

ACLU
Delaware



CONNECT!

SOLIDARITY WINS FOR IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

SUMMER 2026

Jac Cichocki, Campaign Communications Manager

Coloring my fifteenth butterfly, I thought about the hundreds of videos I'd seen of government agents abducting people as they screamed in a terror recognizable in any language. I meditated on the brutality with which these people were treated and mourned for them and the families they were forced to leave behind.

"But ICE isn't doing any of that stuff in Delaware," was a common refrain from well-meaning but misinformed folks who were not targets of the federal anti-immigrant agenda. Over eight hundred Delawareans have been taken since January of 2025.

For decades, monarch butterflies (collectively called a kaleidoscope) have been a popular symbol for U.S.

immigrants. Their migration pattern through North America crosses many borders — from Mexico all the way up to Canada. This journey, often spanning several generations, demonstrates their incredible adaptability and resilience.

In response to the urgent need for more legislative protection in Delaware, ACLU-DE's Campaign Manager Helen Salita organized the June 17 immigrants' rights rally that featured the 'kaleidoscopic solidarity' art installation at Legislative Hall. In partnership with Delaware's Indivisible groups, we mobilized volunteers throughout the state to decorate hundreds of paper butterflies, representing those in Delaware who had been abducted by ICE.

Despite the heat that day, our community showed up in full force.

SOLIDARITY WINS FOR IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS by Jac Cichocki

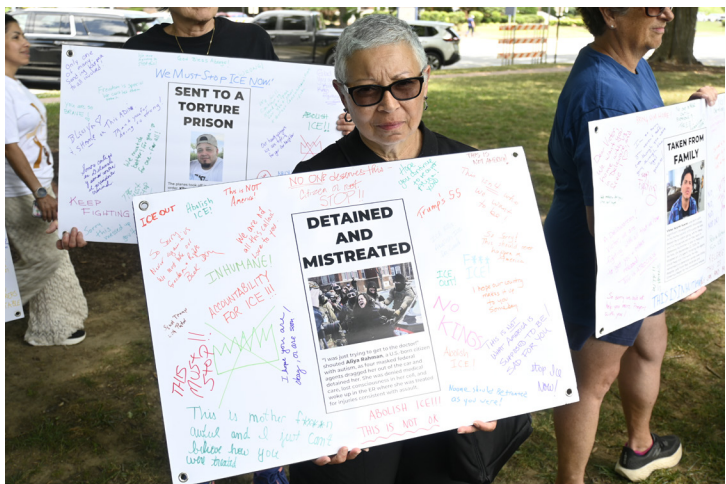
On arrival, I immediately noticed the large homemade signs of local activists proclaiming "Abolish ICE" and "Protect Immigrants' Rights." Members of Indivisible wore black with posters commemorating people who had been detained, abused, killed, or deported.

The rally featured speakers from the Delaware State Education Association (DSEA), the Latin American Community Center (LACC), the Votamos, We Vote Coalition, New Castle Help, Kent Help, Sussex Help, Indivisible Newark, the Presbyterian Church, and Representative Mara Gorman from RD 23. The crowd absorbed the palpable fear and loss in the speeches of those personally impacted by immigration enforcement and learned how to join volunteer efforts to support our state's immigrant families.

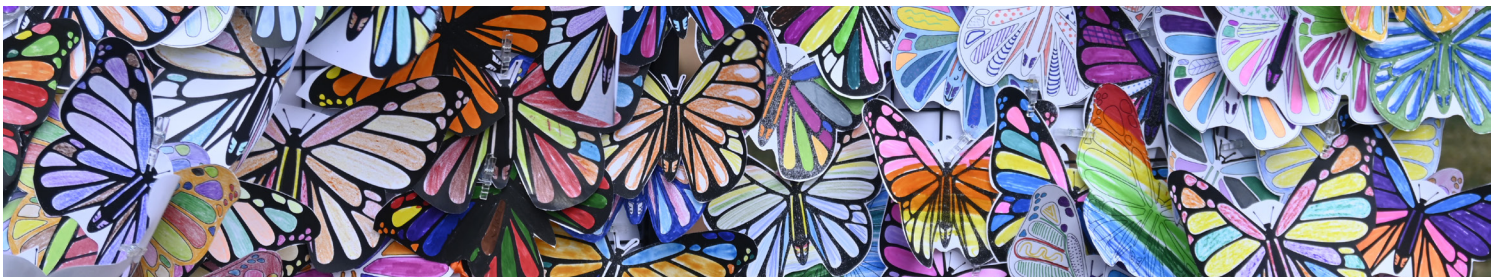
The only thing as captivating as the speeches was the art display: metal frames over five feet high and nearly six feet across held hundreds of paper butterflies decorated with various mediums — markers, crayons, paint, glitter. They were all completely unique; repeating patterns and vibrant colors, all catching the light in remarkable ways. A butterfly for every member of our community taken by ICE, many of whom never came home.

