

## New Leadership at the ACLU of Delaware

*Mike Brickner brings a great background and a big vision to our organization.*

ARTICLE BY: MORGAN KELLER,  
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

A lot of things have changed since we announced the retirement of our former Executive Director last year, both within our organization and outside of it. The world looks very different right now: our country has shifted to a culture of social distance and public health as a priority, and here in Delaware we are navigating the curve as we try to figure out the best path forward.

But even now, exciting news deserves to be shared—and we have some very exciting news for you: the ACLU of Delaware has

new leadership! Mike Brickner, our new Executive Director, joined the team in May. Without ever stepping foot into the office in his new role, Mike has already become an integral part of our team. Get to know him a little more by learning about his background below, then reading his first “Letter from the ED” on the next page.

### *Mike ❤️'s Voting Rights.*

Prior to joining us here in Delaware, Mike was the Ohio State Director of All Voting is Local (AVL), a new campaign to secure and expand the right to vote. Mike's focus



We are excited to welcome our new Executive Director,

**MIKE BRICKNER**

at AVL was fighting discriminatory voter purges, ensuring jailed voters could cast a ballot, and exposing how unfair provisional ballot systems disenfranchised Black, low-income, and young voters in Ohio. He's already got us working on important voting efforts here, so stay tuned for more information on that.

*He's new to our affiliate, but not new to the ACLU.*

Before AVL, Mike was the Senior Policy Director at the ACLU of Ohio for 14 years. During his tenure at ACLU-OH, Mike worked on a variety of critical civil liberties movements, including campaigns to reform

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and more!

## CONNECTION

## ACLU-DE Officers &amp; Staff

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



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**Newsletter Design**  
by Morgan Keller



ARTICLE BY: MIKE BRICKNER,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Dear Friends,

**The intersection of COVID-19 and mass incarceration presents the public health crisis of our generation, and the ACLU of Delaware has risen to the call.**

Prisons have become breeding grounds for new infections, and the staff and their allies in the Coalition for Smart Justice have spent countless hours fighting for the release of those most vulnerable, and holding the government accountable for the health and safety of those incarcerated. We have worked with experts in medicine, community reentry, and civil rights to speak out for the immediate release of people close to completing their sentence, the elderly,

and people with illnesses that make them more susceptible to COVID-19.

**We fight every day to keep more people from entering prison.**

Along with the Campaign to End Debtors' Prisons, ACLU of Delaware staff successfully lobbied local court systems to suspend their collection of fines and fees, helping to alleviate the suffering of those trapped in cycles of poverty and incarceration.

Delawareans face many uncertainties in these times. COVID-19 has touched every facet of our civil liberties, including our youth's right to equitable education, our right to vote, and our right to be free from discrimination.

**Despite these challenges, I am optimistic.**

I envision an ACLU of Delaware that is vibrant and can sustain integrated advocacy campaigns that can finally deliver justice and equality to the First State. We must fight in the courts, the legislature, the media, and the hearts and minds of the public, but we are poised to achieve new heights.

**And you are integral to making a stronger, more nimble ACLU of Delaware.** It is with your support--as donors, volunteers, and community ambassadors that we may continue to evolve and grow to meet the challenges of our times.

Together, we can reform Delaware's broken probation system, which sends far too many people back to prison for minor technical violations. We can stop predatory debtors' prison schemes that prey on the poor



## Letter from the ED

**Now Hiring: Development Director**

Check out the job description & apply: [www.aclu-de.org/en/about/careers](http://www.aclu-de.org/en/about/careers)



OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
CONT. FROM FRONT PAGE 1

Ohio's criminal justice system, protecting safe and equitable access to reproductive healthcare, and ensuring LGBTQ people are free from discrimination.

These campaigns resulted in systemic reforms to combat contemporary debtors' prisons; end burdensome pay-to-stay jail fees; fight the use of prisons for profit; stop solitary confinement of people with severe mental illnesses, work with community groups and law enforcement in Cincinnati and Cleveland to build community trust and support positive police practices; and increase support for legislation that would prohibit discrimination against people on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

