



# CIVIL LIBERTIES IN THE SILVER STATE

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF NEVADA

IMPACT REPORT FY2014-2015

democracy | equality | justice | liberty



The ACLU of Nevada is a nonpartisan organization committed to the defense and advancement of civil liberties and civil rights for all people in Nevada. Grounded in the principles of liberty, justice, democracy, and equality, we engage in education, advocacy, and litigation on behalf of the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Nevada Constitution.



# ACLU OF NEVADA TEAM

## Board of Directors

Robert Chester, president and national board representative

Rachel Anderson, vice president

Todd Eikelberger, vice president

Robert Langford, treasurer

Patricia Vasquez, secretary

Yvanna Cancela

Sharon Chamberlain

Sondra Cosgrove

Ruben J. Garcia, affirmative action officer

Tyre Gray

Patricia Lee

Lisa Rasmussen

Roger Vogel

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## Staff

Tod Story, executive director

Amy Rose, legal director

Vanessa Spinazola, legislative and advocacy director

Shawn Meerkamper, staff attorney

Rosine Zelickovics, development director

Sara Lemma, office manager

Tamika Shauntee, paralegal and legal advocacy coordinator

Allison Bowmer, education and outreach coordinator

Paige White, communications coordinator

Lu Ann Pillar, administrative assistant

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## 2014-15 Interns

Karla Navarette - Katie Hoops - Vyacheslav Murtazin - Sierra Jickling - Annie Helion - Maggie Salas

Aria Overli - Athena Turek - Katie Harris - Amanda Cuevas - Rebekah Cooper

UNLV School of Social Work, Social Justice interns Nicole Milligan and Rita Colon



# STRENGTHENING THE ARM OF LIBERTY

The 2014-2015 fiscal year was one marked by accomplishment on many fronts. Our efforts on marriage equality with Freedom Nevada and the *Sevcik v. Sandoval* suit, our push to expand as well as defend immigrant rights, our vigilance on police conduct, our education efforts and policy work in sex education, and the numerous victories of our legislative and legal teams made for a successful year.

Ongoing analyses of each school district's sex education policies and curricula proved successful in rural counties such as Lyon, Douglas, and Lincoln. While success has been elusive in Clark County, we will not rest until all counties in our state teach age-appropriate, medically accurate, comprehensive sex education. With the statewide review of every school district's sex education policies and curricula we seek to ensure all children receive proper education about their own health.

Heading into the 2015 session of Nevada Legislature, we planned for an onslaught of legislation attacking civil liberties. These bills materialized almost daily, but we defeated bills that sought to promote religious proselytizing in schools, roll back reproductive choice, impose voter id requirements, make religious-based discrimination legal in places of public accommodation, and mandate a discriminatory bullying policy requiring transgender students to use a separate bathroom in schools. Every one of these bills would have restricted liberties, not expanded them. The work we do protects the liberties and rights of all Nevadans. This is our mission; this is our purpose.

With our legal department under new and talented

direction, we have been building our legal docket to take on some of the most egregious cases that violate the principles of equality, liberty, and justice. In October we were victorious in *Sevcik v. Sandoval* in the Ninth Circuit, securing the right of all Nevadans to marry the person they love. We also prevented a racially inequitable and discriminatory voter suppression initiative.

However, there are still many issues requiring our attention and resources. Inaccurate, discriminatory, and archaic sex education is still being taught to the majority of Nevada's students, those incarcerated are treated inhumanely by a corrections system with insufficient safeguards and policies of retaliation over rehabilitation. We continue to work on reforming our juvenile justice programs throughout the state by reducing/eliminating solitary confinement and transferring youth from adult facilities to youth facilities. The most vulnerable among us are locked away and mistreated, denied medical services, and rehabilitation and reintegration services. Immigrants are still profiled and singled out for harassment, detention, family separation, and displacement. We will continue working to right these injustices with the support of committed civil libertarians like you.

Take satisfaction in the progress you helped achieve, note the challenges ahead, and know that together we can solve these difficult problems. Whether you have been a longtime member or just learning about the ACLU of Nevada, your support enables us to pursue a future where justice, liberty, democracy, and equality exist for every person.

