

ACLU of Ohio Foundation
ACLU of Ohio

*From Presence
to Power*

Strategic Plan
2015-2020



Introduction

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is our nation's guardian of liberty, working daily in courts, legislatures and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to all people in this country by the Constitution and the laws of the United States.

In 1920, when the ACLU was founded by Roger Baldwin, Crystal Eastman, Albert DeSilver and others, civil liberties were in a sorry state. Activists were languishing in jail for distributing anti-war literature. Foreign-born people who were suspected of political radicalism were subject to summary deportation. Racial segregation was the law of the land and state sanctioned violence against African Americans was routine. Constitutional rights for the gay community, the poor and many other groups were virtually unthinkable. Moreover, the U.S. Supreme Court had yet to uphold a single free speech claim under the First Amendment.

Since the ACLU's founding in 1920, the nonprofit, nonpartisan organization has grown from a roomful of civil liberties activists to an organization of nearly 400,000 members and supporters, with offices in every state. The ACLU has also maintained, since its founding, the position that civil liberties must be respected, even in times of national emergency. In support of that position, the ACLU has appeared before the Supreme Court and other federal courts on numerous occasions, both as direct counsel and by filing amicus briefs.

The ACLU of Ohio Foundation ("Ohio ACLU") is an affiliate of the National ACLU. An outgrowth of the Youngstown Workers Defense League, the Ohio organization was founded in 1920 as one of the first fifteen affiliates of the National organization. The Ohio ACLU has gone through many transformative periods in the past 90 years.

This Strategic Plan will end in 2020 as the American Civil Liberties Union looks forward to its second century of service to the Bill of Rights of the United States and to the American people. We are called on to remain committed to making the vision of liberty, of which many Americans can only dream, a reality for all.

Executive Summary

In the Strategic Plan for 2010 to 2015 the affiliate made significant changes to its approach to civil liberties problem-solving, reflecting and at times leading the national movement to implement a new model for the process of our work, called *integrated advocacy*.

Over five years we recast our tools to most effectively intervene in and correct civil liberties abuses. We have moved from an almost complete reliance on litigation to a focused and coordinated use of all of our skills and resources in communications, membership, policy research, legislative advocacy, shaping public opinion and community organizing. We sometimes use litigation as well, but often successfully make change without it. Integrated advocacy has proven to be a powerful corrective for civil liberties abuses, reaching timely resolutions when litigation might continue for years at great expense, and with indifferent results. Nonetheless, litigation will always have an important role in seeking equality and justice.

In this five-year plan we move from being beginners at integrated advocacy to realizing the full force and benefits this model can bring to our work.

Public Policy/Legislation: Lead fully integrated long-term campaigns to address mass incarceration in police practices, courts, prisons and jails. Bring about voting rights equality in a similar fashion.

Leadership/Management and Organization: Plan and execute the smooth succession of staff and board leadership.

Fiscal and Human Resources: Eliminate the structural deficit. Manage the expansion of central Ohio ACLU.

Development: Build out a modern and sophisticated development department.

Technology: Advance our services and accessibility to people with disabilities. Be forward thinking.

Communications: Use ‘old’ and ‘new’ media tools to increase the impact of all integrated advocacy efforts.

Legal: Work with the team of directors to determine the role of legal strategies in every integrated advocacy campaign.

Finally, we affirm the Mission, Vision and Core Values as adopted in the 2003 Strategic Plan.

ACLU's Mission: *To aid in maintaining and extending constitutional and other fundamental rights, liberties, privileges, and immunities, and to take all legitimate actions in furtherance of that object without political partisanship.*

ACLU's Vision: *We envision Ohio as a free, safe and just society where civil liberties are secure for all.*

ACLU's Core Values: *Respect, diversity, integrity, courage and justice*

Core Values

Core values are woven into our culture, and serve as the foundation in which the organization stands. They are fundamental to our sustainability and to our mission to aid in maintaining and extending constitutional and other fundamental rights, liberties, privileges, and immunities. The following are the American Civil Liberties Union's core values:

Respect

By this we mean...

