

Ohio Civil Liberties Snapshot

Marriage Equality: Love Wins in Ohio and the Nation!

At long last, all committed, loving Ohioans, can now marry the person they love!

On June 26, the U.S. Supreme Court heard six cases from Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan, and Tennessee. The ACLU, along with Lambda Legal and Gerhardstein & Branch, were co-counsel on the Ohio case, *Obergefell v. Hodges*. The Court ruled that state bans against same-sex marriage are unconstitutional. This historic decision means that hundreds of thousands of same-sex couples have the freedom to marry and recognition for their marriages across the country.



“This is a momentous win for freedom, equality, and most of all, love,” said ACLU of Ohio Executive Director Christine Link. “This ruling will bring joy to families in Ohio and across the country,

and a final victory to the decades-long freedom-to-marry movement.”

We cannot rest on our laurels. We must harness the current climate to continue the push

for full legal equality for LGBT individuals. The truth is—there are many more battles to fight. Did you know in Ohio an individual can lose their job or be denied housing for simply being who they are?

“It’s unacceptable that hardworking LGBT people can still be fired from their jobs, evicted from their homes, and denied service in restaurants and shops simply for being who they are,” Link said. “That’s why we will continue to work towards true equality, especially nondiscrimination protections for LGBT individuals in Ohio.” 



ACLU Victories

First Amendment: Fighting Back Against SLAPP

Each year high power individuals sue everyday people for speaking out on issues of public concern. This type of litigation is called a strategic lawsuit against public participation or SLAPP for short. The goal isn’t to win the court case; it’s to intimidate others from speaking out.

Robert E. Murray, CEO of Murray Energy Corporation, the largest coal mining company in America, sued James and Lisa Ciocia because they protested outside his company’s headquarters in 2012. The Ciocias weren’t the only ones Murray has sued to suppress criticism of his company’s activities. Journalists also are a frequent target.

Now, the threat of litigation by someone like Murray has a severe chilling effect on public participation and speech. It’s our job to protect those rights by fighting back. That’s why we filed an amicus brief in *Murray v. Ciocia et al.*

ACLU Secures More Early Voting Opportunities

Voting holds the power to change your local, state, and federal governments; however, the right to vote often comes under attack. The ACLU of Ohio was instrumental in two recent victories for increasing Ohioans’ early voting opportunities.

We reached a settlement in *NAACP v. Husted*, which restores many early voting opportunities. The case was filed after the Ohio General Assembly passed a bill that slashed early voting opportunities in the state. Under the agreement, Ohioans will now be allowed to vote on multiple Sundays leading up to a presidential election, and have access to additional evening voting hours for all elections.

Additionally, the ACLU and other voting rights groups, along with their supporters, pushed legislators to keep funding in the state budget for mailing absentee ballots.

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Support our efforts by making a gift online at www.acluohio.org/donate.

It's Time to Modernize Ohio's Voter Registration System



The ACLU of Ohio has long advocated for a robust online voter registration system. Recently, Ohio Senate Bill 63 passed the senate and will head to the house in the fall.

Online voter registration is gaining big momentum

nationally because it's either been approved or already in use in 28 states. Why?

An online voter registration system would allow many more Ohioans to participate in our democracy as it's quicker and more convenient. It would save money over in-person and mail-in modes of registration, according to Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted, who estimates the state could have saved between \$2.8 and \$13.2 million between 2011 and 2014 if we had online registration in place during those five years. Additionally, it would be faster and more accurate as registrations would be able to be verified electronically.

While SB 63 is a great first step, it could be even better by making online voter registration more accessible. Currently, the bill requires a driver's license or a state issued ID. This makes it harder for many Ohioans including those with disabilities and limited incomes. For more information, visit www.acluohio.org/onlineforall. Be sure to sign up for our emails at www.acluohio.org/emails to learn the latest update on this important legislation.

Working Toward Meaningful Police Reform in Cleveland



Change in the Cleveland Division of Police (CDP) is long overdue. In June, the Department of Justice (DOJ) reached an agreement with the city of Cleveland. The agreement stems from a DOJ investigation of the 2012 shooting deaths of Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams and its finding that the CDP engages in excessive use of force on people of color.

The consent decree includes provisions on everything from better data collection and increased transparency to the creation of civilian review boards and an inspector general.

While the consent decree is a big step forward, we have a long way to go before true reform happens. Changing the culture of a police force with a long-standing history of biased policing will take time and effort. The ACLU will continue to work with the DOJ, community groups, and the government to move toward a police department that is fair, restrained and committed to protecting the lives of all people.

"To change the culture of the police force will not happen overnight" said Mike Brickner, ACLU of Ohio senior policy director. "It will take a strong working partnership with city officials and community members, as well as the commitment of officials to not allow discrimination and unconstitutional practices to occur within the Cleveland Division of Police any longer."

Did You Know

You Can Leave a Legacy of Liberty?

You can make a gift through your will or trust or even name the ACLU of Ohio Foundation as a beneficiary on a variety of accounts, such as life insurance or 401(k) policies.

You Can Follow Us on Social Media?

To get news on civil liberties fast, follow @acluohio on Twitter and ACLU of Ohio on Facebook and LinkedIn. Be among the first to receive news of events and issues that affect your rights.

Many Employers Have a Matching Programs?

Companies and organizations all across our state—big and small—have matching gift programs to help support the causes most important to their employees. Matching gift programs often match the full dollar amount of an employee's contribution and can double your support!

Please email give@acluohio.org or visit www.acluohio.org/matchinggifts for more information.