

ANNUAL REPORT

American Civil Liberties Union
of Texas
FY 2016-2017



A MESSAGE FROM TERRI BURKE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

For the ACLU of Texas – as for our sister affiliates, our national office, the country, and the history of the country – this year marked a turning point in our collective fortunes. Our steady and inexorable grind to secure and defend the civil liberties of our fellow Texans has been thrust into breakneck acceleration.

But these recent crises are not without their opportunities. Since the election we have expanded our reach and seen our stature rise. We have enrolled thousands of new members, volunteers, and volunteer attorneys, provided them with training and deployed them effectively. When we call upon Texans to come to the Capitol to help defend civil rights, they come by the busload.

This outpouring of support has proved both helpful and necessary. The Trump era poses a greater threat to our rights, liberties, values and institutions than any other in my lifetime, and the country needs the ACLU more than ever before. We know this is not a fight we can afford to lose.

SMART JUSTICE

Jeff Sessions' appointment to head the Justice Department struck a significant blow to criminal justice reform in the U.S. But the will and the momentum for such reforms are there, and we remain committed to bringing fair justice to Texas.



ACLU BLUE

With the launch of our police accountability app ACLU Blue, we're giving Texans the tools to hold accountable the police sworn to protect and serve them. ACLU Blue allows users to join an interactive, online community committed to publicly documenting excessive uses of force, racial profiling and over-militarized responses by law enforcement, as well as to showcase examples of model policing in Texas communities. It's available for free download in both the iPhone and Android app stores.



DEFENDING THE HOMELESS

Officials in both Houston and Dallas tried to resolve their homelessness problems by arresting and jailing their homeless residents. We stepped in to remind both cities that folks who have lost their homes haven't lost their rights.

ENDING DEBTORS' PRISONS

Low-income Texans who can't afford their traffic tickets find Texas' criminal justice system to be a maze with no exit, and many end up imprisoned for their debts. Debtors' prisons are unconstitutional, so we sued.