- We respect the Rule of Law
- We value the rules, and work to ensure the rules are right for all
- We honor the people who enforce and live the law

Diversity

By this we mean...

- We honor collaboration with all staff, Board members, and leaders throughout the state chapters
- We value the diversity among all staff, Board members, and leaders
- We respect all cultures
- We take affirmative action to increase the diversity of our staff, Board, memberships, volunteers, and other constituents of the Ohio ACLU

Integrity

By this we mean...

- We value the efficient stewardship of our resources
- We are committed to the thoughtful examination of cases
- We are dedicated to the promotion of civil liberties, and we take innovative approaches to protecting these liberties

Courage

By this we mean...

- We are on the cutting-edge with the concerns of civil liberties violations
- We are uncompromising in our pursuit to protect civil liberties

Justice

By this we mean...

- We are deeply committed to the promotion of constitutional and other fundamental rights, liberties, privileges, and immunities
- We are relentless in the pursuit of equality for all, especially those who are socially discarded and/or politically disenfranchised.
- We are accountable to our mission in preserving liberty for all

Goals and Objectives

I. Public Policy/Legislation

Goal Statement: Increase the sophistication and effectiveness of the policy and legislative department through the development of high-impact integrated advocacy campaigns that seek to defend and expand civil liberties in the ACLU's core areas of interest. This work should mirror the priorities outlined in the Centennial Campaign. By campaigns, we mean the promotion of ACLU positions using all available strategies through sustained, planned efforts.

1. Strengthen Policy and Advocacy Work

- 1a. Transition long-term campaigns to address mass incarceration into new initiatives that further stem the tide of Ohioans into the criminal justice system. In five years, the ACLU should meet the goal of reducing the state's prison population by at least 25%, which would ensure most prisons would no longer be above maximum population levels.
 - Conduct analysis of existing mass incarceration campaigns and select new campaigns to launch or expand. Campaigns may address improving police practices, use of deadly force, and accountability in our communities; ensuring prisoners are provided rehabilitation and housed in humane conditions in our prisons and jails with access to full mental and physical healthcare; ending the use of solitary confinement for all prisoners, but particularly for people with mental illness; ending the school to prison pipeline and fighting back against other policies like indiscriminate juvenile shackling that hurt children; and fighting back against profiteers who seek to capitalize on the criminalization of vulnerable populations.
 - Produce high-impact advocacy research on solitary confinement, prison privatization, and police practices.
 - Complement all research with story finding that portrays the human impact of mass incarceration.

- 1b. Expand and deepen the ties that the ACLU has begun to forge with disability rights activists, and seek to highlight the rights of people with disabilities in our core campaign areas. Leaders in the disability rights community should see ACLU as an equal partner in their fight for full inclusion and accessibility.
 - Assess components of all ongoing campaigns, including voting rights and criminal justice reform, to ensure they are accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities.
 - Conduct training programs for disability rights advocates on core ACLU issues like voting rights in order to strengthen ties and better educate advocates.

- 1c. Build upon successful advocacy campaigns to enfranchise all Ohioans, especially those with criminal convictions, people with disabilities and people of color, to institute vibrant

voting rights work every year, regardless of whether a presidential or gubernatorial election is looming.

- Ensure that all voting rights campaign plans are multiyear, beyond simply the next upcoming election.
- Develop a core of voting rights volunteers who can aid ACLU staff on protecting and expanding access to vote through education and advocacy.

