



Grassroots Leaders Prepare to Make a Positive Impact in 2024

Federalburg voting rights advocates. ↑
Photo credit: Nehemiah Bester

ARE YOU READY TO MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT DURING THE 2024 GENERAL ASSEMBLY? We've got you covered for many of the most pressing civil liberties and civil rights issues affecting Marylanders. Together we will empower Marylanders to exercise their rights so that the law values and uplifts their humanity. In the state legislature, we advocate for a broad range of rights – including access to justice, legal justice reform, election fairness and voting rights, freedom of expression, government transparency, police accountability, rights of people who are incarcerated, public school students' right to education, equal protection, privacy, racial justice, due process, religious liberty, and LGBTQ+ and reproductive rights. **We are strategic, so that we can make deep, lasting change.**

↑ **Get the full details about our 2024 General Assembly priorities at our website:**
aclu-md.org/mdga24

Here are some of the issues we expect to dedicate significant time and resources to in 2024:

The 90-day Maryland General Assembly session begins soon. Every action alert you sign, every phone call you make, every meeting or rally you attend to demand better for all Marylanders, makes a difference.

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY BOARDS The ACLU and the Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability will work to pass a bill to clarify that local governing bodies have the power to allow their Police Accountability Boards (PAB) to issue subpoenas, interview witnesses, and employ all other investigative techniques necessary to draw accurate conclusions about incidents, and to investigate claims prior to internal police adjudication and after.

MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION Legalization should not only address past harms, but it must prevent future disparities. The ACLU and allies will work to pass a bill that eliminates criminal penalties for marijuana and designates possession of more than the civil use amount and possession with intent to distribute as civil offenses, subject to citations and civil fines, rather than imprisonment.

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FREE STATE LIBERTIES

Winter
2024

FREE STATE LIBERTIES

The newsletter of the American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland and the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Maryland.

MAIN OFFICE: 3600 Clipper Mill Road, Suite 350, Baltimore, MD 21211

PHONE: (410) 889-8555 and Fax: (410) 366-7838

TDD: (410) 889-8558

EMAIL: aclu@aclu-md.org

WEBSITE: www.aclu-md.org

SUBSCRIPTION: With membership, \$20 or more donation per year.

BOARD PRESIDENT: Homayra Ziad

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Dana Vickers Shelley

Read about our Board of Directors, Staff, and other Team Members at our website: aclu-md.org/staff

EDITOR: Meredith Curtis Goode

WRITER: Neydin Milián

DESIGNER: Nicole McCann

Documents and information filed under the Maryland Solicitations Act may be obtained from the Maryland Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401.

ACLU
Maryland

DEAR FRIENDS OF CIVIL LIBERTIES

We are excited and proud to announce that the ACLU of Maryland has a new open process for community members to apply to be volunteer board members. Board members oversee the governance of the organization, and membership on our board is a unique opportunity to support our civil rights and civil liberties work.

Our staff and volunteer board members share our organization's five values: transparency, collaboration, equity, integrity, and accountability. Through these values, we empower Marylanders to exercise their rights so that the law values and uplifts their humanity. Our vision is that Maryland's people are united in affirming and exercising their rights in order to address inequities and fulfill the country's unrealized promise of justice and freedom for all.

Are you or do you know someone who could be a great board member? Please apply or share our open application today.

Yours in liberty and equity,



DANA VICKERS SHELLEY

Executive Director,
ACLU of Maryland



HOMAYRA ZIAD

Board President,
ACLU of Maryland

LEGAL RESOURCES

↑ Learn more and apply online:
aclu-md.org/board-app-24

Police Accountability Self-Advocacy Toolkit

We have a powerful new resource for Marylanders who have experienced abuse by police, the **Police Accountability Self-Advocacy Toolkit**. Our new toolkit describes ways a person harmed by police may use existing, though inadequate, accountability structures. We also hope the toolkit will highlight flaws in the system and encourage Marylanders to change it.