In Liberty,

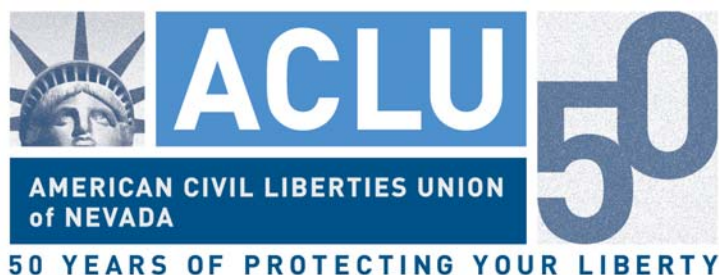


# INVESTING IN LIBERTY

So long as we have enough people in this country  
willing to fight for their rights,  
we'll be called a democracy.  
-Roger Baldwin, ACLU founder

To all of our supporters,  
for nourishing the light where liberty has arisen, we  
extend a heartfelt thank you.

Privacy is paramount at the ACLU; we do not release information about donors or clients without their expressed permission.



In 2016, the ACLU of Nevada Celebrates 50 Years  
of fighting for Civil Liberties in the Silver State.

You've helped us make history over the last 50 years  
and hope you'll join us as we continue making history for  
the next 50!

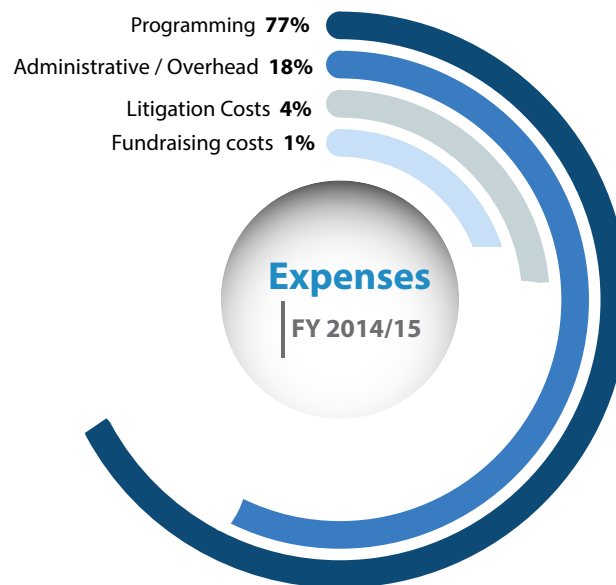
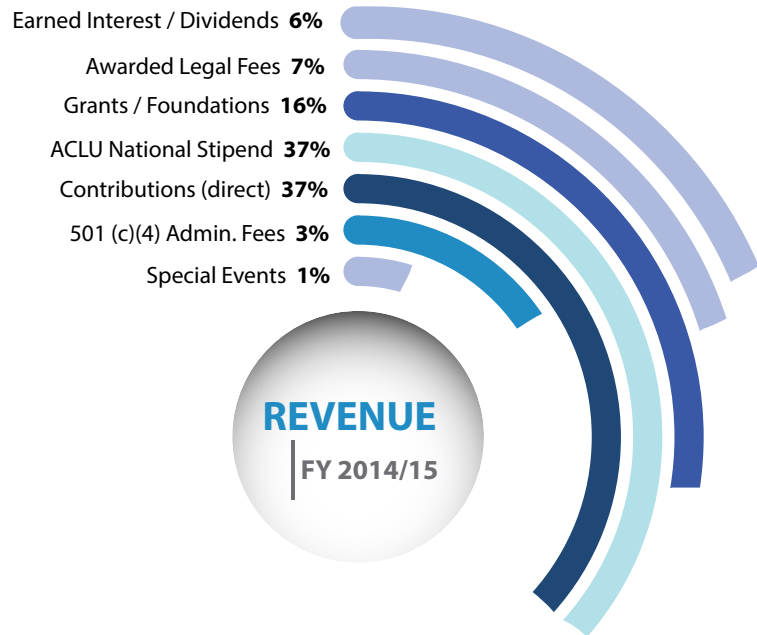
[www.aclunv.org/give](http://www.aclunv.org/give)



# KEY FINANCIALS FY 2014-2015

The fiscal year for the ACLU begins on the first day of April and ends on the last day of March. The information provided here includes those figures from April 2014 - March 2015. Financial information reflects the status of the ACLU of Nevada Foundation only.

