

## A Letter from ACLU-DE Board President:



ARTICLE BY: **KATHRYN JAKABCIN**  
ACLU-DE BOARD PRESIDENT

Here at the ACLU of Delaware, the stars have aligned to create some challenges, but more importantly: some exciting opportunities for our organization.

As the President of the Board of Directors, I wanted to take this opportunity to reach out and give you an update on what's happening with our team at ACLU-DE. To quote First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, "We cannot tell from day to day what may come. This is no ordinary time. No time for weighing anything except what

we can do best for the country as a whole."

Mrs. Roosevelt's words were true for America when she spoke them in 1940, and they're true today in 2019: for our country, for our state, and for the ACLU of Delaware too.

The organization is in a good place to stretch our muscles—and stretch we must. Earlier this year, our former Executive Director retired to the sunshine state, and we placed the duties of that position in the capable hands of Dave Bever during this transition period. We are currently in the process of searching for a new Executive Director and plan to fill the position early in the new year.

Our Interim Director and Director of Development Dave

Bever has seen us through this transition period with integrity, guidance, and patience—but it is time for him to take a new path, too. Dave has accepted a position as Executive Director of our community ally, the DE Center for Justice. This move is a perfect fit for his background in development and social services and his passion for social justice. We will be sad to see Dave go, but because of his diligent work this year, we are in a good position until we hire our new Executive Director; and we wish him so much success and happiness in this new appointment.

Last month we bade farewell to our former Legal Director Ryan Tack-Hooper. He and his family moved to



Seattle because his wife (also an ACLU attorney) accepted a position with the ACLU of Washington state. We are thrilled for the opportunities this move presents for Ryan and his family, both personal and professional. We are also excited to announce that Karen Lantz, former Policy Counsel, has agreed to take on the position of Legal and Policy Director at ACLU-DE. The search for a new Staff Attorney is underway.

The staff of the ACLU of Delaware is among the best and most cohesive groups of colleagues I have ever witnessed. They do a spectacular job, and the

CONT. ON PAGE 2



### FALL 2019 // WHAT'S INSIDE:

- 4 Kandler Memories
- 5 Remembering Sonia Sloan
- 7 ACLU Gift Ideas for the Holidays

and more!

# CONNECTION

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We invite you to exercise your free speech rights by sending suggestions, letters, questions, or comments.



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### LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT CONT. FROM FRONT PAGE

proof can be seen in our many initiatives and projects like the Campaign for Smart Justice, fair discipline in schools, and the education lawsuit—just to name a few.

We are also an integral part of the national work to protect and advance the civil rights of all Americans during these turbulent times. From attempted abortion bans to family separation

to immigrant imprisonment and worse, the ACLU's mission remains steady: protect the promise of the United States Constitution. Beyond any one person, party, or side—the ACLU dares to create a more perfect union.

We have important, exciting, meaningful, but nonetheless difficult work ahead of us in the next few months. We may be down a few hands, but I am confident that we will effect the

transition seamlessly. I look forward to welcoming new team members to our organization.

Thank you for your valuable support of this important work, through this transition and always. None of this would be possible without you.

Warm Wishes,



Kathryn Jakabcin  
**President**  
ACLU-DE Board



## Coalition for Smart Justice Announces 2020 Priorities

The ACLU of Delaware's Coalition for Smart Justice is ready to take on the second half of the 150th General Assembly's legislative session. The coalition is a statewide group of organizations and individuals who advocate for a criminal justice system that fosters public safety by reducing mass incarceration, recidivism and racial disparities.

The first half of the 150th General Assembly in 2019 saw the most ambitious criminal justice reform effort Delaware has taken on in decades – establishing a solid foundation for real, meaningful reform in the First State.

Several of the bills that passed addressed key Coalition priority areas, including:

- **SB 37:** Expands access to expungement for adults,
- **HB 5:** Returns discretion to judges by expanding concurrent sentencing and eliminating mandatory consecutive sentencing for many crimes, and
- **SB 47:** Reduces sentencing disparities for convictions in the city by eliminating sentence enhancements that apply more often to urban residents,

removes sentence aggravators for prior convictions, and changes the weight tiers for controlled substance offenses to reflect actual use patterns.

