

ACLUnews

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STEPPING UP TO PASS PROP 34: DOING OUR PART TO REPLACE THE DEATH PENALTY

By Abdi Soltani

It's campaign season for Prop 34. Many dedicated ACLU members are opening their homes to their friends and neighbors and asking them to support this historic initiative to replace California's dysfunctional and costly death penalty.

Replacing the death penalty will save California taxpayers \$1 billion over the next five years and eliminate the risk of executing an innocent person. Prop 34 will also help to make all communities safer by ensuring that some of the budget savings go toward the "SAFE California Fund" to investigate and solve open murder and rape cases. Inmates are also required to work and pay restitution into the state victims' compensation fund.

One of the first house parties of the season was hosted by ACLU members Judy Kerr and Barbara Ridley in Albany.

Judy is a longtime supporter of the ACLU and has contributed countless hours over the years speaking about the high costs of the death penalty, both human and financial. In 2003, Judy's brother Bob was brutally murdered. During this traumatic time in Judy's life, she and her family needed grief counseling and, just as important, she needed to know that the man who killed her brother would be caught and punished. But almost 10 years later, justice has not been served. Bob's murderer walks free.

YES on ✓ 34

Today, Judy is working to pass Prop 34. She believes California should redirect some of the millions of dollars we spend on the death penalty toward solving open rape and murder cases—56 percent of reported rapes and 46 percent of murders go unsolved each year.

At her house party, Judy shared her deeply personal story with her guests and explained the larger realities behind

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BOARD ELECTION NOTICE

The ACLU-NC Board of Directors, in accordance with changes adopted in the bylaws in 2003 (Article VI, Section 3 and Article VI, Section 4), have an election schedule as follows:

Nominations for the Board of Directors will now be submitted by the September Board meeting; candidates and ballots will appear in the Fall issue of the *ACLU News*; elected board members will begin their three-year term in January.

As provided by the revised ACLU-NC bylaws, the ACLU-NC membership is entitled to elect its Board of Directors directly. The nominating committee is now seeking suggestions from the membership to fill at-large positions on the Board.

ACLU members may participate in the nominating process in two ways:

1. They may send suggestions for the nominating committee's consideration prior to the September Board meeting (September 13, 2012). Address suggestions to: Nominating Committee, ACLU-NC, 39 Drumm Street, San Francisco, CA 94111. Include your nominee's qualifications and how the nominee may be reached.
2. They may submit a petition of nomination with the signatures of 15 current ACLU-NC members. Petitions of nomination, which should also include the nominee's qualifications, must be submitted to the Board of Directors by October 3, 2012 (twenty days after the September board meeting). Current ACLU members are those who have renewed their membership during the last 12 months. Only current members are eligible to submit nominations, sign petitions of nomination, and vote. No member may sign more than one such petition.

ACLU members will select Board members from the slate of candidates nominated by petition and by the nominating committee. The ballot will appear in the Fall issue of the *ACLU News*.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Bob Hsiang Photography



In January, we sent a staff member to Alabama to help our ACLU colleagues organize against that state's "show me your papers" law, which went further than even Arizona's anti-immigrant SB 1070.

One of the remarkable people we met, an 8th grader named Brandon, recorded a simple video message calling us to action. What could we do to let Brandon know that he and his community are not alone?

We organized a campaign called "Estamos Unidos" which means "we are united" in Spanish. Days before the Supreme Court arguments on SB 1070 in April, we set out on a tour that ultimately took us 9,000 miles through 16 states. We raised awareness of these discriminatory laws, gathered stories, and launched the bilingual Spanish website called MiACLU. And we met Brandon, in his home town.

In addition to the Estamos Unidos van, we also had a classic convertible and a cable car in our sights this season. As the Community Grand Marshal for the SF Pride Parade, we were proud of our 250-person contingent, many of them undocumented immigrant youth. It was a powerful reminder that we are all whole people, deserving of full equality and fair treatment in every aspect of our lives. I am proud of the ACLU's work challenging discriminatory laws, whether it's Arizona's SB 1070 or the federal Defense of Marriage Act.

We have another vehicle in our sights now—a ballot measure, Prop 34. Prop 34 is our vehicle to replace the death penalty in California with life without the possibility of parole. Prop 34 eliminates the possibility of executing an innocent person and redirects \$100 million to help solve open murder and rape cases. Our lead article is about the ways people are stepping up to pass Prop 34. I hope you will join them by hosting a house party or encouraging people to vote Yes on 34.