Revenue	2014-15
Contributions	\$252,772
Special Events	\$4,285
National ACLU support stipend	\$250,000
Legal Fees Awarded	\$50,000
Affiliated ACLU, Inc. management fees	\$19,500
Grants / Foundations	\$68,597
Interest & Dividends	\$37,416
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$682,570</b>
Expenses	2014-15
Programming	\$509,099
Fundraising Costs	\$9,262
Litigation Costs	\$24,675
Administrative	\$115,579
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$658,615</b>



# OUR APPROACH

## *An Integrative defense of liberty*



The ACLU of Nevada monitors and testifies at meetings of all levels of government, from school boards and city councils to the Nevada Legislature. We support bills and regulations that expand the idea of individual liberties and civil rights and oppose bills and regulations that limit liberty or violate the U.S. or Nevada Constitutions. The ACLU of Nevada is strictly non-partisan.



The ACLU of Nevada works to educate Nevadans about their civil liberties and civil rights. We hold public education events, conduct outreach to vulnerable constituencies and allies, work in coalitions, and publish Know Your Rights materials and other reports on civil liberties issues that are available through our website or one of our offices.



The ACLU of Nevada's legal department focuses on establishing case law and policy precedents that protect or expand civil rights. We prefer to talk things out or negotiate whenever possible to correct civil rights violations and reserve litigation as a last resort.



# NEVADA LEGISLATURE 2015

## *Sound law and policy through relationships*

The ACLU of Nevada monitors and testifies at meetings of all levels of government, from school boards and city councils to the Nevada Legislature. We support bills and regulations that expand the idea of individual liberties and civil rights and oppose bills and regulations that limit liberty or violate the U.S. or Nevada Constitutions. The ACLU of Nevada is strictly non-partisan and our lobbying work is supported by the affiliated 501(c)(4), ACLUNV, Inc.

A talented and committed team, led by Vanessa Spinazola, worked with like-minded partners to build collaborative efforts and stand against the gradual encroachment of our rights and liberties. For more information about the 2015 Nevada Legislature, please use the link below. These efforts and those of our coalition partners are included here for contextual purposes only.

### ***Voter supression***

1093 bills were introduced during the legislative session. 34 of those bills sought changes to voting rights and elections. Several restrictive voter identification bills were among them.



Speaker John Hambrick with ACLUNV lobbyist Vanessa Spinazola (center right, respectively) and (from left) Brian Vasek, Steve Yaeger, Regan Comis, and Sean Sullivan

### ***Bathroom bullying***

A bill singling out and separating our transgender youth for the purposes of using the restroom in schools will not happen in our state! Vocal and determined supporters of the measure were checked every step of the way as the ACLU and its allies.

### ***Victory in Youth Incarceration***

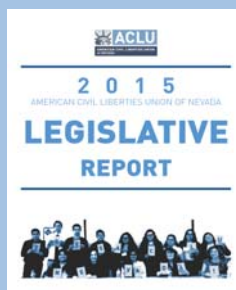
Our most sweeping success was the elimination of the sentence of life without parole for juveniles. Substantial positive legislation passed, including ending the indiscriminate shackling of youth in juvenile court, raising the age at which kids become involved in the system from 8 to 10 in all but the most egregious cases, and even prohibiting harsh discipline through the much bemoaned "pop tart bill," which we supported because it allows kids to act like kids. On another bill, we successfully defeated an amendment that would have criminalized youth possession of vaping products.

### ***Chipping away choice***

An onerous parental notification bill with strong and determined backers kept rearing its ugly head but was defeated in the final days of the session.

### **Read the ACLUNV 2015 Legislative Report**

[www.aclunv.org/files/2015legreport.pdf](http://www.aclunv.org/files/2015legreport.pdf)



### ***No excuse to discriminate***

States across the nation are implementing so-called religious protection acts, granting permission to disregard laws if the individual or business objects based on personal belief. In Nevada, we helped turn this trend around by defeating this and similar discriminatory legislation.



# ADVOCACY MEDIUMS

## AMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE TO TIP THE SCALES

### *Taking Liberties Online*

During the past year, the ACLU of Nevada issued a call to action on 34 different occasions when civil liberties were at risk and another 18 times in conjunction with allied organizations who are our partners in liberty. We asked you to weigh in and take action on issues from sex education curriculum in rural Nevada to ending life sentences without the possibility of parole for juvenile offenders. An astonishing total of 185,910 individual messages were delivered to policy and decision-makers as a result. This is reflection of the deep commitment and passion of our supporters.