2. Expand Current Lobbying Efforts

- 2a. Create an environment in the legislature where voting rights restrictions are no longer tolerated and instead, lawmakers will seek out bi-partisan solutions that expand the right to vote for all Ohioans, including both urban and rural voters.
- Research and advocate for innovations like online voter registration, electronic poll books, same-day voter registration, and expanded early voting opportunities.
 - Conduct research on what messaging appeals to the public and addresses concerns about potential voter fraud when speaking about restrictions and expansion of the right to vote.
 - Develop a strong network of grassroots support for voting reforms through innovative use of social media, communications and advocacy.
 - Identify and cultivate legislators on both sides of the political aisle who can champion proactive voting reforms.
- 2b. Leverage growing public sentiment against policies of mass incarceration to combat draconian sentencing enhancement laws, while also promoting legislation that will reduce the number of people criminalized, especially people of color and low-income Ohioans.
- Stem the tide of sentencing enhancement legislation by using communications, advocacy and research to illustrate the cumulative effect of these bills.
 - Build relationships with conservative legislators who share ACLU support of initiatives such as civil asset forfeiture, bail bond and parole board reforms.
- 2c. Enact protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Ohioans to be free from discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations. These protections must not include broad religious exemptions, and the ACLU must play a leading role in educating lawmakers and the public about true religious freedom and how these exemptions harm others.
- Form coalitions with other advocacy groups that will be devoted to championing these issues.
 - Increase coalition partners' overall knowledge of and effectiveness in the legislative process through trainings and one-on-one mentoring sessions between our legislative staffs.
 - Identify champions among conservative legislators who are willing to support this legislation while also resisting broad religious exemptions.

II. Leadership, Management, and Organization

Goal Statement: To identify, cultivate, recruit, and support leadership at all levels of the organization – board, staff, and volunteers– that provides direction and support for bold and innovative strategies to advance social change.

1. Enhance Staff Leadership

- 1a. Establish a succession plan that ensures continued successful operation of the organization through senior staff transitions.
 - Appoint a succession planning committee.
 - Develop a succession plan that includes emergency and departure-defined succession planning, as well as strategic leader development.
 - Present the plan to the board of directors.

- 1b. Provide a structure for building a cohesive, collaborative senior management team to ensure a smooth transition through upcoming leadership changes.
 - Establish a regular schedule for senior management team meetings.
 - Hold an annual management retreat for senior staff.
 - Respecting cost considerations, encourage senior staff to spend consecutive days in their nonresident office.

- 1c. Develop a process for ongoing strategic thinking, long-term planning, priority setting, and organizational learning.
 - Schedule annual senior management team meetings to review the strategic plan.
 - Incorporate a strategic plan “check-in” as part of every staff meeting.
 - Schedule a biennial staff retreat focused solely on strategic thinking and long-term planning.
 - Ensure all staff participate in appropriate national ACLU listservs and take advantage of networking opportunities with sister affiliates and coalition partners across Ohio to build capacity and an advocacy knowledge base to support our work.

2. Strengthen Board Engagement and Leadership

- 2a. Develop a process to regularly review and promote board member retention, especially as it pertains to equity and inclusion.
 - Launch regular exit interviews with outgoing board members to gather information on improvements related to board meetings, board process, and relationships with other board members and staff.
 - Expand the annual board assessment survey to include questions to solicit input on making board participation equitable and inclusive.

- Establish a formal recognition program that regularly acknowledges the collective and individual contributions of board members.
- 2b. Establish systems to support board members in fulfilling their fiscal and strategic oversight duties successfully.
- Create an ongoing schedule of board meeting “in-services” on key board responsibilities: financial oversight, litigation process, and community activism are examples.
 - Offer reimbursement for board members to attend nonprofit board management workshops.
 - Schedule periodic special meetings or phone conferences on key topics, such as the internal controls phone conference held in 2014.
- 2c. Establish a process for the cultivation, recruitment, and development of board officers.
- Establish leadership development and officer cultivation as a standing agenda item for executive committee meetings.
 - Invite officer prospects to attend executive committee meetings.
 - Track workshop offerings on board leadership topics and offer to reimburse prospective board leaders to attend.
 - Create a “buddy system” that matches officer prospects with current board officers and facilitate occasional informal coffee or lunch meetings.