***He's got a great vision, and a huge heart. Mike is a perfect fit for Delaware.***

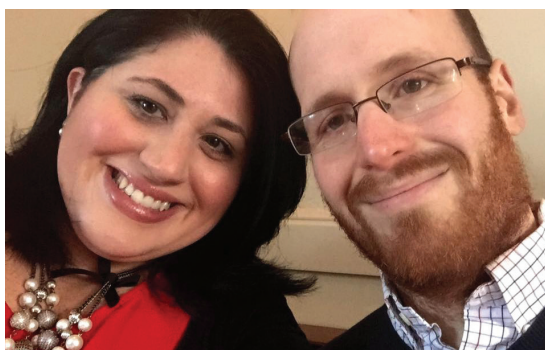
With Mike's experience, passion for civil liberties and commitment to protecting our most vulnerable communities, the ACLU of Delaware is in great hands. Learn a little more about his vision on page 2 and reach out to him at [mbrickner@aclu-de.org](mailto:mbrickner@aclu-de.org) if you'd like to connect further. 🇺🇸

LETTER FROM THE ED,  
CONT. FROM FRONT PAGE 2

and create a two-tiered system of justice for those with means, and those without. And we can guarantee that every citizen of Delaware can cast a ballot freely, fairly, and safely by expanding access to vote by mail and modernizing our voter

registration system.

In normal times, I would invite you to meet in person over coffee or lunch, but we can still create community within our virtual limits. If you would like



^ Mike and wife, Katie.

to reach me, my email address is [mbrickner@aclu-de.org](mailto:mbrickner@aclu-de.org).

I wish you and your families health and wellness, and hope to connect with each of you soon. *The ACLU community is strong and resilient—will get through this pandemic together stronger and ready to take on the challenges that await.* 🇺🇸



ARTICLE BY: KATHRYN JAKABCIN,  
PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## Friends,

We are in the second full month of "staying home" in response to the pandemic of COVID-19. We have been learning to make our way through a world in flux and pain, working from home, trying to make a living or hold it together in



new and difficult circumstances, dealing with illness or grief. Many of us have taken Fred Rogers' advice to "look for the helpers" and have joined or lauded those who put their safety and health at risk to care for, feed, and tend to the rest of us.

I also see the "helpers" on our staff and among our volunteers continuing to work to preserve and advance the civil

liberties of the people of our state and region. Our staff is exemplary and so is their work. The arrival of our new Executive Director, Mike Brickner, is most welcome and I'm excited for the future of the organization under his leadership.

It has been my honor to serve as President of the Board of the ACLU of Delaware. I leave the chair and the organization in good hands. 🇺🇸

# How to Protest in a Pandemic

*This is an excerpt from an article originally published by ACLU National on May 1, 2020.*

ARTICLE BY: EMERSON SYKES,  
STAFF ATTORNEY AT ACLU NATIONAL

**W**ith physical distancing and shelter in place orders prevalent throughout the U.S. and the world, how do we responsibly exercise our First Amendment right to protest, which remains as essential as ever?

Current physical distancing measures have presented challenges, but people have found some creative ways to make sure their voices are heard. Here are just a few examples:

## ***Keystone XL Pipeline Protests***

In Montana, a small group of people — in accordance with the state's ban on gatherings of more than 10 people — from the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Reservation gathered for a prayer circle, holding a length of traditional sinew to symbolize their physical distancing while maintaining their social cohesion.

## ***Student Activism Moves Online***

With classes moving online and campuses largely shut down, student activists have shifted their movement online, too, with [strikeuniversity.org](https://strikeuniversity.org), an innovative platform for sharing

their concerns with decision-makers and garnering public support.

## ***Drive-By Protests***

While being in a car does not necessarily alleviate all health-related concerns and the degree to which such protests can be safely done may vary, this tactic has the advantage of looking in many ways like a traditional street protest.

## ***Money Talking***

We have seen people speak out with their wallets in a variety of ways: donating to pandemic relief efforts, giving to friends and neighbors in need, and patronizing local and responsible businesses.

## ***Vote and Be Counted***

Advocates are working tirelessly to ensure that election processes are as accessible as possible, while also reminding people that everyone can and should fill out the census, because the national headcount will have important implications far beyond the current crisis.

## ***Windows to the World***

People confined to their homes are displaying signs




of solidarity and beauty with passersby, and people in detention have written pleas for help on their windows. Powerful curbside messages have also been sent using walls and sidewalks.

## ***The Way Forward***

History has taught us that people in power have strong incentives to use crises to consolidate power and silence dissent. It is often Black and Brown communities and the most vulnerable who bear the brunt of medical emergencies, as well as law enforcement efforts to implement restrictions on public life.

So, speak out, act up, and exercise your First Amendment right to protest. But be responsible, stay safe, wash your hands, and don't risk your health and the health of your communities.