12 month increase  
in ACLUNV email  
Subscribers:

**+118%**



ACLUNV email  
Subscribers taking  
action at least  
once in the past 6  
months.

**47%**

### *Writing of wrongs: Publications from the ACLU of Nevada*

Our publications serve not only to inform and educate the public but also to aid our advocacy and outreach strategies. visit [aclunv.org/reports](http://aclunv.org/reports) to read them all.

- Mass Incarceration in Nevada
- Bills Introduced During the 2015 Legislative Session  
Final Post-Legislative Session Report, June 2015
- Stuck Behind Bars: Exploring Reasons Why Parole Eligible  
Inmates in Nevada Remain Incarcerated, May 21, 2015
- ACLUNV's Know Your Rights series:
  - General Law Enforcement | First Amendment | Homeless
  - Domestic Partnerships | Rights of Transgender Individuals
  - Federal Freedom of Information Act
  - Nevada Public Records Law | Nevada Open Meetings Law
  - Voting Rights Guide | College Students | Voting with a Criminal Conviction
  - Right to an Education | Voting Rights for College Students

**34**

electronic calls  
to action sent to  
**12,000+**  
subscribers

supporters take  
action and forward  
to friends, family,  
share through  
social media, etc

coalition partners and  
allied groups further  
amplify the call

**185,910**

messages generated and  
actions taken

# ENGAGING ISSUES

*“GROWING TOWARDS JUSTICE...”*

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"Immigration reform leaders arrested 5" by Arasmus Photo

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## ***Immigration***

The ACLU of Nevada hosted or worked in partnership on 10 immigration events in Nevada and 440 people were identified for assistance on immigration issues.

## ***Juvenile and Criminal Justice***

An additional 10 events centered around this issue, allowing our staff, board, and volunteers to assist 275 people. Our work heavily relied on and involved many social justice advocates and organizations concerned with reform of the justice system.

## ***Reproductive Rights and Sexual Education***

Continuing our collaborative work, the ACLU of Nevada hosted or participated in an additional 10 events, where we were able to reach another 285 constituents in this area.

## ***Voting Rights***

Few things are more fundamental in a Democracy than the right of every citizen to cast a ballot. Unfortunately, efforts to restrict this right as well as obstacles to casting a ballot are in no short supply. No citizen should face barriers on Election Day, but these limitations on the right to vote disproportionately impact communities of color, lower income populations, senior citizens, the homeless, students, and the formerly incarcerated working to improve their socio-economic position after completing their sentences. This is why our outreach efforts included 8 events targeted towards these very demographics. Those efforts enabled the ACLU of Nevada to identify and reach 355 people for assistance.

## ***Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Persons.***

Over 1200 people were reached through a total of 4 events in the LGBTQ community. Our efforts were focused on the freedom to marry, discrimination against transgender people, and LGBTQ youth.



# ENGAGING ISSUES

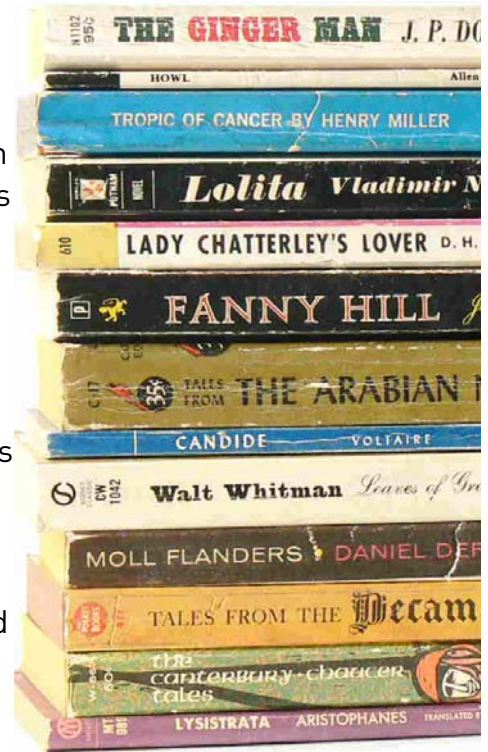
*...EXPANDING TOWARD EQUALITY” - THURGOOD MARSHALL*

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In addition to the specific efforts listed above, our team attended, participated, co-hosted, or hosted numerous events throughout this past year. Several hundred additional Nevadans were reached through these efforts and the ACLU is proud to have worked on all these events to raise public awareness and understanding about our civil liberties.