Abdi Soltani

Abdi Soltani
Executive Director

2012 BENEFACTORS DINNER

Generous ACLU supporters gathered together to *occupy* the City Club of San Francisco for the ACLU of Northern California (ACLU-NC) 2012 Benefactors Dinner. The evening's program focused on the ACLU-NC's free speech work and featured ACLU-NC Executive Director Abdi Soltani, ACLU-NC Legal Director Alan Schlosser, ACLU-NC Staff Attorneys Linda Lye and Michael Risher, and ACLU-NC client and UC Davis student Fatima Sbeih.



Susana Millman

Photos, left to right: Melanie MacKerel (right) with UC Davis plaintiffs William Roberts and Enosh Baker. Former Board Member Dick Grosboll with ACLU-NC Staff Attorney Linda Lye. Ardent civil liberties advocates Herb and Lee Kanner.

CELEBRATING PRIDE

The ACLU of Northern California was named the Community Organization Grand Marshal for San Francisco Pride 2012. Over 250 people marched with the ACLU-NC at the San Francisco Pride Parade on June 24.



Amanda Munoz



Adrian Mendoza



Amanda Munoz

ACLUnews

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Membership (\$20 and up) includes a subscription to the *ACLU News*. For membership information call (415) 621-2493 or visit www.aclunc.org

Michelle Welsh CHAIR
Abdi Soltani EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Rebecca Farmer EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Gigi Pandian MANAGING EDITOR & DESIGNER



39 Drumm Street, San Francisco, CA 94111
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“TEACH OUR CHILDREN TO READ,” SAY DINUBA PARENTS & TEACHERS

By Isobel White

For elementary school teacher Nona Rhea, the worst part about her school district’s fundamentally flawed method of teaching English is the time lost in young learners’ lives.

“Reading provides the building blocks for all other skills in a young child’s life,” says Rhea, teacher of the year at Roosevelt Elementary in the Central Valley town of Dinuba. “But instead of being taught to read, students in my district whose first language isn’t English are stuck doing mini-grammar lessons completely out of context. At the same time, their peers are being introduced to a whole rich reading curriculum. It’s heartbreaking, and it’s wrong.”

Rhea is a plaintiff in an ACLU-NC lawsuit filed on behalf of teachers and parents against the Dinuba Unified School District and the State of California, charging that the school district and state are violating students’ fundamental right to equal educational opportunity. The lawsuit seeks to stop the school district from denying basic instruction in reading to 1st and 2nd grade English learners and to stop using a flawed and unproven method of teaching English to them.

In 2009, the Dinuba Unified School District adopted a program of English language instruction known as Second Language Acquisition Development Instruction (SLADI). No research supports the use of SLADI for students as young as 1st and 2nd grade, yet it is in use throughout the district.

Teachers are required to provide instruction in complex grammatical rules, without offering any meaningful exposure to the way English is spoken and written in real-life contexts.


Moreover, teachers are not allowed to provide any reading instruction to their 1st and 2nd grade English learners during the first half of each school year. During the second semester of the school year, English learner students are abruptly moved into the regular reading curriculum, even though they have not been taught any of the previous reading lessons. Throughout the year, many English learner students are completely segregated from their English-speaking peers, except during recess and lunch.

“It’s a crying shame that we’ve been wasting time in these kids’ lives,” says Rhea. “Young kids learn to read and to understand English because they want to communicate and they want to engage—because they want to know what happens to the pig in Charlotte’s Web.”

The lawsuit, the first of its kind in California, asks that the program be stopped and that the State honor its responsibility to ensure that all school districts provide equal opportunity to a meaningful education for the state’s schoolchildren.

“Dinuba Unified School District is depriving English learner children of their constitutional right to equal educational opportunity,” said Jory Steele, ACLU-NC Managing Attorney.

“By signing off on this fundamentally flawed and unequal program, the state of California is not honoring its constitutional obligation and is risking the future of these children.”

The lawsuit was filed by the ACLU of Northern California, the ACLU of Southern California, the ACLU of San Diego and Imperial Counties, California Rural Legal Assistance, the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, with pro bono assistance from the law firm of Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati. 



Elementary school teacher
Nona Rhea.

Isobel White is a contributing writer.

LEGAL BRIEFS

By Danielle Riendeau

Making Every Vote Count

Under the California Constitution, stripping the right to vote from people who have been convicted of felonies—called felony disenfranchisement—is limited to people who are serving sentences in state prison and who are on parole. A 2006 court ruling, an ACLU of Northern California case, clearly establishes that individuals sentenced to felony probation retain the right to vote, even if they are confined in county jail. Under realignment, 85,000 Californians newly sentenced for low-level, non-violent felonies will now go to county jail instead of state prison.