***We'll see you back in the streets just as soon as it's safe to be there.*** 

# Victory in Education Funding Lawsuit!

*We're one step closer to bridging the gaps in Delaware's funding system that leave vulnerable students at a disadvantage.*

The American Civil Liberties Union of Delaware and the Delaware Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. are excited to announce a victory in the county track of our education funding lawsuit: **Delawareans for Educational Opportunity v Carney. On May 8, 2020, the Court ruled that counties' reliance on decades old valuations for property tax assessment violates Delaware law and Delaware's Constitution.**

Next step: Further proceedings will be scheduled to determine the timing and manner of an appropriate remedy for the County Track violations. Trial is still set for November in the state track of this lawsuit.

*We'd like to extend a special thank you to the team at Arnold & Porter, who have been indispensable cooperating attorneys on this case.*

## Same Storm, Different Boats—But We're Getting Through it Together.

*Check out these other great organizations who are doing everything they can to help those who need it most right now.*

COMPILED BY: RYAN NOWACZYK, COMMUNICATIONS INTERN

### ***Building People Power Campaign (BPPC)***

BPP is a coordinated campaign that brings together organizers from different issue areas and neighborhoods to advance racial justice on multiple fronts. Communities of color are more vulnerable to COVID-19, so BPP's focus on addressing racial disparities in economic status, health outcomes, and re-entry outcomes is particularly important through the pandemic. To learn more about BPP, visit [BuildingPeoplePower.com](http://BuildingPeoplePower.com).

### ***Cape Community Coordination for COVID-19 (CCC)***

A network of institutions and community groups in Sussex County, this rapid-response coalition links a wide range of resources and services. CCC facilitates communication and collaboration between social nonprofits, faith groups, businesses, care providers and emergency services, municipalities, and

government agencies. It calls for volunteers to assist specific member organizations under pressure. To learn more, visit [CCC4COVID.org](http://CCC4COVID.org).

### ***Delaware Immigrant Fund (DIF)***

The Delaware Immigrant Fund, hosted by Network Delaware, provides direct cash assistance to immigrant Delawareans who are affected by the COVID pandemic but are excluded from federal relief and ineligible for most state safety-net programs. To learn more about DIF, please visit [ImmigrantFundDE.org](http://ImmigrantFundDE.org).

### ***Wilmington H.O.M.E.S. Campaign (HOMES)***

HOMES wants to provide safe, affordable, housing for all Wilmingtonians, but in the meantime they are working to protect those who are housing insecure during the pandemic.

They are advocating for increased funding for emergency homeless shelters, and they are urging a stop to mass evictions. To learn more about HOMES, visit [Facebook.com/Homes4Wilm](https://Facebook.com/Homes4Wilm). 



Image By Daniel Barreto, Courtesy of the United Nations



## Get to know our 2020 Board of Directors Nominees!

*It's that time of year again! We're so excited to introduce you to our 2020 nominees for the ACLU of Delaware Board of Directors.*



### Ariel Gruswitz

Ariel Gruswitz, J.D., entered the economic development field after a 15+ year career in law, policy, and advocacy. She earned a J.D. from the University of Maryland Law School and a B.A. from the University of Virginia. In addition to several years of practicing law, Ariel spent over a decade doing a mix of regulatory/government affairs and public relations for agriculture biotechnology issues. Since 2018, as Director of Innovation at the Delaware Prosperity Partnership, she has focused on strengthening the high-tech entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem in Delaware as part of its economic development strategy.

Ariel has become more engaged, educated, and passionate about civil rights advocacy in recent years, as challenges to basic principles of constitutional law have become more prevalent in the U.S. Ariel is thrilled to be joining the ACLU Delaware's Board of Directors. She lives with her husband and two children in the Village of Ardencroft, Delaware.

The board candidates listed above and the board's executive and officer positions will all be voted on at our annual meeting, happening next month. If you would like to cast your ballot for any of the open positions, please visit [aclu-de.org/en/2020-board-nominations](https://aclu-de.org/en/2020-board-nominations).

*For more information on the Annual Meeting, see the ad below.*



### Haneef Salaam

Mr. Haneef Salaam is a native Delawarean born and raised in Wilmington. He is engaged in empowering the community and very passionate about helping individuals released from prison become positive and productive community members after making that change himself.

