's abuse of power—a cost victims of that abuse should not have to suffer and hold. Instead, we will continue to hold government agencies accountable for their unconstitutional conduct.





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More Legal Highlights

- ***Pernell v. Lamb*** — Florida cannot rewrite the First Amendment to silence ideas it dislikes. In our challenge to the higher education provisions of the Stop W.O.K.E. Act, which censored classroom conversations about race and gender, we won a landmark victory in the Eleventh Circuit affirming that professors and students have the right to teach, learn, and debate freely. Rather than accept that ruling, the State of Florida has asked the U.S. Supreme Court to review it. The Court is now considering whether to take the case, and we stand ready to defend academic freedom at every level.
- ***Naples Pride v. City of Naples*** — Pride is protected expression, and in no city gets to push it into the shadows. In our challenge to the City of Naples' unconstitutional restrictions on our client Naple's annual celebration, we filed our response opposing the City's motion for summary judgment, which seeks to end the case without a trial. We fight to ensure Naples Pride gets its day in court, and that LGBTQ+ Floridians can gather, celebrate, and be seen.
- ***De Leon Serrabi v. United States of America*** — The government cannot hide how it treats the people in its custody. In our challenge to the inhumane treatment our client endured in immigration detention, the court granted our motion to compel, ordering the federal government to turn over evidence it has been unlawfully withholding. This is a critical step toward accountability and toward bringing the truth of these conditions into the light.
- ***CAIR-Foundation, Inc. v. DeSantis*** — When the state can label an organization a "domestic terrorism organization" on its own say-so, every advocacy group's freedom of speech and association is at risk. In our challenge to this new and unprecedented designation regime, the court held a hearing on Wednesday, October 28, on our motion for a preliminary injunction to block the law's enforcement against our client's, CAIR and CAIR-Florida. We await the court's decision.

To see all of our case updates, visit aclufl.org/cases.







FIELD UPDATE: WHERE THE PEOPLE MOVE

GRASSROOTS POWER IN ACTION

Election season is in full force in October, and our field team has been busy across the state training poll monitors, calling voters, and hosting Get Out The Vote events on campuses. To prepare voters for the election, organizers hosted Know Your Rights trainings in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole, answering voting questions and equipping attendees with up-to-date information on election laws and their voting rights.

Our team was also on the ground in Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Tallahassee to support the No Kings mobilizations and help get their communities fired up to cast their ballots. We trained and deployed legal observers to keep protesters safe and provided election protection information to attendees. Standing alongside the community, we sent a message that America has no kings, and that the people choose their leaders.

As part of our election safeguarding work, we organized neighborhood canvasses in Broward, Miami-Dade, Lee, and Palm Beach counties to distribute information encouraging voters to vote early and report sightings of law enforcement presence to the Florida Election Protection Coalition hotline.

A big thank you to our amazing volunteers and supporters who braved the Florida heat to help knock doors, poll monitor, and collect petitions with us!



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 Campaign Meeting — **11/2**
- Storytelling Team Meeting — **11/4**
- Banned Book Club — **11/10**
- Free Speech Team Meeting — **11/18**
- Detention Advocacy Team Meeting — **11/18**

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JOIN AN UPCOMING TRAINING OR EVENT

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

Community Meet-Ups and Local Activism

Join our teams on the ground across Florida:

- Miami Action Team Meeting — **11/9**
- Tampa Bay Action Team Meeting — **11/11**
- Orlando Action Team Meeting — **11/18**

Trainings

Empower yourself and your community:

- Know Your Rights for Immigrants — **11/12**

Take Action

Join our upcoming:

- Orlando Get Out The Vote Phonebank — **11/2**









POLICY UPDATE: WHERE ADVOCACY MATTERS

TURNING OUTRAGE INTO IMPACT

Across Florida, the ACLU of Florida's Policy and Advocacy team is working to keep civil liberties at the center of public policy and to give everyday Floridians the tools and opportunities to make their voices heard. From challenging harmful policies to safeguarding elections, our work reflects a simple truth: democracy works best when people are informed, engaged, and empowered to participate.

Defending Advisory Boards in Broward County

With Florida's anti-diversity law, SB 1134, looming over cities and counties, our advocacy turned to Broward County. Broward Commissioners are considering eliminating the Racial Justice Task Force and the Commission on the Status of Women, founded in 1976, along with other cuts to advisory boards. They did this even though the law explicitly exempts nonelected advisory boards. Our team met with the County Attorney and commission staff, then attended the commission meeting to raise concerns about these unnecessary cuts. In the end, commissioners postponed their vote until December 8 to take more time to examine the issues and potential consequences. The delay gives us an important opening for continued education, advocacy, and community engagement.







Protecting Inclusive Programming in Miami Beach

Miami Beach Commissioners also considered cutting programs before the law even requires it. Funding for diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, LGBTQ communities, Pride celebrations, and the Commission on the Status of Women and Girls was on the line. Our team prepared testimony, contacted commissioners, mobilized volunteers, and worked with partner organizations. Then we spoke out at the City Commission meeting. With a strong turnout from advocates, directly impacted Floridians, and partners, commissioners voted to ***keep*** current funding levels despite their concerns about SB 1134!





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TURNING OUTRAGE INTO IMPACT

Turning Civic Awareness Into Action

This voting cycle, we brought the celebration to the ballot box. We hosted Party at the Polls events at four sites across the state: FAMU in Tallahassee, FIU in Miami, USF in Tampa, and the Alafaya Branch Library in Orlando.