3. Develop Volunteers

- 3a. Expand efforts to cultivate community leaders and organizations across the state with whom we can partner on civil liberties issues and initiatives.
- Hold a staff training on the virtues and tactics of networking.
 - Institute a process for timely, regular follow-up with connections made in the community.
 - Host periodic formal and informal gatherings to bring together leaders advancing social justice goals.
- 3b. Build a volunteer corps that can be rapidly mobilized to respond to civil liberties challenges.
- Draft a detailed volunteer recruitment plan.
 - Develop a list of tasks with which volunteers can assist regularly through the year to maintain engagement.
 - Host regular in-person trainings and social events for volunteers to build camaraderie and commitment to the organization’s mission.
 - Create a plan for engaging volunteers through the conventions and election of 2016.

III. Fiscal and Human Resources Management

Goal Statement: Develop a resources management plan that enables the organization to achieve its priority advocacy goals in areas such as voting rights and mass incarceration.

1. Leverage Assets for Expansion and Stability

- 1a. Eliminate the structural deficit.
 - In each annual budget cycle through this five-year strategic plan, narrow the gap between revenue and expenses by 20% each year.
 - Leverage and invest Centennial Campaign revenue to support a balanced budget into the future.
 - Expand the effectiveness and capacity of the development department to meet the revenue needs of our programmatic priorities.

- 1b. Create a long-term facilities plan that ensures statewide effectiveness.
 - Project facilities needs in Cleveland and Columbus at one-, three- and five-year intervals.
 - Develop a comprehensive budget to execute facilities changes.
 - Incorporate those needs into the Centennial Campaign.
 - Engage real estate brokers and/or other consultants to facilitate the changes in both cities, with the timing to be based on the needs at one-, three- and five-years.

- 1c. Leverage and grow reserve funds (to include endowment) to allow for responsiveness to emerging civil liberties issues or financial challenges.
 - Build into the Centennial Campaign a component to raise funds to build the organization's reserves.
 - Convene a board committee to revisit the existing reserve funds policy to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the organization.

- 1d. Develop a plan for staffing that will leverage Centennial Campaign revenue and enable the organization to carry out the goals in this strategic plan.
 - Create a five-year staffing plan that supports the goals of this strategic plan.
 - Collaborate with the Policy and Development departments to bi-annually to assess revenue projections and possibilities for hiring.

- 1e. Leverage technological innovations to enhance internal administrative and financial procedures.
 - Transition to a new accounting software that meets the reporting needs of the staff and board of directors.
 - Pursue a new payroll provider that provides online payroll input and reporting and integrates a timesheets function for hourly staff.

2. Fairly Compensate and Support Staff

- 2a. Develop a salary structure for all positions that is competitive and supports recruitment and retention.
- Survey salary structures of similarly situated organizations and establish comparability data.
 - Create a salary structure for all positions within the organization.
 - Write a compensation policy.
 - Discuss the salary structure and compensation policy with the Executive Committee.
 - Present the salary structure and compensation policy for board approval.
- 2b. Provide opportunities to progressively develop staff members' professional skills to advance the organization's mission.
- Institutionalize a schedule of annual in-services.
 - Create and maintain a list of resources for training and education opportunities for staff development by Fall 2015.
 - Develop a tracking system to ensure each staff member has a training and professional development plan tied to each annual performance evaluation, and provide support to staff and supervisors to ensure that the plans are carried out.