A memorandum from Secretary of State Bowen interpreted realignment in way that would deny these Californians the right to vote. In response, the ACLU-NC and other civil rights organizations filed suit asking the California Supreme Court to clarify and protect the voting rights of these citizens. The suit charges that excluding Californians with felony convictions who are neither in prison nor on parole from voting violates the California Constitution and undermines a central purpose of realignment, which is to stop the state’s expensive revolving door of incarceration by successfully reintegrating individuals back into their communities.

The ACLU-NC petitioned the court to hear and decide the case on an expedited basis so the issue could be resolved before the October 22, 2012 voter registration deadline. On July 25, the California Supreme Court denied the petition for review. The voting rights of individuals sentenced under Realignment therefore remain unclear.

The ACLU-NC and its partners in the lawsuit will continue to fight for the voting rights of these individuals.

Victory: Safe San Francisco Civil Rights Ordinance

The ACLU-NC, a founding partner of the Coalition for a Safe San Francisco, celebrated an important victory in May when Mayor Lee signed the Safe San Francisco Civil Rights Ordinance into law. The law puts in place steps to strengthen transparency and accountability over the activities of the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) when the department gathers intelligence in collaboration with the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF).

All agreements between the two agencies will now be subject to public review and comment before the Police Commission, and the commission will be informed of the JTTF’s work with the SFPD through yearly reports.

For decades, San Francisco has been a civil rights leader in prohibiting policing based on race, ethnicity, national origin or religion. The new law reinstates measures like those that were in place prior to 2007, when a secret MOU began to govern the relationship between the FBI and the SFPD.


The ordinance should help to prevent local involvement in FBI intelligence abuses of the kind that have garnered widespread attention in Los Angeles and New York.

While the original proposed legislation was broader in scope, the law provides much-improved oversight of both agencies. The SFPD will no longer operate under an agreement whose terms were dictated unilaterally by FBI Headquarters. The ACLU-NC, together with Asian Law Caucus and the Council on American-Islamic Relations, will be closely following its implementation.

Protecting Journalists’ Rights

The ACLU-NC filed an amicus brief asking the Santa Cruz County Superior Court to dismiss felony conspiracy charges against two photojournalists who followed a group of Occupy activists into a vacant bank building.

The journalists were arrested and charged with conspiracy, as well as aiding and abetting trespass and vandalism, after they took and published photographs of the occupation. Journalists have particular protections under the First Amendment when it comes to holding them responsible for the conduct of other people—so that they can cover the news. The journalists were charged for the occupiers’ conduct that occurred while they were gathering and disseminating information about a newsworthy event. Therefore, the ACLU-NC brief argued, the court must take a close look at the evidence against them to make sure that they are not prosecuted for constitutionally protected activities.

Forcing reporters to defend themselves at trial against unjustified felony charges can have a serious chilling effect on their willingness to cover controversial events and to express opinions about those events that the government may disagree with. Ultimately, the court dismissed the charges, citing the ACLU-NC’s amicus brief. 

Danielle Riendeau is the Communications Coordinator at the ACLU of Northern California.

NEW WEB APP LETS USERS TRIM PRISON SPENDING, REINVEST IN CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE

By Caitlin O'Neill

Think Outside the Box is a new web app created by the ACLU of Northern California that allows Californians to get a real-time sense of how the state's bottom line would fare if prisons and jails were placed at the center of the budgetary chopping block.


Users are in the appropriations driver's seat, making decisions with a click of the mouse. Is it best to hold tight to the "lock 'em up" status quo, or to achieve significant savings by, for example, canceling all 2012 jail construction projects (savings = \$727 million)? Should we enact modest reforms to allow people who are accused of low level offenses to be released from jail while they await trial (\$225 million savings)? Or replace the death penalty with life without the possibility of parole (\$184 million savings)?

Users who trim criminal justice dollars can trade the savings for investments in child welfare, K-12 education, and CalGrants for college students without going into the red.