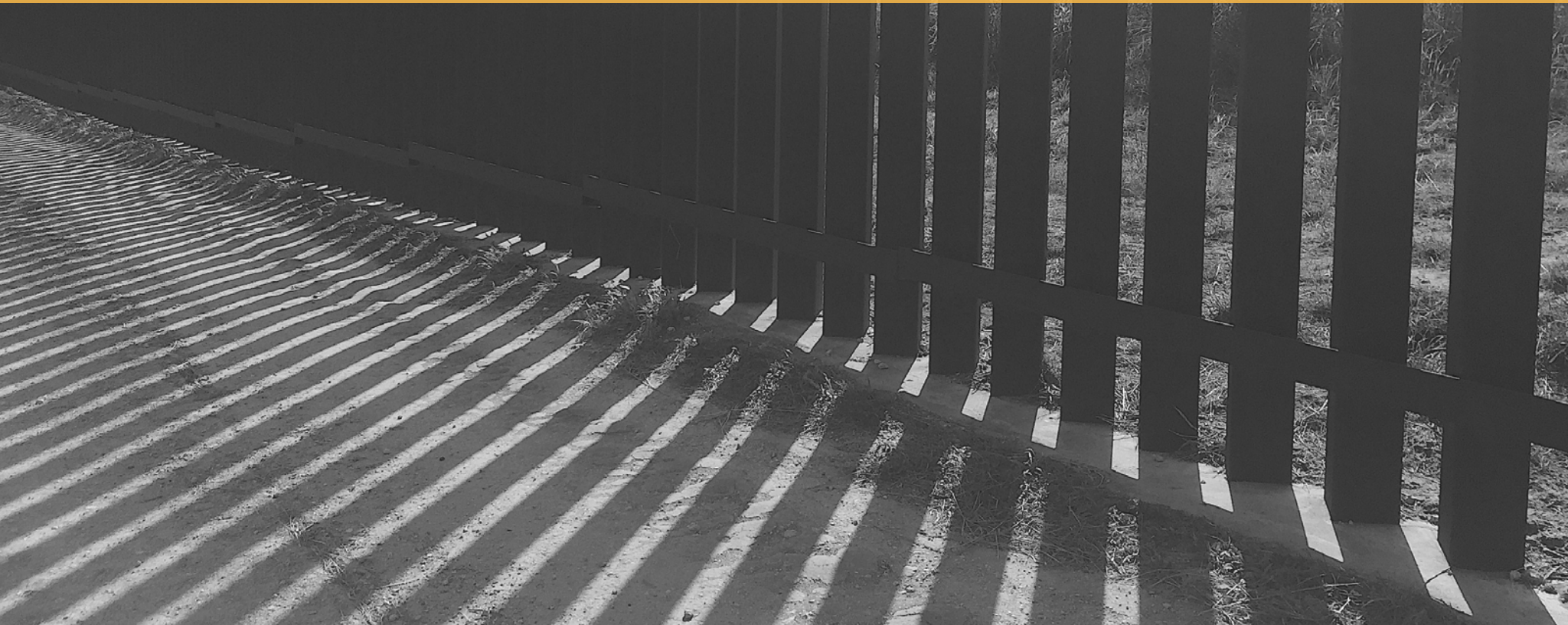
KIDS BELONG IN SCHOOL

This year we worked with Texas teachers and community groups to end suspensions and expulsions for our state's youngest students. Ending these practices is the beginning of the end for the school-to-prison pipeline and teaches students that their futures matter.



IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

It's a hard time to be an immigrant in the U.S., and especially in Texas. But we're fighting to get families out of private prisons, to ensure that refugees keep their right to settle here, and to see that law enforcement treats the residents of our border communities with respect.





TRUMP'S TRAVEL BAN

When President Trump's first Muslim ban executive order went into effect, our staff deployed to airports in Houston and Dallas where they coordinated with local volunteer attorneys to defend the rights of travelers and protesters alike. Thanks to our efforts and the efforts of our partners, all travelers in Dallas and Houston who were temporarily detained under the executive order were released and no protesters were arrested.



IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS HOTLINE

The president's travel ban exposed an urgent need for real-time assistance for affected immigrants and their families, so together with our partners we set up a hotline to ensure everyone understands their constitutional rights. Those seeking information can call 1-888-507-2970 from 2-6 p.m., M-F.

FAMILY DETENTION

Lawmakers in both Austin and Washington have tried to license private prisons in Texas as “child care facilities” so they can illegally keep undocumented children behind bars. We’ve kept the media pressure on them; in December they released nearly 500 mothers and children from the detention centers in Karnes and Dilley, near San Antonio.

TWO COURT VICTORIES

Twice in the last few years we’ve sued Customs and Border Protection over its agents’ use of excessive force. One of our clients was subjected to six hours of invasive and illegal cavity searches during a fruitless search for smuggled drugs, and the other — a petite woman with a disability — was manhandled and thrown to the ground. Both cases were wrapped up this year, as we secured justice for both of our clients, and forced CBP to review its practices and retrain its agents.



LGBTQ EQUALITY

The backlash from the historic marriage equality decision has driven lawmakers all across the country to target LGBTQ equality generally — and transgender folks specifically — with renewed intensity and aggressiveness. Texas is no exception.