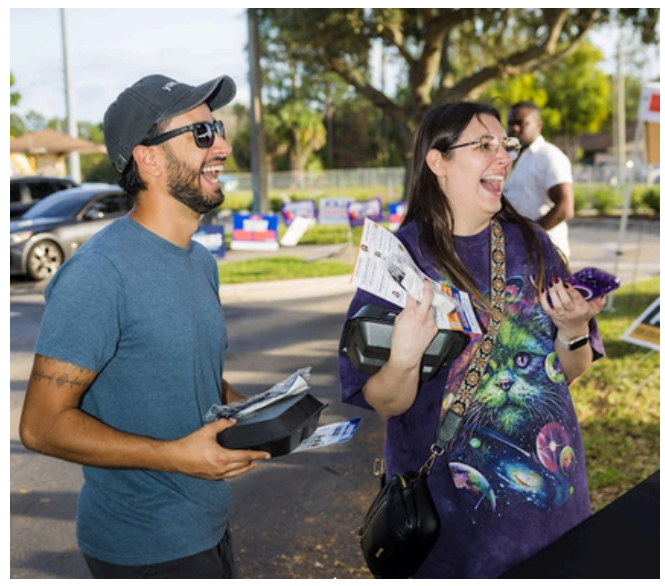
At each stop, we had music, community, and nonpartisan Know Your Rights resources. We made sure voters knew what to expect at the polls and what to do if something went wrong. We chose these locations on purpose, because young voters too often face confusion over ID rules, polling locations, and misinformation. At FAMU, FIU, and USF, students showed up for themselves and for each other. In Orlando, we met families and neighbors right in their community. Thank you to every student, volunteer, and partner who helped make it happen.



















POLICY UPDATE: WHERE ADVOCACY MATTERS

TURNING OUTRAGE INTO IMPACT

Standing With Our Immigrant Neighbors in Gainesville

In Gainesville, we joined the Gainesville Immigrant Neighbor Initiative at a press conference calling on the Gainesville Police Department to rescind General Order 82.4. The order directs officers to collect suspected immigrants' personal information and report it to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for potential arrest. We raised serious concerns that the policy could encourage racial profiling, undermine community trust, and enable unconstitutional immigration enforcement.

Showing Up for Democracy at UF Law

This month, we corrected the record on ballot initiatives, direct democracy, and government interference at the University of Florida Levin College of Law, in front of the state's own representatives and about 150 attendees. The crowd spilled out into the courtyard. We gave voice to students who might otherwise have felt unseen, and they're already asking for a follow-up that digs even deeper into the topic. Many stayed afterward to tell us they can't wait to join this work. As Shirley Chisholm put it: "If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair." Each of us is part of the "good trouble" that will move Florida, and this country, out from under authoritarian rule and back toward the freedoms that belong to all of us.







Our Commitment

From commission chambers to college campuses and polling places, our commitment stays the same: protecting constitutional rights, strengthening public accountability, and empowering Floridians to shape the future of their communities, not just on Election Day but every day. Protecting the people's power to govern themselves is a responsibility we share, and we'll keep carrying it together.

FUELING THE FIGHT

DEFENDING FREEDOM AND EXPANDING OUR FUTURE

Make Your Year-End Giving Count

As the year draws to a close, we are grateful for the supporters who make the ACLU of Florida's work possible. Your generosity helps us defend fundamental freedoms, challenge abuses of government power, and stand alongside communities whose rights are threatened. As we prepare for the year ahead, your continued partnership helps ensure we have the resources to respond when it matters most.

Now is a good time to review your charitable giving plans and arrange your year-end contribution. **To count toward the 2026 tax year, charitable gifts generally must be completed by December 31.** Credit card gifts must be charged by that date, and checks sent by mail must be postmarked by December 31. A pledge alone generally does not qualify for a charitable deduction until payment is made.

If you are considering a gift of appreciated stock or a charitable distribution from your IRA, please begin the process early. Financial institutions may have processing deadlines well before the end of December, and initiating a transfer does not necessarily mean your gift has been completed.
As you organize your tax records, remember to retain receipts and supporting documentation for your contributions. **The IRS requires a written acknowledgment from the charity for each gift of $250 or more when claiming a charitable deduction.** Your tax advisor can help you determine which giving option best fits your circumstances.

For a tax-deductible contribution, please direct your gift to the **ACLU Foundation of Florida**. Our development team is happy to provide giving instructions, assist with donation acknowledgments, and answer questions about supporting our work.

Thank you for standing with us and for helping build a future where every person in Florida can exercise their rights freely and fully.

Interested in making a gift from your IRA? We're here to help. Contact our Development Department at **786-363-4432** or **philanthropy@aclufl.org** to learn more.

This information is not intended as tax or legal advice. We encourage you to consult with your financial or tax advisor about your individual circumstances.







Join the resistance.

WE'RE HIRING!



Spread the word within your networks.

- Deputy Legal Director
- Director of Equity and Culture
- Compliance Coordinator and Operations Administrator
- Policy Analyst/Counsel
- Executive Assistant
- Executive Program Assistant
- Fall 2026 Orlando Intern

All positions will remain open until filled.

ACLU Florida

APPLY NOW

aclufl.org/jobs