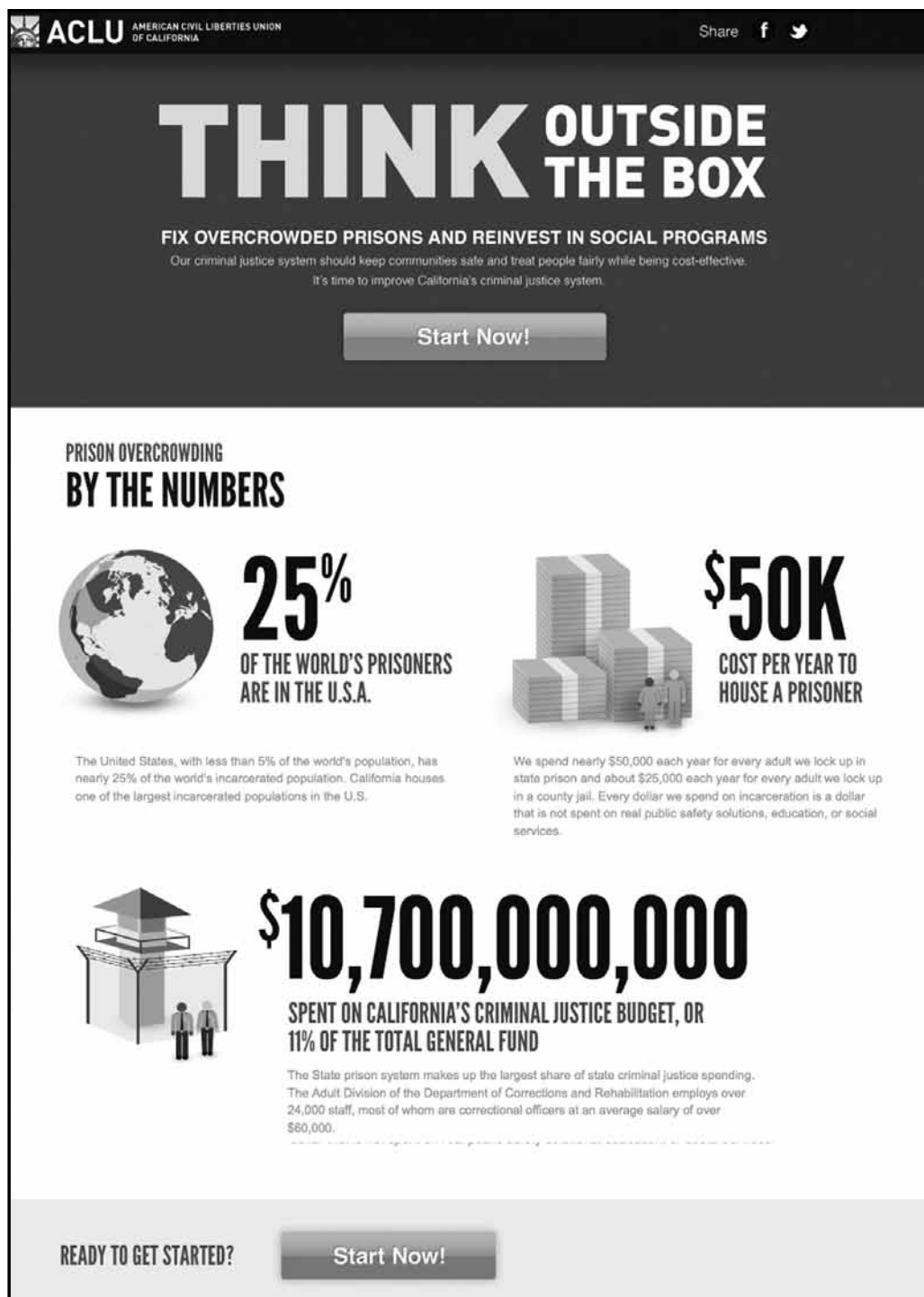
The exercise may be virtual, but the tradeoffs are real and realistic. Every dollar we spend on incarceration is a dollar that is not spent on more effective public safety solutions, education, or social services.

Using the web app is easy. Visit www.thinkoutsidetheboxca.org.

ACLU staff will be hosting interactive workshops for community members and students, leading groups through the decision points while facilitating dialog on the pros and cons.

To request a presentation, contact Caitlin O'Neill of the Criminal Justice and Drug Policy Project at coneill@aclunc.org or (415) 621-2493. 

Caitlin O'Neill is a Criminal Justice and Drug Policy Associate at the ACLU of Northern California.



A screen shot of www.thinkoutsidetheboxca.org.

INSTRUMENTS OF CHANGE: CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACTIVIST DAVID MOSS HITS THE ROAD TO CREATE CHANGE THROUGH PERFORMANCE ART

By Kiran Savage-Sangwan

Performer and advocate David A. Moss pioneered a one-man show about his experience of addiction rooted in childhood trauma and the courage to overcome it. This year, he took his performance a step further, joining the ACLU of Northern California as a forceful advocate for alternatives to incarceration and reforms to drug sentencing, as a Criminal Justice & Drug Policy Educator. In coming to the ACLU-NC, David created a new performance piece that combines his personal experience in the criminal justice system with ACLU research and policy advocacy.

David's piece is aptly titled "Instruments of Change." No one knows how broken the California criminal justice system is better than David, a man who went to jail fourteen times for an addiction to cocaine.