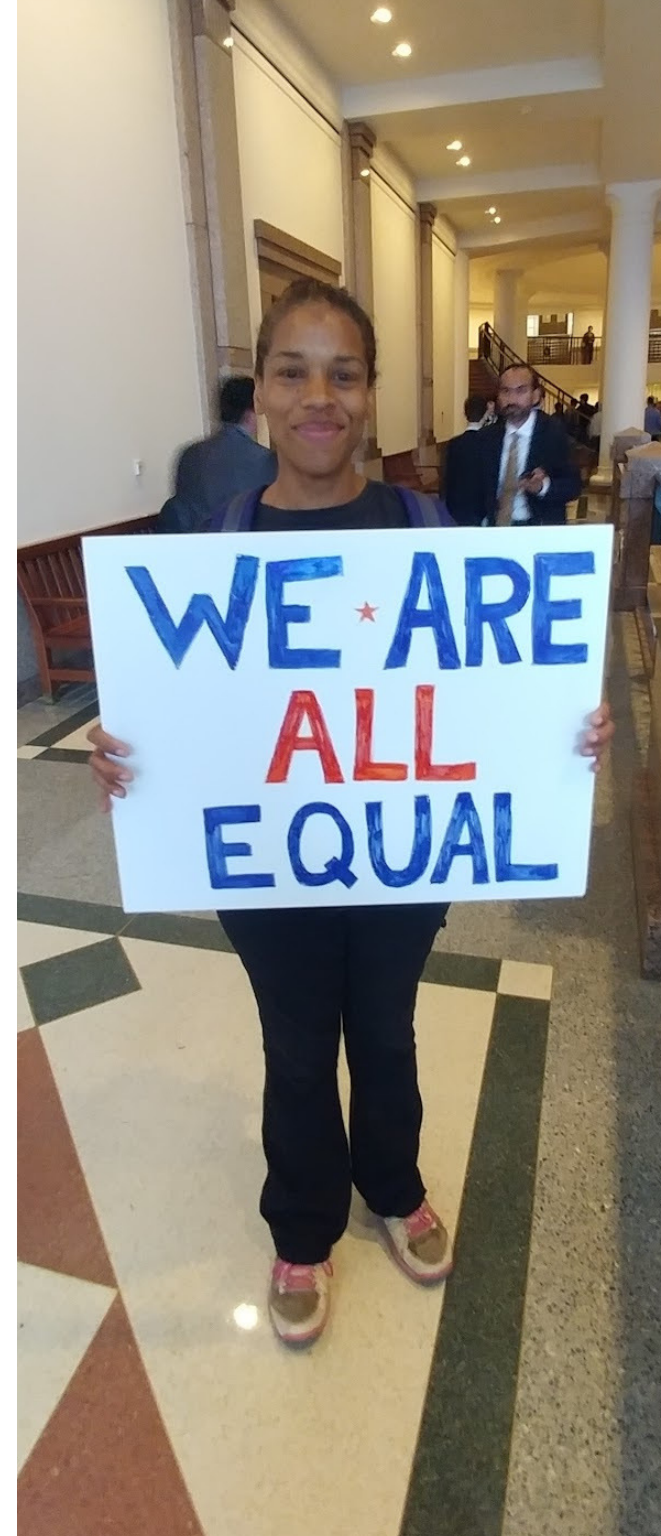


TAKING THE FIGHT TO THE LEGE

This year we and our supporters flooded the Capitol to fight anti-LGBTQ legislation. We co-hosted “All in for Equality” advocacy day and welcomed the actress Sara Ramirez who spoke to lawmakers and roused the crowd that numbered in the thousands. We also worked with the Transgender Education Network of Texas (TENT) to support the 2017 Trans Texan Lobby Day, which was the largest transgender-specific lobby day in Texas history.

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE COURTROOM

While our organizers reached out to Texas schools to provide Know Your Rights trainings for students and support for Gay Straight Alliances, our legal team intervened in several cases to defend against the State's attempts to infringe on transgender rights and relitigate the marriage equality decision.





BATHROOMS, AGAIN?

We and our allies mobilized to stop Dan Patrick from securing passage of a “bathroom bill” for Texas during the regular legislative session. We even partnered with Richard Linklater to direct a video showing that laws like this aren’t about privacy, but discrimination against transgender Texans.

REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

Since the Supreme Court struck down Texas' draconian anti-abortion law HB2, lawmakers have redoubled their efforts to infringe on women's reproductive freedom, and the many bills they filed this year no longer even pretend to protect women's health.



CALLING OUT LIES

This year we worked with a whistleblower to reveal that state officials were hiding statistics about the devastating impact of Texas's anti-abortion law. We always knew lawmakers weren't motivated by a desire to protect women's health, and now we have the data.

REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM IN ACTION

Our annual RFIA conference again brought graduate students and young professionals in medicine, law, public health, and social work together to help transform Texas's political calculus in support of full reproductive rights and abortion access.

#SUPPORTHER

When a woman makes the decision to end a pregnancy, she needs access to safe medical care and support from her friends and family. Thus far hundreds have taken our pledge to support women who have chosen to make the deeply personal decision to have an abortion.



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

We were humbled by the incredible outpouring of support since the presidential election. We've taken that opportunity to ensure everyone who supports us has the tools, knowledge, and training they need to defend Texans' civil liberties.



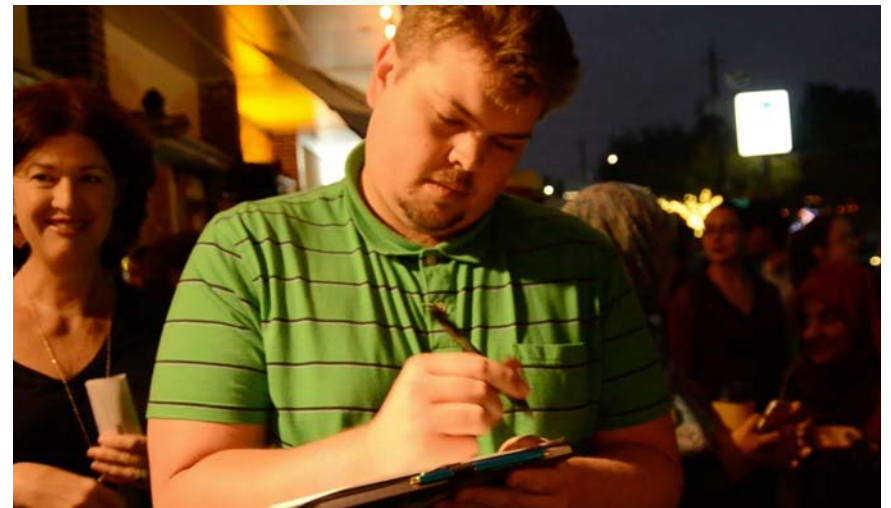
VOLUNTEERS

At our many volunteer trainings throughout the state, attendees became trained legal observers, learned about our new ACLU Blue launch, and became familiar with ACLU issues and how to talk about them. We also hosted a popular webinar series that prepared our supporters to take action during the Texas legislative session.



MEET-UPS

The morning after the election, we began organizing a series of volunteer meet-ups across the state, in response to the post-election outpouring of support and desire for people to get engaged. By the end of 2016, we had held meet-ups in Houston, Austin, San Antonio, Brownsville, and Dallas.



LAWYERS' SUMMIT

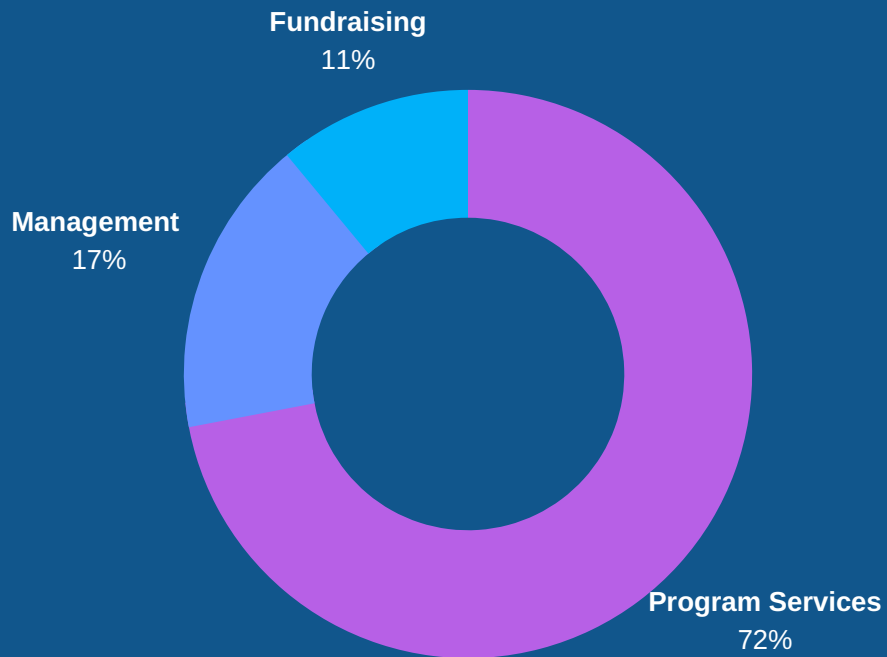
Our legal department held its first lawyers' summits in Houston and Dallas. Participants heard inspiring presentations on cutting-edge ACLU cases and attended trainings on the threats facing immigrants, students of color, LGBTQ Texans, and more. Many signed up to join our Speakers' Bureau so they can spread the word and expand support for civil liberties in Texas.