It was the culmination of weeks of solidarity and activism. As I watched them waving in the breeze, the final result was sobering but also beautiful. It reminds me that our community has power in times of strife. This year, this very same community succeeded in passing priority legislation that: helps protect sensitive locations from ICE activity (HB 94 & HB 150), prohibits detaining any person solely based on a civil immigration warrant (HB 368), and bans private detention facilities in Delaware (HB 151).

The work is never truly done, but it will also never be done alone. 🚩



Pictured: Advocates from the June 17 Immigrants' Rights rally and 'kaleidoscopic solidarity' art installation in Dover.



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Delaware's New Voting Rights Act: For Us, By Us

Jasmyn Moore, ACLU-DE Policy & Advocacy Intern



Pictured: Author (left) and volunteer advocate at Legislative Hall.

Our recent Advocacy in Action series was a powerful experience showing the importance of community engagement. The Advocacy in Action series consisted of weekly interactive advocacy trainings and action opportunities occurring at Legislative Hall, during the final weeks of session.

These days were an opportunity for Delawareans to volunteer and make their voices heard about key issues in Delaware, including Immigrants' Rights, Voting Rights, and Privacy Rights. Each session began in the morning at the cafeteria of Legislative Hall. Volunteers shared what district they were from—some learning their district and representative for the first time—and listened to each other's stories about why they were attending that day. Many volunteers were motivated by their lived experience, their loved one's lived experience, and their principled belief in civil liberties.

As a Policy & Advocacy Intern, I wasn't sure what to expect of these days spent at Legislative Hall. On the first day, I was able to train community members in how to draft a public comment and properly register to give their comment. Then I watched them courageously share the comment they had worked so hard on. One of the key bills we focused on was HB 444, the John Lewis Voting Rights Act. This bill protects Delaware voters from discriminatory practices and restores

protections that the *Louisiana v. Callais* decision left unprotected.

While advocating for this bill, I had the immense privilege of meeting people in my community who remember when the federal Voting Rights Act was passed. I was honored to witness the deep fear and grief that persists for those members of the community to be in a place where they are fighting for their voting rights *again*. In this fear and grief, I could see how their voices were deeply rooted in generations of resistance and community activism.

In a committee hearing, I saw volunteers remind legislators that many Delawareans are the great-grandchildren of sharecroppers. It was very powerful to hear in Legislative Hall that the disenfranchisement of Black folks was not so long ago. As an African-American woman, this a memory and feeling I will carry with me with pride for a long time.

On the last day of the session, there was an even deeper sense of urgency to speak with legislators about the importance of the issues and bills we were advocating to secure the votes we needed. For many volunteers, this was the fourth consecutive Advocacy in Action Day they attended. This means I got to see how volunteers encouraged one another, informed others of the legislative process, and met with legislators with confidence.

The passage of the Voting Rights Act we fought for speaks to the life-changing and essential nature of civic engagement and community involvement. In my experience as a Policy & Advocacy Intern, I am often reminded how the buildings we occupy and organizations we work within are nothing without the people. The Advocacy in Action Days helped people come together and become more familiar with the legislative process. This led to seeing even more confidence in volunteers advocating for their civil rights. I am so grateful for this experience, and I look forward to participating in more events like this. 📌

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

Dear Friends —

June marked the end of two important terms: the U.S. Supreme Court and the Delaware 153rd General Assembly.

The Court thankfully ruled that ballots postmarked by Election Day were protected, *and* birthright citizenship means that people born in the U.S. are citizens. Unfortunately, the Court also ruled that states can discriminate against trans girls in sports. This extremely disappointing decision did *not*, however, grant states permission to discriminate against trans people in other ways, and the ACLU will continue to fight to protect and expand rights for LGBTQ+ people.

In the Delaware legislature, the results were much more positive. Our policy and advocacy team successfully passed priority legislation on immigrants' rights, digital privacy, voting rights, criminal legal reform, and LGBTQ+ rights. These wins are inspiring, and the credit

belongs to each of you. Since the 2024 election, we have been inundated with volunteers who have shown up at legislative hall, met with their elected officials, and had their voices heard at protests and rallies across the state.

Your advocacy is working, and now is not the time to let off the pressure. As Delaware gears up for fall elections, ACLU-DE will keep the public informed about where candidates stand on core civil rights issues. We hope to see you at the polls, fighting for the Delaware that we all want to achieve.



Mike B.

Community In and Out of the Courtroom

Gabrielle London, ACLU-DE Legal Intern



Pictured: Legal team outside the Delaware Court of Chancery; author pictured fifth from left

It is early on a Thursday morning in June. I am powering through the streets of Wilmington, Delaware, trying my best to catch up with the other interns on the way to the courthouse. I turn a corner and, on my left, is the pantsuit parade. Seven of my fellow legal interns, all incredible women as I've come to know, are on a pilgrimage led by attorney Jason Beehler to argue a case before the Chancery court.