Know Your Rights – LGBTQ+ Students' Rights

We have an awesome new resource for students and their families! **LGBTQ+ Students' Rights at School in Maryland** is our latest Know Your Rights guide that focuses on gender, dress codes, self-expression, and more.

↑ Check it out: aclu-md.org/lgbtq

← Check it out: aclu-md.org/police-self-kit

Give online or use enclosed envelope to support the ACLU of Maryland's work: aclu-md.org/donate

ACCESS TO PAROLE In 2021, the General Assembly successfully removed the Governor from the parole process, which finally eliminated the politicized process of allowing governors to overturn parole decisions for Marylanders serving life imprisonment sentences. But there is a technical fix needed for a drafting error that excluded medical parole, which makes parole for those ill and dying the only kind to still require gubernatorial approval.

VOTING RIGHTS The ACLU and allies will advocate for a *Maryland Voting Rights Act*, which would enable our state to confront evolving barriers to participation and to root out longstanding discriminatory practices by creating a civil right of action against voter intimidation and protections for non-English-speaking voters. The bill will also provide resources to local governments considering changes to election structures and rules and encourage a streamlined and low-cost approach to addressing complaints of voting discrimination.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE Maryland incarcerates the highest percentage of Black people in the country, at 71 percent of our prison population, more than twice the national average. The only way to reduce existing racial disparities is to create more meaningful avenues for release for those who have demonstrated their rehabilitation. To build towards restorative justice and reduce mass incarceration, the ACLU will advocate with partners to pass legislation to authorize Marylanders who have served at least 20 years to petition to modify or reduce their sentence.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS In 2022, the ACLU of Maryland and our partners

successfully passed the *Child Interrogation Protection Act*, which requires an attorney be consulted before a child is interrogated by law enforcement. The law also requires that parents/guardians for the child are notified when the

child is taken into custody. Now, we must defend these vital protections for children, in the face of rampant attacks mischaracterizing youth crime by police, prosecutors, and certain media outlets.

LEGAL REPORT

↳ Learn more at our website: aclu-md.org/press

VOTING RIGHTS This September saw a historic moment for Federalsburg, a town on Maryland's Eastern Shore, when for the first time in 200 years, Black officials were finally elected to represent their town.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY Family members and the Coalition for Justice for Anton Black in November announced final resolution of their federal court litigation following the brutal, unconstitutional killing of Anton Black.

IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS In response to Frederick County Sheriff Charles Jenkins' federal indictment on criminal charges, misuse of office, and poor civil rights record, the national ACLU joined with the ACLU of Maryland to file an administrative complaint in July to request an investigation by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties into the propriety of continuing the 287(g) agreement between ICE and the Frederick County Sheriff's Office.

RACIAL JUSTICE & MARIJUANA

New Toolkit, Local Advocacy in Prince George's & Baltimore

A new toolkit and local campaigns in Prince George's and Baltimore are centering racial justice in how marijuana tax funds will be spent locally. In 2022, the Maryland General Assembly created the *Community Repair and Reinvestment Fund* (HB 837). This new law says that in Maryland's new recreational marijuana market, at least 35% of the state tax revenue must be used to repair, heal, and reinvest into the communities that have been most harmed by the dangerous "war on drugs."

How can we make sure marijuana reparations happens in the most impactful way? A key new resource is the *Cannabis Advocacy Toolkit*, written by Dayvon Love, director of public policy for the Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle, in partnership with the ACLU. The toolkit is a conceptual guide for community advocates in Maryland working to ensure racial justice is centered as cannabis (marijuana) is legalized and tax dollars are distributed from the newly legal market.

↳ Learn more at our website: aclu-md.org/cannabis-toolkit

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U.S. Postage
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Baltimore, MD
No. 2393

3600 Clipper Mill Road, Suite 350
Baltimore, Maryland 21211
(410) 889-8555

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Please complete this form and return it in the envelope provided or give online at www.aclu-md.org.
Your personal commitment and strong support will make all the difference in the fight for civil liberties in 2024. **Renew your support of the ACLU today.**

DONATE ONLINE!