## ***Advocacy and Community Engagement***

In addition to the efforts of ACLU, Inc., our team, aided by volunteers were able to take part in a number of visits with policy makers across the state. 75 members from our communities attended these meetings and visits. It is crucial that those who are elected to represent the people hear directly from the people. On many important issues such as sex education, women’s reproductive rights, criminal justice, juvenile in the penal system, capital punishment, education equity, and racial equity in the justice system and reforming the way law enforcement interacts with people and communities of color, our elected officials heard loud and clear from our allies and advocates.



## ***Coalitions and Partnerships***

Much of the work of the ACLU of Nevada is aided by our work with community partners and much of our success must be shared with them. **Thank you** to our coalition and community partners

Alternatives to Violence Program - Nevada Immigrant Coalition - Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN)  
NAACP Reno/Sparks - ACTIONN - Mi Familia Vota - Transgender Allies Group - National Juvenile Justice Network  
Nevada Teen Health and Safety Coalition - Northern Nevada Latino Alliance - Northern Nevada Area Coalition  
Guiding a New Generation - Latino Leaders Roundtable - UNR School of Social Work - Be the Change Project  
Immunize Nevada - UNR Voices for Planned Parenthood - Nevada Disability Advocacy and Law Center  
Reno Area Alliance for Homeless - FUSED at UNR - Catholic Charities - NV Coalition for Fair Sentencing of Youth  
Campaign for Fair Sentencing of Youth - Strategic Services - Boyd School of Law at UNLV - Ridge House  
Lutheran Episcopalian Alliance Network - Let Nevadans Vote Coalition - Silver State Voices - Battle Born Progress  
Human Services Network - Reno Justice Coalition at UNR - Clark County Public Defenders - Human Rights Campaign  
Gender Justice - Nevada Cure - Freedom to Marry - Nevada Legal Services - Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada -  
The Center (Las Vegas) - Build Our Center



# TAKING LIBERTIES

## For liberty, the defense must never rest

Anyone seeking the assistance of the ACLUNV must complete an intake form either online or by printing and mailing a completed form. Some cases are easily and/or immediately resolved during intake, many cases require some form of intervention with a government entity, some are referred to other organizations or agencies, and some become legal clients. The completed intake forms received by the ACLUNV for FY 2014-2015 are categorized broadly for purposes of this report as there are too many unique issues for full representation here.

**During this fiscal year, the ACLU of Nevada averaged intake contacts at a rate of nearly 4 per day, every day of the year.**

**Incarceration Issues 39% (408)** Abuse, violation of rights, access to legal aid and materials, lack of proper healthcare, access to medication, solitary confinement, etc.