VOTING RIGHTS

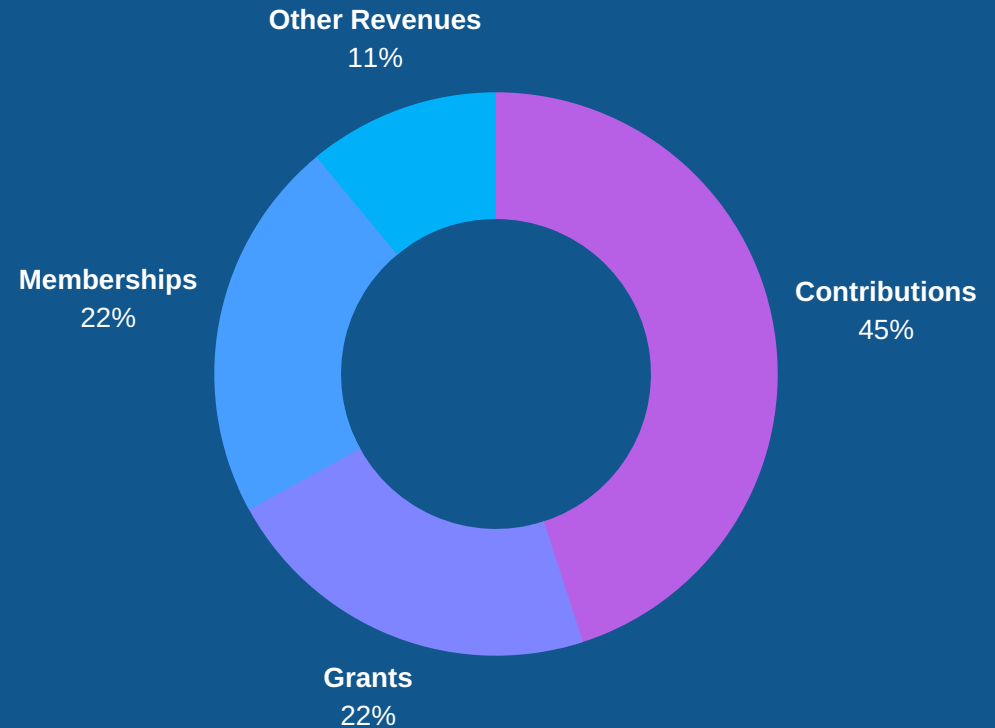
The right to vote is sacrosanct in a democracy, and that right is currently under threat in states all across the country, including Texas. This year we undertook a robust drive to extend and protect voting rights in the Lone Star State that included a tele-town hall, our Election Protection hotline, Voter ID Law primers, and voting rights booklets.



FISCAL YEAR 2017 CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT*



EXPENDITURES



REVENUES

*APRIL 1, 2016 - MARCH 31, 2017 - AUDITOR: CARR RIGGS AND INGRAM LLP. AUDITED STATEMENT AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.

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