"I want people who see Instruments of Change to go away and make activism a verb," Moss says. "It's one thing to sit in a room and talk about it, but if that's all we do, it's just entertainment."




David Moss (second from right) with members of the Monterey County Chapter.

Since April, David has performed "Instruments of Change" in over a dozen venues across Northern California. College campuses have been a particularly compelling audience, from Chico to Berkeley to Fresno. Additionally, the tour had a great run through the Central Valley, including a lively event in Applegate Park in Merced. David performed in Sacramento

at the ACLU of California Conference and Lobby Day to an audience of 100, after which he lobbied the state legislature for reforms to drug sentencing laws. Community feedback was phenomenal, with audience members getting involved in local efforts to promote alternatives to incarceration and ACLU chapters growing their memberships.

Moss says one tour highlight was "sitting in the offices of state senators." He adds, "It's pretty cool for someone who once woke up in a doorway to speak on the steps of the Capitol. It's about getting up and doing it. We are not powerless. After I performed in Monterey, the Sheriff came up and spoke to me. It put a face on law enforcement; these guys are human too."

As David continues on the Instruments of Change tour, he says "it brings to mind the old country western song 'if my song changes just one life, then I've done my job, my time here is well spent'." 

Kiran Savage-Sangwan is an organizer at the ACLU of Northern California.

IN MEMORIAM: FRAN STRAUSS, BOARD MEMBER EMERITUS, ACTIVIST EXTRAORDINAIRE

By Elaine Elinson

The ACLU of Northern California lost one of its brightest lights when Frances C. Strauss, board member emeritus, died at her home in San Francisco on June 15 at the age of 94.

“Fran was really the heart and soul of this affiliate,” said former ACLU-NC Executive Director Dorothy Ehrlich, who collaborated with Strauss for more than three decades. “Fran figured out how to make a difference in an organization as a volunteer—in extraordinary and creative ways that resulted in an enduring contribution.”

Strauss, a Bronx native and former Hunter College student, began her long association with the ACLU in Chicago in 1953. She worked as the administrative assistant to the executive director of the Illinois affiliate and served on the board from 1956-60.

When Strauss and her husband, the renowned medical sociologist Anselm Strauss, moved to San Francisco in 1960, she brought her ACLU commitment with her. Her first project was the establishment of the Complaint Desk, a hotline for people seeking help from the ACLU. Although the Complaint Desk is now a permanent institution at the ACLU-NC, when Strauss created it with then-Executive Director Jay Miller and staff attorneys Joe Remcho and Charles Marson, it was a major innovation. Then, as now, it is completely staffed by volunteers.

Strauss helped to reorganize the San Francisco chapter and soon became the chapter representative on the ACLU-NC board. Her sharp mind, wit and joie de vivre made her a valued ambassador for the organization. When she launched the very first Bill of Rights Day Celebration in 1975, she filled the Geary Theater and created an instant tradition. Retired Chief Justice Earl Warren himself attended the event, and the first Earl Warren Civil Liberties Award was given to legal pioneer




Anthony Amsterdam. The Celebration netted an unprecedented \$23,000 and raised the profile of ACLU-NC outside of the courtroom. Strauss continued to organize the annual Celebration and parallel fundraising campaign; at the 1989 Bill of Rights Day Celebration, Strauss was honored with the Lola Hanzel Advocacy Award as an “individual who has made an extraordinary contribution as a volunteer.”

Strauss, who was elected an at-large member of the board

in 1975, served on almost every board committee—Executive, Development, Equality, Field, Budget Management and Student Outreach – and as chair of the Development Committee. In 1980, by then a seasoned fundraiser, Strauss helped design and implement the major gifts campaign. Her strategic view of fundraising not only helped secure a sound financial base for the ACLU-NC, but, as Ehrlich notes, created a real community dedicated to strengthening the organization. In 1997, in recognition of Strauss’s all-sided leadership role, she was named the first board member emerita. On the occasion of her 90th birthday, a Board resolution honored Strauss as a “role model in the work for justice, equality and liberty.”

“Fran Strauss made her mark on the ACLU not in a matter of days, weeks or years, but in her service over decades,” said ACLU-NC Executive Director Abdi Soltani. “Two qualities made her accomplishments for civil liberties possible: a lot of heart and a lot of hard work.”

In 2010, the Development Department wing in the new ACLU-NC building on Drumm Street was named in honor of Strauss. The plaque on the wall will remind future generations of ACLU activists of the inspiring legacy of Fran Strauss and the torch that she carried so that civil liberties would continue to burn bright. 