3. Promote equity and inclusion within the ACLU workforce.

- 3a. Develop a year-round staff recruitment plan that results in a diverse pool of candidates for job openings.
- Develop a manual that comprehensively details the various recruiting tools available to recruit top-notch, diverse job candidates.
 - Train all staff members in networking and engagement tools to support efforts identify talented individuals for future staff openings.
 - Evaluate all aspects of the recruitment process (website, job descriptions, screening, interviewing) to remove barriers to attracting a diverse pool of candidates and to promote the ACLU as an equitable, inclusive employer.
- 3b. Foster an office environment where staff are treated equitably and feel included in the vital work of the organization.
- Recruit and train five racial justice champions from among board and staff to regularly articulate our equity and inclusion goals.
 - Identify racial justice learning opportunities for personal and professional growth and to build a supportive workplace for a racially diverse staff.
 - Conduct a staff in-service on concepts of equity and inclusion.
 - Create a mechanism for anonymous feedback from staff on ways to improve equity and inclusiveness in the workplace.

IV. Development

Goal Statement: Create a dynamic Campaign infrastructure designed to produce a stronger, more financially stable ACLU and meet or exceed Ohio fundraising goals in the near-term, and which can be re-purposed to support the long-term needs of advancing civil liberties.

1. Lead the Centennial Campaign to achieve ambitious stretch financial goals.

- 1a. Establish a plan for solicitation of Centennial Campaign gifts.
- Identify the key donors for the nexus (leadership and planned giving) for the Campaign.
 - Create and begin implementing strategies to engage individual nexus donors.
 - Conduct Campaign cultivation and solicitations.
- 1b. Organize a top notch development department.
- Hire a Development Director.
 - Focus the work of the Development Director on Centennial Campaign nexus donors.
 - Execute a plan for departmental expansion.
- 1c. Participate in all national ACLU activities supporting the Campaign.

2. Create a dynamic annual development plan employing a range of strategies to grow annual fund contributions 28% by 2020 and maintain that level afterwards.

- 2a. Maximize the use of technology and communications to support and grow the fundraising program.
- Initiate or increase the use and sophistication of social media and other emerging technologies, donor communications and relations, and direct mail.
- 2b. Organize and develop the pipeline to increase the annual fund.
- Analyze constituent groups for annual fund growth potential.
 - Identify annual fund donors with major and planned gifts potential and begin moving them through the pipeline.

V. Technology

Goal Statement: To maximize existing technology and to identify appropriate technological advances for the purpose of furthering the ACLU of Ohio's ability to advance our mission and to operate securely and efficiently.

1. Leverage Existing Technology

- 1a. Implement the technology component of the disaster recovery and business continuity plan.
 - Finalize the system for periodic updating of needed resources and formalize the procedure for replacement of technology infrastructure.
 - Enhance the disaster recovery website to serve staff communication needs. Regular staff use will increase familiarity so that the site can be easily used in an emergency.

- 1b. Upgrade our group email/ advocacy process to a hosted system with analytics and reporting.
 - Select a service that allows for scheduled email sends, list management (including unsubscribes and user configuration of interests), email traffic analysis, and constituent engagement reports. The service should also be fully compliant with the CAN-Spam Act.

- 1c. Ensure that our website content is accessible to people with disabilities.
 - Identify resources to analyze website accessibility. Seek assistance from disability organizations with which we are in partnership. Contract for professional analysis and remediation, if needed.

- 1d. Increase staff access to and understanding of our technology resources to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in carrying out our mission.
 - Create a searchable archive of information, to include tech solutions, database management, and procedures, on the staff disaster recovery website.
 - Increase staff use of the advocacy/development database. (Note that a new national database is under development.)

2. Identify Appropriate Technological Advances

- 2a. Transition file/data/email storage that provides access from any location, accommodates a variety of devices, and has strong backup and security protocols.
 - Utilize Microsoft Exchange for email, allowing for mail/calendar synchronization between devices, increased security due to remote wipe capabilities.
 - Migrate server data to cloud storage; utilize improved backup with versioning.

2b. Explore technology enhancements related to communication and collaboration.

