

WE *THE* PEOPLE

WE FIGHT
WE PROTECT
WE LITIGATE
WE ORGANIZE
WE COME TOGETHER
WE PARTNER
WE INVEST
WE SUPPORT

ACLU Tennessee 2024 & 2025 Annual Report

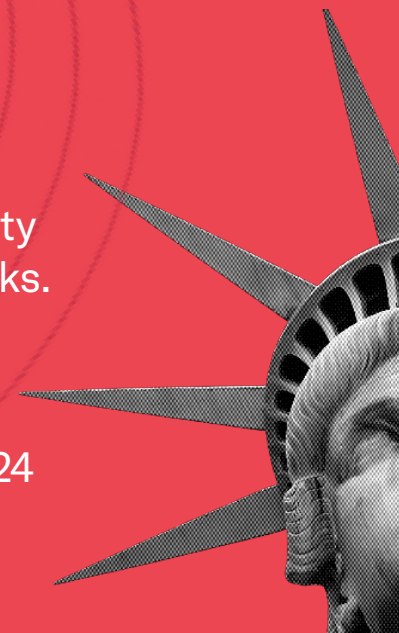
A Brief Overview Of Our Recent Work

Looking back on the past two years, the ACLU of Tennessee has expanded our capacity to continue our work of defending civil liberties statewide.

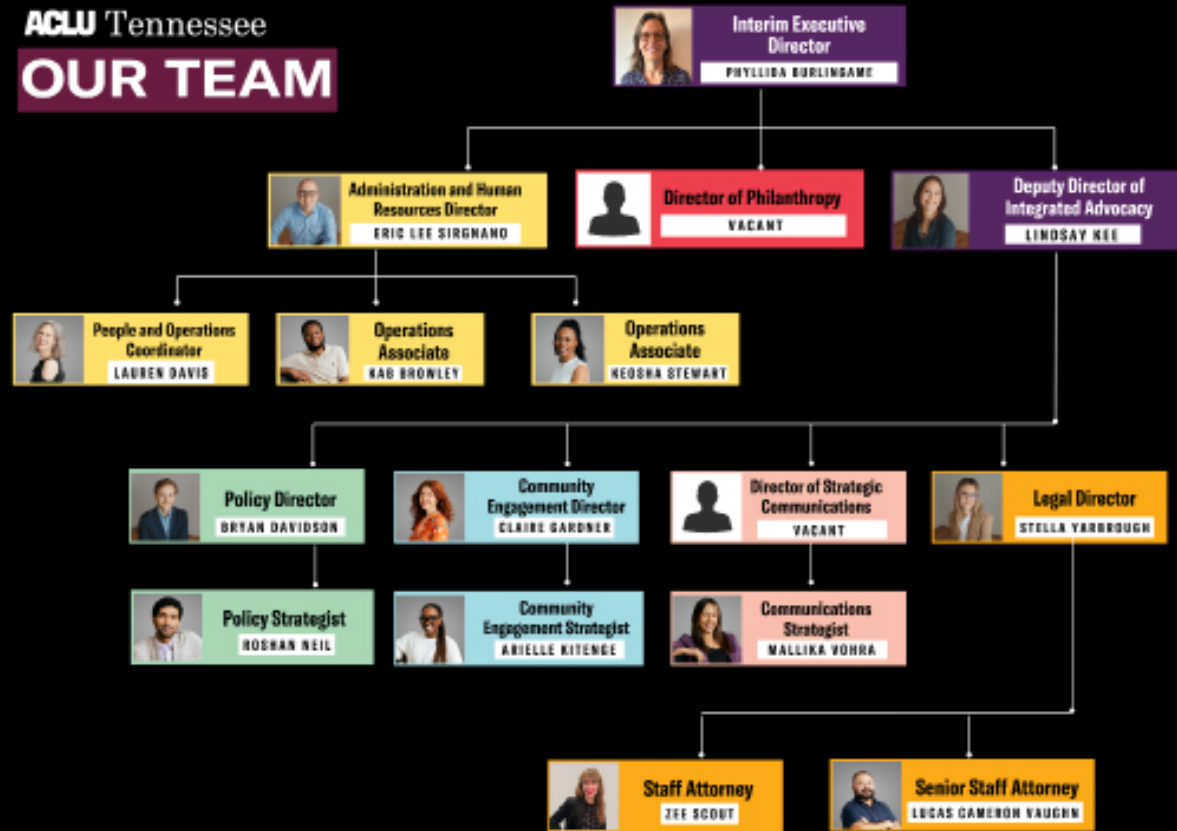
In the past two years, we've:

- Hired seven new staff members across our policy, communications, community engagement, legal, and operations teams, as well as paid interns and law clerks.
- Increased our on-the-ground presence across the state.
- Expanded our volunteer base and volunteer engagement program.

And more! Keep reading to learn the ins and outs of our work in fiscal years 2024 and 2025.