Elaine Elinson is the former Public Information Director of the ACLU of Northern California.

Gifts in memory can be made to the ACLU-NC Foundation. Please contact Denise Mock at (415) 621-2493 x 334 or email giving@aclunc.org.

With a Single Sentence, You Can Defend Freedom Now and Forever.

Right now, by adding the ACLU to your will, you can leave a legacy of liberty for generations to come and defend our freedom today.

Name the ACLU in your estate plans and the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust will make a cash matching contribution of up to \$10,000 to the ACLU today, while matching funds are available.

For simple bequest language to include in your will and for information on other gifts that qualify for the Legacy Challenge, visit www.aclu.org/legacy or call toll-free 877-867-1025.



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ACLU-NC MAILING PREFERENCES

To Our Members:

Mailings to our members and the general public provide opportunities to describe complicated legal and political issues in ways not possible in other media and to describe strategies we plan to use for future actions. They enable us to explain, in detail, the benefits and provisions of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, the ways our rights can be protected in today’s world, and the costs of preserving those rights. We use the mail to inform people of the importance of our legal work and to solicit funds that enable us to continue our litigation, public education, and legislative lobbying.

Sometimes, as part of our program to find and recruit members, we exchange or rent our list of members’ names to like-minded organizations and publications. We do this so that we will be able to send our membership letters to their lists.

The ACLU never makes its list available to partisan political groups or those whose programs are incompatible with the ACLU’s mission. Whether by exchange or rental, the exchanges are governed by strict privacy procedures, as recommended by the U.S. Privacy Study Commission. Lists are never actually given into the physical possession of the organization that has rented them or exchanged for them. No organization ever possesses our list and no organization will ever see the names of the members on our list unless an individual responds to their mailing.

While mailings—under strict privacy guidelines—form the basis of our new member acquisition program, and are key to our growth, we understand some members do not wish to receive solicitations from other groups and we gladly honor requests from our members to be removed from the process. Once you make this election, you do not need to do so again unless you wish to change your preference back.

If you do not wish to receive materials from other organizations, please complete this coupon and send it to:

ACLU Membership Department
125 Broad Street, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10004

☐ I prefer not to receive materials from other organizations. Please eliminate my name from membership exchange/rental lists.

Member # _____

Name _____

Address _____


City, State, Zip _____

STEPPING UP TO PASS PROP 34 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

California's death penalty: it is broken beyond repair, exorbitantly costly, and carries the risk of executing an innocent person.

Special guest State Senator Loni Hancock explained how she was "heartbroken" when forced to make cuts to social service programs, particularly in marginalized communities, while hundreds of millions of death penalty dollars remained untouched. She urged guests to donate to the Yes on 34 campaign because the death penalty "punishes taxpayers, not killers" and voters should carefully consider how we spend our tax dollars.

Supporting the Yes on 34 campaign is a family activity in the Kerr-Ridley household. Their daughter Abigail is a fulltime volunteer for the campaign this summer. Abigail is helping with voter registration drives, reaching voters through community events and fairs, and helping other people plan their Yes on 34 house parties.

Judy, Barbara and Abigail are just a few of the many volunteers who have dedicated themselves to reaching out to as many California voters as possible and to helping the Yes on 34 campaign succeed this November. 

Abdi Soltani is the Executive Director at the ACLU of Northern California.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- ✓ Throw a house party to raise awareness and financial support
- ✓ Get endorsements from churches, local elected officials, and political parties in your area
- ✓ Donate to the campaign yourself

For more information on how to get involved, please visit www.yeson34.org or email ashley@safecalifornia.org.

YES_{on}34
Justice that works
YESON34.ORG

SACRAMENTO REPORT

By The ACLU California Legislative Office

Mobile Location Privacy

SB 1434, the California Location Privacy Act, authored by State Senator Leno (D-San Francisco) would update California privacy law to reflect the modern mobile world by providing needed protection against warrantless government access to a person's location information. Most Californians now carry tracking devices every day—with their mobile phones, tablets and more. The bill will next be heard in the Assembly Public Safety Committee.

Expanding Access to Safe, Early Abortion Services

SB 1338 authored by State Senator Kehoe (D-San Diego), would allow women to receive safe, early abortions from trained Nurse Practitioners, Certified Nurse Midwives, and Physician Assistants in their communities.