*The second half of the General Assembly's legislative session is just around the corner, and our work isn't done yet.*

At their last meeting, members of the Coalition for Smart Justice voted on six areas of criminal justice reform to tackle in 2020:

- **Fines, Fees & Drivers' License Suspensions:** End the criminalization of poverty that has trapped many people in a punitive cycle by allowing the court to consider a person's ability to pay court fines and fees, and stop the automatic suspension of drivers' licenses where someone is unable to pay,
- **Data Collection & Transparency:** Collect and publish data to understand racial disparities, measure policy

impacts and inform better policy choices,

- **Sentencing Reform:** Eliminate most mandatory minimums and expand opportunities for sentence modification and early release,
- **Pretrial Reform:** Reduce the number of people in prison before they've been convicted of a crime and ensure fairness through the pre-trial process from arrest to trial,
- **Probation Reform:** End the revolving door to prison by implementing post-release policies that promote success after incarceration, and
- **Treating Children as Children:** House all children in juvenile facilities and increase the minimum age at which children can be prosecuted criminally.

Please visit our website for more information about the coalition, our priorities, and ways that you can get involved in the Smart Justice movement.

Dear ACLU of Delaware members:

As you may have heard, my family and I have moved to Seattle.

Although I am excited for my family's new adventure in the Pacific Northwest, I am sad to be leaving Delaware and the ACLU. ACLU-DE is part of a network of people who are working every day to make life better for the underdogs in Delaware. I will long remain inspired by the work done by this little merry band of troublemakers.

It has been a great honor to work on behalf of Delawareans to fight for free speech, humane prison conditions, constitutional policing, transparent government, and equitable schools. And it has been a joy to share in that essential work with my colleagues at the ACLU of Delaware and our allies elsewhere in the State. I know that work will continue and thank you for continuing to support their efforts.



*Ryan Tack-Hooper*

Ryan Tack-Hooper

SEE PAGE 6 FOR A SPECIAL NOTE FROM DAVE BEVER

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF THE 2019 KANDLER AWARDS CELEBRATION!

Thank you to everyone who joined us this year to honor Charlotte King of the Southern Delaware Alliance for Racial Justice & Brendan O'Neill of the Delaware Office of Defense Services at the 2019 Kandler Awards Celebration!



To view all the photos and videos from the event, visit [www.aclu-de.org/en/events/2019-kandler-awards-celebration](http://www.aclu-de.org/en/events/2019-kandler-awards-celebration).

We had so much fun this year that we're already looking forward to next year's party! In the meantime, we'd like to give another big thank-you to our sponsors of this year's event:

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## Remembering Sonia Sloan

CONTRIBUTED ARTICLE BY: JUDY MELLEN  
FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
ACLU OF DELAWARE

There is a hole in the world....a hole that exists because Sonny Sloan is gone.

Sonny died on October 19. She had lived for 91 years, but no one who knew Sonny would use the word "old" to describe her vibrant spirit.

For those of you who did not have the good fortune to know her, I'd like to offer a little background on Sonia Sloan. One of the countless things that Sonny did during her lifetime was to help found the Delaware affiliate of the ACLU, where she was instrumental in hiring me as the first paid full-time executive director. For a more thorough list of her impressive accomplishments, I refer you to her front page obituary in the News Journal, which can also be found on DelawareOnline.com.

Sonny was a force to be reckoned with: she knew everyone who was anyone in Delaware and could pick up a phone and get them to assist in whatever we needed: funding, names for an honorary committee, help for a project or initiative, the list goes on. All this characterized her profound commitment to the ACLU, a commitment that ran deep into who she was as a person and citizen.



This small woman (in size only) has been described as a juggernaut and her energy found its outlet in ideas for projects and directions, gratefully accepted by this fledgling director when I was starting out at ACLU-DE. Moreover, she never walked away; she was always offering help. She would say "Who can I call," and since she knew absolutely everyone, it was never an empty offer.

I was just one of many who benefited from Sonny's knowledge, commitment, and love. I can't believe she is gone, but while we grieve the loss of this incredible woman we must also honor her by continuing to fight for all the things that she would have wanted us to: making Delaware a better place for everyone, every day.

## What You Need to Know About the LGBTQ Rights Cases Before SCOTUS

EXCERPT OF BLOG POST BY: JAMES ESSEKS, DIRECTOR, ACLU LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL TRANSGENDER & HIV PROJECT

Last month the Supreme Court heard arguments in three cases in which the Trump administration is urging the court to rule that it's legal to fire workers for being LGBTQ.

For the LGBTQ civil rights movement, this is a big moment. These cases will affect more people than the Supreme Court's decision about the freedom to marry, and they potentially implicate a broader range of contexts in which LGBTQ people may face harm if the Court green-lights discrimination. Worse still, a bad ruling would strip away protections against discrimination that LGBTQ people have been able to use to protect themselves for two decades. And all this in a context where

nearly one in three transgender people has experienced discrimination in the workplace.

**In short, the stakes are very high.**

One of the cases is about the rights of transgender people and involves Aimee Stephens, who worked for nearly six years as a funeral director at a funeral home near Detroit, [before being fired by her boss for coming out as transgender].