- Establish a video conferencing system for use between the Cleveland and Columbus offices.
- Develop a mobile app/website that provides Know Your Rights information and other online organizing tools of particular use to those involved in protests or who experience encounters with police.
- Explore use of the national database for both development and advocacy, thus eliminating redundancies and extra costs, and allowing for a more effective leverage of Centennial Campaign information.
- Recognizing our website's primary role in the engagement of our stakeholders, ensure that it is regularly refreshed, utilizes current technology, and contains effective tools for advocacy, issue education, and development.
- Move to an enhanced phone system serving the Cleveland and Columbus offices as one enterprise.

VI. Communications

Goal Statement: Establish a communications program to raise awareness of the mission of the ACLU of Ohio with the public and key stakeholder groups, as well as to plan and implement integrated communications campaigns to further policy, legislative, legal, and fund-raising goals.

1. Position the ACLU of Ohio as the organization that protects the individual rights and liberties of all people in the state of Ohio that are guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and laws.

- 1a. Deliver clear consistent messages that are delivered in brand voice.
- 1b. Develop key messages for staff, board, and communicators to further the organizational goals on key policy issues, legal, and fund-raising communications.
- 1c. Evaluate and redesign publications to create the ACLU branded image.

2. Focus communications efforts on engaging stakeholders to take action.

- 2a. Increase understanding of ACLU, civil liberties issues, and desired calls to action.
- 2b. Establish regular and effective communication with key stakeholders.
- 2c. Expand the organizational network of communicators and spokespersons.
- 2d. Develop contacts and relationships with media organizations, partner organizations, and ACLU national communications.
- 2e. Identify and develop relationships with online and social media influencers.

3. Expand, enhance and effectively use communication resources.

- 3a. As the marketing tool of choice, revise and update www.acluohio.org for ease of use and increased visitor engagement.
- 3b. Enhance the use of content marketing (blog, social media, emails/alerts) and new communications platforms to proactively engage with current and potential stakeholders, such as members, volunteers, donors, legislators, and community partners, and promote the organization as a resource on constitutional rights issues.
- 3c. Develop use of analytical tools to improve the efficacy of communications efforts, including website, social media, and email.

3d. Expand departmental staff to extend capabilities and effectively use existing and future communications platforms.

VII. Legal

Goal Statement: To provide legal research and analysis, and employ litigation tactics and advocacy, in concert with the work of other departments, to advance ACLU of Ohio objectives.

1. Develop and carry out a plan to anticipate, prevent and respond to threats to civil liberties stemming from the Republican National Convention in 2016.

- 1a. Protect the constitutional rights of protesters and others, including bystanders and the press.
- 1b. Identify clients and collect evidence for lawsuits we may bring to redress serious constitutional infringements.
- 1c. Issue reports and recommendations afterwards.

2. Fight manipulations of laws that restrict, dilute or deny individuals' right to vote.

- 2a. Challenge unconstitutional restrictions enacted by the Ohio General Assembly or directed by the Secretary of State.
- 2b. Protect the voting rights of people with disabilities and those of other marginalized people.

3. Challenge discrimination against the LGBTQI community.

- 3a. Prepare for the end of marriage discrimination in Ohio and its repercussions.
- 3b. Seek greater protections for LGBTQI individuals in housing and employment.
- 3c. Ensure the civil rights of people along the spectrum of sexual identity.

4. Advocate for the civil rights of individuals who are incarcerated.

- 4a. Challenge the existence and operation of private prisons in Ohio.
- 4b. Protect the rights of children in the justice system.
 - Hold the system accountable to an agenda of reform rather than punishment.
 - Protect the civil rights of children in court and in detention.

4c. Eliminate the abuse of solitary confinement in Ohio prison systems.

- Look for and exploit points of attack against Department of Rehabilitation and Correction's use of solitary confinement.
- Review and flag intake pertaining to the issue.

Conclusion

This strategic plan is a vision – and a work plan – for the board of directors and staff of the ACLU of Ohio.

It is designed to help the organization direct and prioritize its efforts in the next five years.

At the same time, it is a living document. It should be reviewed regularly to measure progress, and revised as necessary to adjust to the changing civil liberties landscape and to emerging management concerns.