The bill failed in Senate Business & Professions and Economic Development Committee. However, a new, related bill (SB 623) would extend a UCSF-sponsored project, authorizing clinicians currently trained under the project to continue providing abortions through 2013. SB 623 passed out of Assembly Health and will next be heard in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Effective School Discipline

AB 1729, authored by Assemblymember Ammiano (D-San Francisco), encourages school leaders to use effective—and proven—policies that get at the core issues behind a student's behavior, create a safer environment for all students, and keep kids in school. The bill gives superintendents and principals discretion to use other means of correction prior to suspension or expulsion and enumerates those alternatives. The bill passed out of the Assembly 53-25 and heads to the Senate Floor in August.

Protecting Immigrants' Rights

AB 1081, the TRUST Act, authored by Assemblymember Ammiano (D-San Francisco) would restore trust and transparency between our communities and local police by limiting local jails from holding people on immigration-based detention requests when they pose no risk to public safety. It would create safeguards against racial profiling. It would allow local police to do their jobs and focus on public safety—for everyone in the community.


A federal immigration program, "Secure Communities," scans fingerprints of everyone arrested to check their immigration status. Unfortunately, this program has unfairly swept up community members for deportation, including law-abiding citizens and even some victims of domestic violence who call the police for help.

The bill passed the full Senate and awaits a final Assembly floor vote before going to the Governor.

Stopping the Shackling of Pregnant Women

AB 2530, authored by Assemblymember Atkins (D-San Diego) would prohibit the most dangerous forms of shackling of pregnant prisoners. Pregnant women represent between four and seven percent of the female population in correctional facilities, and this number is steadily growing across the nation.

While current law prohibits the use of shackles during labor, delivery, and recovery, there are no standards for when and how to safely restrain pregnant inmates throughout their pregnancies.

AB 2530 has garnered support from Republicans and Democrats. It will be heard in Senate Appropriations on August 6. 


The Sacramento Legislative Office works with the three California ACLU affiliates: Northern California, Southern California, and San Diego.

STANDING WITH SERVICEWOMEN

By Rebecca Farmer

Women serving in the military who are raped cannot get insurance coverage for an abortion. This is particularly pressing when women in the military face extremely high rates of rape—when a woman enlists, her risk of sexual assault doubles. The ACLU has led efforts to ensure that women serving in the military have the same access to reproductive health care as civilian women.

In just a short time we have seen tremendous progress on this issue. We cannot allow servicewomen who are raped to seek unsafe alternatives because their health care plans don't cover abortion. Recent efforts have focused on the Shaheen Amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act, which would end the ban on insurance coverage of abortion for military women who become pregnant as a result of rape.

The Senate Armed Services Committee adopted this amendment by a vote of 16-10 and with key support from the Committee Chairman, Sen. Carl Levin, and the Ranking Member, Sen. John McCain. For more information and for ways to get involved, visit www.StandWithServicewomen.org, a coalition effort to end this unfair policy. 


Rebecca Farmer is Communications Director at the ACLU of Northern California.

ACLU CONFERENCE & LOBBY DAY: A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

The 2012 ACLU of California Conference & Lobby Day was held in Sacramento from April 14-16. Recent UC Merced graduate Erica Beckles shares her experience with the conference:

The ACLU Conference & Lobby Day was amazing. This was my first time attending an ACLU conference and I made so many connections. I met a lot of similarly passionate students like me, as well as some awesome community leaders.


The 3-day conference was jam-packed with informative workshops, general meetings, great networking opportunities, and even some free time to go out and enjoy the city. The most inspiring part of the conference was Lobby Day.

Seeing the work that the ACLU put into getting its members connected with state officials to lobby for bills and spread awareness regarding legislation made political involvement seem very feasible and impactful. 



ACLU Conference & Lobby Day participant Erica Beckles.

Marty McReynolds



The Sonoma County Chapter's Annual Dinner and Awards Celebration was held April 27 at the Friedman Event Center in Santa Rosa. Sonoma ACLU members came to hear keynote speaker Jeanne Woodford, former warden of San Quentin Prison, to honor Santa Rosa civil rights attorney David Grabill and to support the Sonoma Chapter. Above, the Occupy Band entertains the crowd.


ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE BERKELEY/NORTH EAST BAY CHAPTER?

The Berkeley/North East Bay Chapter invites those interested in filling one of the open board seats to send their name, contact information, and a brief statement (forty words) about their civil liberties concerns to Jim Hausken, 51 Norwood Avenue, Kensington, CA, 94707, by September 14.

STUDENTS COME TOGETHER FOR THE DREAM ACT

The West Coast DREAM Graduation brought together 300 undocumented youth leaders and their allies for a mock graduation at San Francisco's City Hall. The ACLU-NC was a sponsor of their event.