The other two cases both involve men who were fired because they are gay.

Big picture: it's hard to see how firing someone for being LGBTQ doesn't involve the person's sex. You can't even describe being trans or gay without talking about the individuals' sex. At its core, the federal ban on sex discrimination is simple: workers

are not supposed to be treated differently because of their sex.

Many federal courts have concluded that firing LGBTQ people because we don't meet employers' stereotypes of how women and men should act, identify, and appear is just as much sex discrimination as passing over Ann Hopkins because she was considered "macho."

But if the Supreme Court says that this reasoning doesn't apply to LGBTQ people, that could spell trouble for everyone. We could return to a world where employers can fire anyone — straight or gay, transgender or not — for not being the "right kind" of woman or man. Scary stuff. ■

To read this full blog post, please visit <https://www.aclu.org/blog/lgbt-rights/lgbt-nondiscrimination-protections/what-you-need-know-about-lgbtq-rights-case>.

I'm often asked, "What's the best part of your job?"

**The answer's easy. It's the people.**

The ACLU's dedicated supporters. The incredible advocates and activists who work to make Delaware a better place. My friendly, funny, passionate coworkers. These people have made the last three years memorable. And special.

When I came to the ACLU of Delaware—and Delaware itself—just before the 2016 election, I couldn't have imagined how much I would come to depend on all of you to remind me that there are always good people willing to stand up for what's right, even in the darkest of times. I hope that extraordinary spirit follows me as I leave ACLU-DE for a new opportunity at the Delaware Center for Justice.

Thank you to everyone who's made my transition to Delaware a joy. And a special thanks to those who give to the ACLU and make our mission a reality. You're the real civil liberties heroes of Delaware.

And never forget for a second that you're making a real difference in the world. Farewell!

Very humbly yours,



*Dave Bever*  
Dave Bever

## Consider Us for Your Year-End Giving

*We're so thankful for your consistent support.*

If we've learned anything over the last three years, it's that ACLU founder Roger Baldwin was right: "No fight for liberty ever stays won."

Each day seems to bring new atrocities from Trump and his ilk. Family separation. Abortion bans. Threatening Dreamers. Dehumanizing transgender Americans.

You might think it would be easier just to give up, but we're in this fight for the long haul. How?

**Because of you.**

Thanks to your support, we've filed over 240 legal actions nationally against this administration—and we're just getting started. With your help, the ACLU took Trump's hateful family separation policy to court and reunited over 2,300 children with their loved ones. While that fight continues, we're challenging the administration's ban on transgender service members. And thanks to you, we've also blocked abortion bans in seven states.

As the year draws to a close, we ask you once again to take a stand against this unconstitutional and un-American agenda—make a gift to the ACLU of Delaware today.

From the Supreme Court of the United States to Delaware's own Legislative Hall, your support is transforming the lives of those most vulnerable to Trump's policies.

With your help, we're dismantling Delaware's school-to-prison pipeline at both ends. We started by taking Delaware's unfair school funding formula to court to guarantee a quality education for every child. Then we challenged our schools to end the unnecessary suspensions that target students with disabilities and students of color. And that's just half of the battle—in June, our Campaign for Smart Justice helped to pass 11 historic criminal justice reform bills, reducing Delaware's prison population and creating second chances for people with criminal records.

With your help, we're not just playing defense against Trump's attacks on liberty; we're advancing a bold agenda for freedom right here at home. Together, we can make it happen—make a year-end gift to the ACLU of Delaware today!

Thank you for standing with us to give liberty a fighting chance.



## ACLU Gift Ideas!

*Represent your support for the ACLU and help us celebrate 100 years fighting for civil rights and civil liberties by gifting swag that's sure to please the civil liberty lovers on your list!*



**Popsocket: \$10**

Compatible with both phones and tablets, Popsockets are collapsible grips and stands that make your devices easier to use.



**Pin: \$9**

We made a pin as a reminder that everyone, no matter where they live or how much money they make, deserves access to abortion.



**Socks: \$15**

You'll never get cold feet knowing you're team ACLU with our latest "We The People" knit socks.



**Dog Tee: \$10**

Don't let our civil liberties go to the dogs. Enlist your favorite canine friend in the fight for freedom with the ACLU's Civil Liberties Watchdog tee.



**Tote: \$17**

Celebrate our nationwide footprint with this commemorative Dare To Create double sided natural canvas tote.

*You can find all of these gifts and more at [shop.aclu.org](http://shop.aclu.org)—and shipping is always free for orders over \$50.*

# ACLU

## Delaware

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*From Our Team To You!*