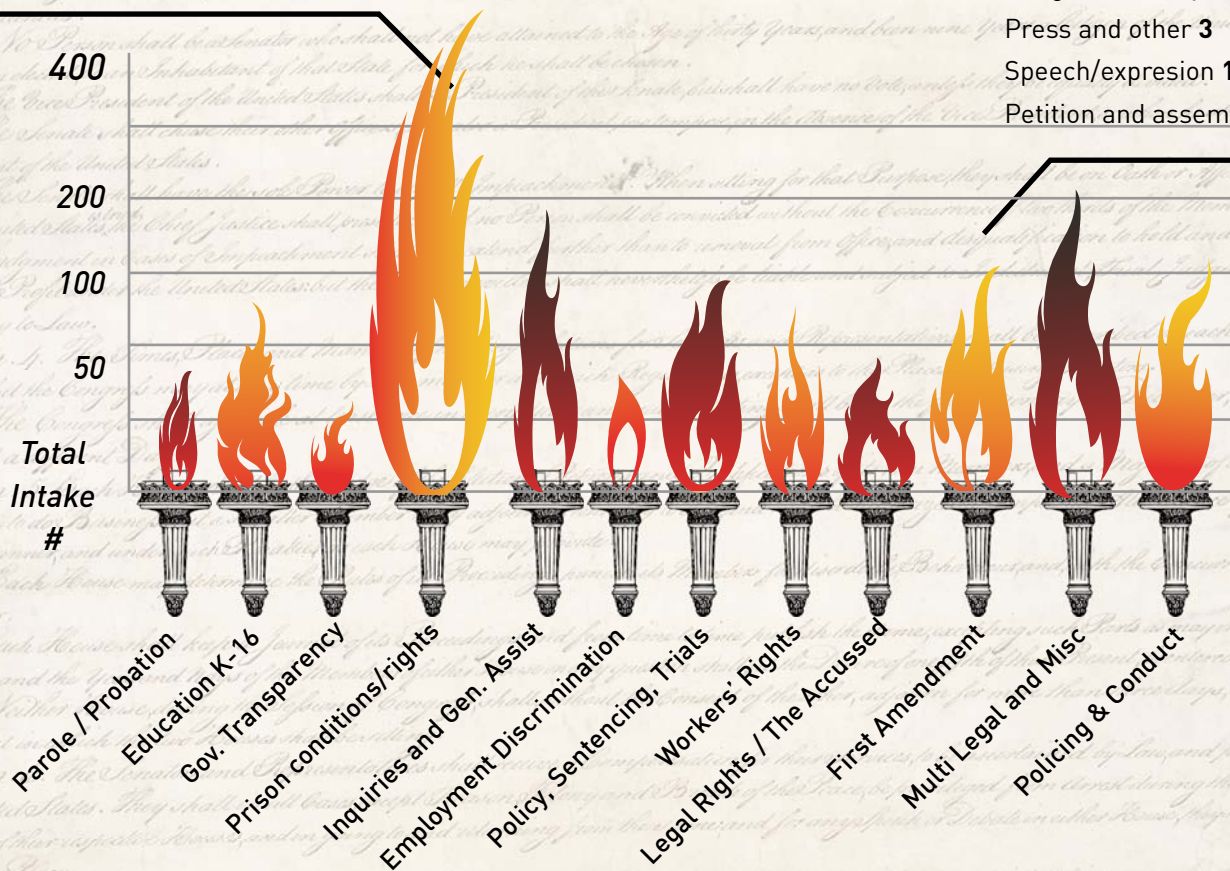
**First Amendment Issues 5%**

Religious Liberty 1

Press and other 3

Speech/expression 14

Petition and assemblage 25





# MAKING THE CASE

A complimentary and comprehensive advocacy and negotiation strategy has enabled the ACLU of Nevada to avert legal action and to simultaneously defend, secure, and strengthen protections for a number of our rights and liberties. Some of the constituencies on whose behalf we fight as well as issues significantly impacted by our work include: Protecting the rights of the incarcerated, fighting discrimination against transgender students, Elko and Nye County Jail policies, Las Vegas Metro Police Gang Database policy, sex education in public schools, disability rights and discrimination based on physical ability, racial equity in education policy, the use of force by law enforcement, immigrant rights and immigration policy, and numerous First Amendment issues.

While litigation is always a last resort of the ACLU of Nevada, we will and have sought relief from the courts on a number of important issues. Some important legal victories this past year include:

- ✓ The successful defeat of a deceptive initiative petition seeking to institute a “Voter ID” system in Nevada. The system had great potential to disenfranchise people of color, lower-income, and older Nevadans.
- ✓ A challenge to the constitutionality of Nevada’s discriminatory definition of marriage through *Sevcik v. Sandoval* led to a positive ruling in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, granting marriage equality for all Nevadans..
- ✓ Litigation arguing against shackling of pregnant inmates during childbirth led to new Department of Corrections regulations which now prevent the practice.
- ✓ Filed an amicus brief arguing for immediate implementation of DAPA (Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents) and expansion of the DACA programs (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).

## SEEKING LEGAL HELP?

The ACLU of Nevada is interested in redressing violations of civil rights and civil liberties. When determining whether to take a case, the ACLU of Nevada will evaluate whether the situation raises significant civil liberties or civil rights issues and the possibility for the suit to impact larger social change. Because of limited resources we take on only a few cases each year and thus must try to concentrate our resources on areas where they can effect the most positive change. If the ACLU of Nevada is unable to litigate the matter or to provide direct assistance, we will make every effort to provide you with other resources to help remedy the injustice suffered.

To file a complaint, please visit: <http://www.aclunv.org/complaint>

## AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION of NEVADA



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Rightful liberty is unobstructed action according  
to our will within limits drawn around us by the  
equal rights of others. -Thomas Jefferson