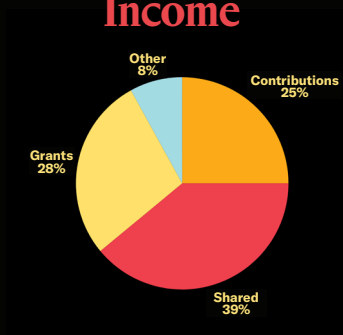


ACLU Tennessee OUR TEAM

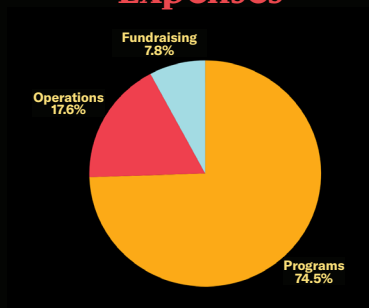


Finances

Income



Expenses



Consolidated audited statement of activities for the ACLU of Tennessee and the ACLU Foundation of Tennessee and statistics from Fiscal Year 2024 (April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024).

Audited financials for Fiscal Year 2025 are not available at this time, but can be shared upon request once available.

Meet The Board

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Vice President

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Brandon Tucker

Hershell Warren

Erika Wollam-Nichols





Defending Free Speech: From Book Bans to Drag Shows

Since 2024, we've seen a rise in book bans throughout the state due to Tennessee's new Age-Appropriate Materials Act, resulting in books like "Beloved" by Toni Morrison being targeted for censorship. In response, **we filed a lawsuit on behalf of three Rutherford County families and PEN America against the Rutherford County Board of Education for banning and restricting more than 130 books from school libraries in the county. Libraries are revered, protected places where students should be able to encounter a marketplace of ideas.** Our lawsuit asserts that the First Amendment protects students' right to access information and ideas, and that the government cannot censor books solely based on dislike of or disagreement with the ideas in a book.

We also **successfully lobbied against and defeated a bill (SB 266/HB 304) during the 2025 legislative session that would have prevented government entities from displaying any flag other than Tennessee or United States flags** on courthouses, in public schools, and on public roads and sidewalks, which was introduced to target Pride flags.

Drag Bans

In February 2024, the American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU of Tennessee, Ballard Spahr, and Burr & Forman **settled a lawsuit filed against the City of Murfreesboro over its anti-LGBTQ+ ordinance** and local policy denying all special event permit requests from the Tennessee Equality Project (TEP), founder and host of the annual BoroPride Festival.

The parties filed suit in federal court after City Manager Craig Tindall and Murfreesboro Mayor Shane McFarland engaged in a yearlong, concerted anti-LGBTQ+ campaign to chill TEP and Murfreesboro residents' protected speech and expression. The campaign culminated in the city establishing an official policy prohibiting the issuance of permits to TEP; discriminatorily and unconstitutionally denying TEP's request for a permit for 2023 BoroPride; and implementing a sweeping and vague ordinance designed to censor any LGBTQ+ speech or conduct within the Murfreesboro community and by TEP. The ordinance was also cited as an attempt to justify banning multiple LGBTQ+ books from Murfreesboro public libraries. In light of the settlement, the parties filed a dismissal of the case, bringing the lawsuit to a close.

We also played a key role in defeating a proposed bill this year (SB 1424/HB 884) that would have expanded the definition of "adult-oriented establishment" to impose stricter regulations on "adult cabaret" performances. This **bill specifically targeted drag shows** and threatened to make it more difficult for Pride festivals to secure permits from local governments.

Freedom Of Political Speech

In 2025, we worked with the independent monitor, the City of Memphis, and the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee on transition plans for the conclusion of outside monitoring of the Memphis Police Department, established as a result of our lawsuit *Blanchard v. City of Memphis*, which challenged police spying on Memphians' protected First Amendment activities. While outside monitoring has ended, the consent decree established in our 1976 case *Kendrick v. Chandler*, which **ensures Memphians have a right to engage in political speech without fear of unwarranted police monitoring**, remains in effect.

Informing The Community

Our work also includes informing the public of our issue areas and the importance of our mission. In collaboration with community partners, we led various **"Know Your Rights" trainings**, including trainings for educators and librarians on new censorship laws, and for university students and immigrant advocates on the right to protest. We also drafted and published an **op-ed in Ebony magazine** on book banning, along with a community **town hall** after filing our lawsuit, providing people the opportunity to see a first-person view of our litigation efforts and the effect of book bans statewide.



ACLU Tennessee

Reproductive Justice

Fighting At The Legislature

We envision a world where Tennesseans have the freedom to make decisions about their bodies, lives and futures without government interference, including decisions about abortion, IVF, birth control and beyond. These past two years, our team fought hard for all Tennesseans' right to reproductive healthcare — in the legislature and in our communities.

During the 2024 legislative session, our policy team **successfully lobbied in support of legislation that allows TennCare recipients to receive a 12-month supply of birth control at one time.** This change helps people with unstable insurance, long travel distances, or limited pharmacy access — an especially critical need in Tennessee, where a near-total abortion ban makes access to consistent contraception more urgent than ever. In 2025, the policy team also successfully lobbied in support of **legislation that clarifies that “criminal abortion” does not include FDA-approved contraception and IVF** and stopped bills that would have amended the state constitution to say that human life begins at fertilization and that would have criminalized the mailing of safe, FDA-approved abortion medications like mifepristone and misoprostol.