When we arrive, the Chancery courthouse is a delightful and strange carnival of locals, lawyers, officers, or jurors, and we are the ringleaders of the legal procession. We as interns are gathered in the courtroom gallery, while Jason and Jared prepare to face the judge. We rise for his honor, and the day begins.

Today is the hearing for *Calm, et al. v. Taylor*, more commonly known in the office as just "Chancery." It's a case brought by ACLU-DE against the Delaware Department of Corrections (DDOC). In simple terms, correctional officers have been spraying incarcerated people with a dangerous chemical called Oleoresin Capsicum and not decontaminating them properly, creating unsafe and unreasonable conditions for people. The case was expedited as soon as it was brought forward, making its developments rapid and intense, delivering us quickly to the court. The unusual

speed of the case reflects the ACLU's dedication to prison justice. A person's sentence does not and should not determine their treatment as a human being, and we are empowered to defend this truth.

Chancery isn't the only case seeing major developments this summer either. We're also handling a case in Fenwick Island that looks to block corporations from being able to vote in local elections. It's a crucial part of our mission to ensure that voting stays in the hands of real local individuals. Our rights cannot be determined by the interests of businesses whose synthetic hearts are made of money and power.

Before Chancery, I have never been to a courthouse or experienced the proceedings. Even jury duty, an expected and perhaps dreaded part of the everyman's plight, hasn't come to claim me yet. I am unsure of what to expect, and strangely delighted at a decidedly bureaucratic ordeal. I am learning, fundamentally, what it means to be an advocate. There is community in this courtroom, among my fellow interns, among the ACLU-DE's excellent lawyers, among our executive director Mike Brickner who sits with us as a peer in the wooden pews of the gallery.

In the middle of the afternoon, seven long hours

COMMUNITY IN AND OUT OF THE COURTROOM by Gabrielle London

after our great migration from the office to the courthouse, the day adjourns. The judge has decided to take our valiant case under advisement, and now we can only wait. We head back to the office, and again the interns gather together at the conference table.

The conference table itself, a largely unassuming piece of furniture, is our watering hole. It is where we all sit and work and talk, loudly and passionately, about matters trivial and extraordinary. The table is in a room that is central to the whole office, and so there is a constant flicking in and out from the attorneys, other department members, volunteers, and the like. Everyone has something new and interesting and strange to say, and I find myself learning constantly.

I spend much of my time at that table just listening, and asking questions. I'm surrounded by people who are far, far smarter than me and there is a lot that I can glean from just hearing their thoughts on any variety of matters. I think I can definitively say that's my favorite part—the people and their voices.

I am learning, fundamentally, what it means to be an advocate.

Fenwick and Chancery are, of course, just two of several cases that have defined a very nuanced experience at the ACLU of Delaware thus far. There is always something new happening inside the walls of the office. Every day, I am tasked with research for one of our attorneys that enlightens me and alerts me to some new and unique piece of the bureaucratic system.

With these two cases on the front burners of ACLU-DE's "cooking with gas" stove, we at the office are

excitedly awaiting further developments. Chancery could see a decision at any time after its argument in the courtroom. Oral arguments will be heard in due time, and expedited developments will follow suit. The bureaucracy can be a little hard to navigate when it comes to the timelines of legal proceedings, but it doesn't mean that the fight will fade. ACLU-DE will always stand by our cases, our beliefs, and the people we serve.

In just a few weeks, I've learned about economic and educational disparity across the state of Delaware and numerous comparator states. I've learned about the treatment of people on probation and how deeply complex the prison system is. I've learned about the specific language of the state code and what it relies on the SCOTUS to protect. These pieces of information are the very foundation of how this state operates, and how the day-to-day lives of Delawareans are legally governed. Working in civil rights presents an incredible sense of responsibility, and allows no room for ignorance of the civic system.

Alongside the other interns, fellows, attorneys, and advocacy professionals at ACLU-DE, I am constantly learning. Even in dire times, I am a patriot of my country—that is, I know what it has the potential to become. I can see it in the conference room where we spend our days defending and representing diversity and equity. It's just as present in the streets of Wilmington which I've come to walk every day. It's in my classrooms at the University of Delaware, in the teachers and the students. I'm proud of it. ACLU-DE has made me keenly aware of it, and the ongoing experience is extraordinary. 



WE THE PEOPLE!

Sept 24, 2026 | 6:00-7:30p | Rehoboth Beach

Stand alongside community leaders dedicated to protecting our rights and advocating for justice, including National ACLU's Chief Strategy Officer Aletheia Henry! Join the host committee today: bit.ly/we-the-hosts