Just days before, some of the activists from the National Immigrant Youth Alliance had also organized sit-ins in Obama campaign offices, which prompted the President's announcement of a new policy to provide deferred action and work permits. The mock graduation was a chance for young people to stand with pride with each other in support of access to education and fair immigration policies. Although California now provides in-state college tuition and financial aid to its high school graduates who are undocumented, students in other states are banned from attending public colleges altogether.

Students from Arizona also spoke about the impact of SB1070 and the Supreme Court's ruling on their communities. Other youth told the crowd about the devastation that the Secure Communities program has caused. Civil rights icon Angela Davis marched with the students and gave the keynote address, calling the ceremony "the most important graduation happening across the country." 



Photos by Diana Arreola

GET INVOLVED!

CHAPTERS AND CLUBS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Northern California Chapters

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Chico
Greater Fresno
Mt. Diablo
Marin County
Mid-Peninsula
Monterey County
North Peninsula (Daly City to San Carlos)
Paul Robeson (Oakland)
Redwood (Humboldt County)
Sacramento County
San Joaquin
Santa Clara Valley
Santa Cruz County
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Get contact information at
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ASK THE EXPERTS!

Estamos Unidos

Abdi Soltani joined the ACLU of Northern California as Executive Director in April 2009. As the Supreme Court heard arguments on Arizona's SB 1070, Soltani organized the Estamos Unidos tour in collaboration with other staff at the ACLU of Northern California, the national ACLU and ACLU affiliates around the country.



Why are immigrant rights such a huge issue right now?

As a country, our immigration policy goes back and forth between periods of inclusion and exclusion. Right now, with the country in recession and significant demographic change underway, immigrants are an easy target for politicians. My own family's experience as immigrants to the United States from Iran, when I was in 4th grade and my brother in 8th grade, was the America of inclusion.

What inspired you to organize the Estamos Unidos campaign?

Anti-immigrant laws, like Arizona's SB 1070 and Alabama's HB 56, involve local police in immigration enforcement, leading to racial profiling and unlawful detentions of citizens and non-citizens alike. I watched a video in January of an 8th grader from Alabama named Brandon, whose story of standing up for the rights of people in his community really moved me. I felt we really needed to do something to let people like Brandon know that across the United States, we are united in this fight. Estamos Unidos.

What was a highlight of the tour for you?

The event in Brandon's home town of Clanton, Alabama. Listening to testimonies of racial profiling from simple traffic stops that led to arrests, detention, and even deportation, was truly haunting. Meeting Brandon and his community, which has been so principled in standing up for their rights, was truly inspiring.

You had a run-in with the Border Patrol. What happened?

One of the things you learn is that the border now extends far into the mainland of the United States. At a Border Patrol checkpoint in Texas, the agent said his dog had smelled either "narcotics or a concealed human" giving him probable cause to do a search. SB 1070 extends that idea further, turning every police officer into a border agent, and every street corner into a border checkpoint. I get shivers thinking about it.

How does the landscape of immigrant rights in California fit with the rest of the country?

Prop 187 was to California in the mid-90's what SB 1070 is to Arizona today. Unlike students we met on the tour in Missouri, Georgia and Colorado with little to no access to college, California now provides in-state tuition and financial aid to DREAMers, youth who have grown up here but are undocumented. Despite California's better laws, though, the greatest fear we encountered on the tour was probably in our very own Merced County. So we have a lot of work to do even in California. That is why we are working to pass the TRUST Act (AB 1081), sponsored by Assemblymember Ammiano, to limit police and sheriff involvement in immigration enforcement.

The Supreme Court decision on SB 1070 and President Obama's announcement on the DREAM students are on a lot of people's minds. What happens next?

The Court allowed to stand—for now and with a

warning to Arizona—the "show me your papers" provision of SB 1070. So we will step up our litigation in Arizona, Alabama and states with similar laws to strike down this provision on the grounds that it leads to racial profiling and unlawful detentions of citizens and non-citizens alike.

Meanwhile, President Obama made a big announcement to defer deportations and grant work permits for the DREAM students, young people who are undocumented but grew up in the U.S. It's going to take a lot of work to make sure that this new policy is the real thing and is properly implemented.

Through a project like this, you got to work with many ACLU state affiliates and national ACLU staff. What did you learn about the ACLU?

One of my goals with this project was to uncover the bilingual capacity among ACLU staff nationwide, as we set out to strengthen the ACLU's work with Spanish speaking communities. We launched a number of new bilingual resources through this campaign, including the Spanish language website MiACLU.org.

Latinos are the targets of these discriminatory laws and at the same time are an increasingly powerful force in our country. This really is the decade for the ACLU to build a strong constituency in the Latino community for the whole mission of protecting Constitutional rights. We can do it. Sí se puede. ACLU