

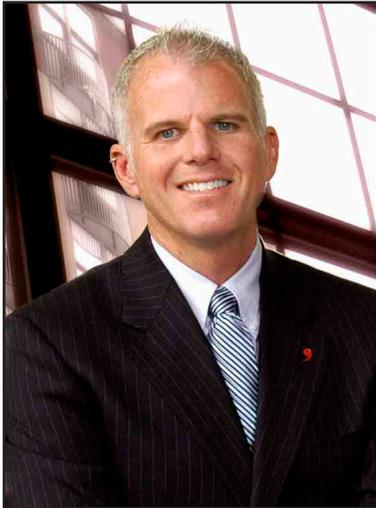


# ACLU

FOUNDATION

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION  
of OHIO

# Ohio Civil Liberties Snapshot



## A New Face, Ready to Lead the Charge

*I am tremendously excited to be joining the ACLU of Ohio. The ACLU's mission has been urgently relevant in each generation and that urgency, today, is as clear and compelling as ever. The ACLU of Ohio is a courageous defender of civil liberties, a relentless advocate for racial, social and economic justice, and a fierce defender of the Bill of Rights. This represents, for me, the essence of what it means to safeguard and advance our democratic society.*

The ACLU of Ohio warmly welcomes our new Executive Director, J. Bennett (Ben) Guess — a prominent civil liberties activist and minister. He joins the ACLU of Ohio after 17 years in various executive management positions at the United Church of Christ (UCC).

Ben brings a life-long commitment to civil liberties and social justice to the ACLU of Ohio. Early in his career, he served as a pastor to a progressive congregation in Henderson, Kentucky, that established an on-site Planned Parenthood clinic and founded Matthew 25 AIDS

Services, which remains one of Kentucky's largest health providers for low-income patients who are HIV+. Ben is a founding co-chair of the Kentucky Fairness Alliance, the state's leading LGBTQ rights organization, and he served on the board of directors of the ACLU of Kentucky. Additionally, Ben was significantly involved in UCC v. Cooper, the federal lawsuit that helped bring marriage equality to North Carolina. Please join us in welcoming Ben to the ACLU of Ohio team.

## Bail Reform

**EVERY DAY  
THOUSANDS OF  
PEOPLE SIT IN  
OHIO JAILS WHO  
HAVE NOT BEEN  
CONVICTED  
OF A CRIME.**

did not commit. Because of this, Ohio's bail system doesn't just hurt those incarcerated, but also the families who depend on their loved one.

It should come as no surprise that people of color are more likely to receive higher bail than their white counterparts accused of the same crime. Most importantly, putting bail out of reach for thousands of low-income people violates our fundamental principle of innocent until proven guilty.

Many of them have little hope of leaving jail, not because they are threats to public safety, but because they simply cannot afford to pay their bail. Each day an individual spends in jail means a higher likelihood they will lose their job, their housing, and even plead guilty to crimes they

Broad support for bail reform is growing. Leaders across Ohio are beginning to recognize that our discriminatory bail system is exacerbating our mass incarceration problem and must change. The Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas has created a taskforce to address the issue and the ACLU of Ohio is an active member, along with municipal judges, law enforcement, prosecutors, public defenders, and bail bond agents.

The ACLU is leading the charge to make bail reform a reality. For more information about our campaign to reform the bail system please visit [www.acluohio.org/bail](http://www.acluohio.org/bail).



Visit [acluohio.org/blog](http://acluohio.org/blog) to stay up to date on advocacy and progress.  
Support our efforts by making a gift online at [www.acluohio.org/snapshotgive](http://www.acluohio.org/snapshotgive).

## Parental Leave

In June, we filed a sex discrimination complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) on behalf of Derek Rotondo. The complaint asserts that Derek's employer, J.P. Morgan Chase, discriminates against men by designating biological mothers as the default primary caregivers. Mothers are eligible for 16 weeks of paid parental leave, while fathers – presumptively considered to be non-primary caretakers – are eligible for just two weeks. Chase's parental leave policy is outdated and reinforces the stereotype that raising children is women's work, and that men's work is to be the breadwinner.

## National Threats

**Muslim Ban**—This spring, the ACLU of Ohio filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit requesting government documents about the on-the-ground implementation of President Trump's Muslim bans. Since the government failed to substantively respond, we sued.

**Police Reform**—Attorney General Jeff Sessions is not taking police reform seriously. In the spring, Sessions ordered the Department of Justice to review all existing police reform agreements across the country – including in Cleveland. In 2014, the DOJ investigated the Cleveland Division of Police and found enough problems to create a 60-page report. Since then, little has changed. We created a petition targeting the city of Cleveland and the DOJ, and nearly 2,000 Ohioans signed on, urging them to commit to reform.

**Discrimination**—President Trump's rhetoric has fueled discrimination across the country. This summer, the Painesville Police Department started aggressively enforcing federal immigration laws in their city – a power reserved only for the federal government. This policy opens the door to unlawful racial profiling against people of color, immigrant families, and individuals whose primary language is not English. Local police should focus on forging strong relationships with all members of the community, not instilling fear in those who may be the victims or witnesses of crime. We sent the City a letter urging them to knock it off, and we asked supporters to contact city officials.

## Equality in the Spotlight

Nothing better illustrates the issues facing transgender and gender-nonconforming Ohioans than the personal stories, experiences, and voices of the people themselves. We worked with an outstanding group of Ohioans to put together five short videos titled, Transgender Spotlight.

We launched an educational campaign backed by a robust webpage providing resources for the trans community about trans rights, name and other ID changes, legal discrimination, health care, and the criminal justice system. Anchored by our video series, we have reached over half a million people with our campaign, promoting the expansion of civil liberties for the trans community. For more information please visit [acluohio.org/trans](http://acluohio.org/trans).

## Chipping Away at the Walls of Solitary Confinement

Last year the ACLU of Ohio and Disability Rights Ohio (DRO) led a campaign to end solitary confinement. A joint report issued in June 2016 highlighted many areas where improvement is needed.

In February of 2017, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) adopted new administrative rules to exclude all individuals with serious mental illness, juveniles, and pregnant women from solitary confinement of more than 30 days. They also created options that address disciplinary issues without requiring prisoners to be placed in solitary confinement. Both are welcome changes, but we will continue to push for an end to solitary confinement for all people in prison.



## Violations of the ADA

Last year we represented James Handwork who is hard of hearing and serving a sentence at Lake Erie Correctional Institution. Lake Erie is a minimum-security prison owned and operated by a private company, CoreCivic (Formerly Corrections Corporation of America). Months prior to our lawsuit, both of Mr. Handwork's hearing aids, which had not been replaced for many years, became completely inoperable. Without two functioning hearing aids, prison life was dangerous for Mr. Handwork and prison programs were inaccessible. So we sued.

This summer we won, Mr. Handwork got two working hearing aids and we got Ohio prisons to change their policy regarding the rights of individuals with disabilities. The decision ensures that individuals receive needed hearing aids, for one or both ears, based on individualized medical evaluations, and that the entire staff receives new training and clarification on the policy.