Mr. Salaam has worked with government and non-profit agencies focused on prisoner reentry for the past 10 years, holding positions such as President of the Delaware Reentry Consortium and Community Facilitator for I-ADAPT, the Governor's reentry initiative. He also started Building Success, LLC a small business that provides consultation and program planning for nonprofits.

Now an In-Reach Coordinator for the Hope Commission at the Achievement Center, Mr. Salaam is passionate about helping disadvantaged populations find solutions and ways to overcome their barriers to success. In his free time Mr. Salaam volunteers for the Smart Justice Campaign and is a community advocate in Wilmington.

## ACLU of Delaware Annual Meeting

Save the Date: Wednesday, July 15 | 7-8 pm

***This virtual event will be streamed to the public***

Details coming soon! Please check our website for more information

**[ACLU-DE.org/en/2020-Board-Nominations](https://aclu-de.org/en/2020-Board-Nominations)**

# Persisting Through and Responding to COVID-19

*We're still here, and we've still got your back.*

COMPILED BY: RYAN NOWACZYK  
COMMUNICATIONS INTERN

**A**t ACLU-DE, we don't back down from a challenge—and our response to COVID-19 is no exception. We've expanded our strategy to meet the needs and issues made apparent by the public health emergency.

Much of our advocacy has concerned the particular vulnerability of those living and working in our state prisons. Our team, along with members of the Coalition for Smart Justice, have urged policy changes in policing, sentencing, and incarceration to reduce suffering and save lives of the people living and working in our state's correctional facilities.

In March we sent a letter to Governor Carney asking him to reduce the incarcerated population via the release of those with compromised immune systems, those nearing the end of their sentence, and those held pretrial or detained for a technical probation violation.

After two months

without a response, we followed up with a second letter renewing our plea and we await a response from the Governor—***we hope that response will be in the form of action.***

We also asked DOJ and DOC to end the jailing of probationers for technical violations, suspend medical copays and provide hygiene products and digital communication to all incarcerated people free of charge. Since that letter, the availability of face masks and hygiene products to corrections officers and inmates have expanded, DOC has extended free phone call opportunities to prisoners, and probation violation arrests have dropped significantly.

The team also worked with the DE Campaign to End Debtor's Prison to send a letter to DE courts asking them to halt court debt collections, stop applying late fees, stop suspending people's driver's licenses, and stop issuing failure to pay warrants during the pandemic.

The courts have implemented those changes.


Meanwhile, our public outreach has sought to equip Delawareans with relevant information and facilitate their participation in our democracy. Shortly after we closed our office, we created a COVID-19 landing page to collect updates on our actions during the pandemic. You can visit this page to stay up-to-date on our work through this public health emergency.

Other actions that we've taken to respond through COVID-19 are:

- Signed onto a letter urging national and state leaders to expand pandemic relief to undocumented people.
- Sent a letter to Governor Carney to prevent mass evictions and utility shut-offs amid COVID-19.
- Public education about the Presidential Primary election date and voting

process changes (*ICYMI: The Presidential Primary has been postponed to July 7, 2020, and any Delawarean can request an absentee ballot to vote from home. Request yours here: [iVote.DE.gov](https://iVote.DE.gov).*)

- Monitoring issuance and enforcement of stay-at-home orders to ensure they are no more restrictive than necessary for public safety.
- Shifting the work of the organization to a more virtual-focused culture to ensure that we can remain effective and connected, no matter what.

We have been comprehensively monitoring the implications this pandemic has for civil rights and liberties in Delaware, particularly for those most vulnerable in our state. We will defend your civil rights and liberties no matter what happens in the world around us. We're still here, and we've still got your back. 



Delaware

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## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: KANLDER 2020

*Save the Date:*  
**Wednesday, October 14, 2020**  
**7:00 pm**

Do you know a seasoned change-maker or a rising activist who deserves to be recognized for the work they've done to help protect and expand Delawareans' civil liberties? Nominate them for the 2020 Kandler Award!

*Please email your nomination(s) to Morgan Keller: [mkeller@aclu-de.org](mailto:mkeller@aclu-de.org).*

## Coming Soon: The Smart Justice Probation Report

In this ground-breaking report, we're analyzing Delaware's probation system, revealing staggering statistics, highlighting the lived experience of probationers, and proposing policies to maximize re-entry success.

**GET NOTIFIED  
WHEN THIS REPORT  
LAUNCHES! SIGN UP TO  
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[WWW.ACLU-DE.ORG](http://WWW.ACLU-DE.ORG).**