As our policy team fought to protect reproductive healthcare at the legislature, our community and communications teams mobilized with local partners to restore abortion rights in Tennessee. In 2024, we held a **press conference supporting the Fundamental Right to Reproductive Health Care Act.** In 2025, at the **Memphis Day of Action, volunteers reached over 13,000 voters** — helping stop efforts to criminalize birth control, IVF and abortion medication.



ACLU TN

Criminal Legal Reform

Bail Reform

On any given night in the United States, **nearly 450,000 people who are legally presumed innocent sit in jail** only because they cannot afford to pay bail. That's why we've been working at the Capitol and in the courts to ensure constitutional protection and fair process for all individuals entering the criminal legal system.

During the 2024 legislative session, **we lobbied against a bill that allowed bail to be set without consideration for an individual's ability to pay.** This could lead to indefinite detention for individuals who pose no flight or safety risk, while those who can afford bail are freed, violating the Constitution's principle of equal treatment under the law regardless of race, gender or financial status.

Unfortunately, the bill passed, so we filed a **federal lawsuit challenging Tennessee's new law that prohibits considering an individual's ability to pay when making bail determinations.** Although our request for preliminary injunctive relief to halt the law from taking effect during the ongoing lawsuit was denied, the case is still in progress, and we remain committed to building a criminal legal system that is safer and fairer for all Tennesseans.

Legal Challenge To Tennessee's Discriminatory Aggravated Prostitution Law

Criminal legal reform also means protecting Tennesseans unfairly targeted by discriminatory laws — including those living with HIV. Tennessee's Aggravated Prostitution statute singles out people with HIV for severe punishment, including lifetime registration as “violent sex offenders,” perpetuating a cycle of poverty without any benefit to public health and safety. No similar law exists for any other infectious disease, even those that are more prevalent and transmissible than HIV.

In fiscal year 2024, we joined with the national ACLU and the Transgender Law Center to file a **lawsuit challenging Tennessee's Aggravated Prostitution statute** and



related sex offender registration requirements, on behalf of OUTMemphis and four anonymous plaintiffs. During the 2024 legislative session, the legislature passed a law that allows people with aggravated prostitution convictions to be removed from the sexual offender registry, rendering some of our claims moot. This case is still pending.

Every person, everywhere, deserves equal protection and safety under the law, regardless of our health conditions, and we will continue to fight for this right in the years to come.

Immigrants' Rights

This year, our team stood strong in defense of immigrant rights, **joining forces with key partners through the Education For All campaign to protect undocumented children's access to public education.** Together with our partners, we lobbied, organized voter outreach, and held rallies to stop a bill that would have allowed schools to charge tuition or deny enrollment to undocumented students. Thanks to months of coordinated advocacy, the bill failed to advance through a key House committee — a crucial win that keeps Tennessee schools open to all children, regardless of immigration status.

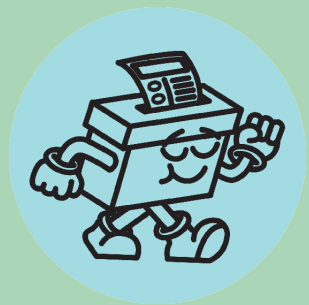
Beyond education, our policy team's advocacy helped stop bills that would have **criminalized undocumented residents based simply on their physical presence within Tennessee and prevented them from sending remittances to their families abroad.** As these issues continue to surface, we remain committed to defending the rights and dignity of all Tennesseans, ensuring that no one is excluded based on their immigration status.

Voting and Democracy

2024 was a pivotal election year, and our team worked hard to ensure fair and equitable elections across Tennessee.

Voter Engagement And Education

A crucial part of ensuring a fair and free election is educating voters statewide on their rights at the polls, key election dates, the importance of local elections, and more. Some of our work included **hosting volunteer engagement and voter education events** in districts that are critical for the future of Tennessee's civil rights and liberties, **creating a "Know Your Rights" resource** for canvassers during elections, and **launching an online voter information center for current and future voters**.



ACLU Tennessee

Protecting Voting Rights

Preparing for elections also includes protecting Tennesseans' freedom to vote through legal action. Our team participated in **election protection efforts** during the November 5 elections, helping ensure voters could cast their ballots and access support if they encountered problems at the polls.

In The Courts

In the summer of 2024, Tennessee election officials initiated a voter list maintenance program by sending 14,375 letters to immigrant registered voters, threatening them with criminal prosecution for illegal voting and demanding that they verify their U.S. citizenship. To continue protecting the right to vote, **our legal team sent a demand letter on behalf of numerous community groups to the Tennessee Secretary of State and State Coordinator of Elections**, informing them that the **voter list maintenance program is unconstitutional and violates federal law**.

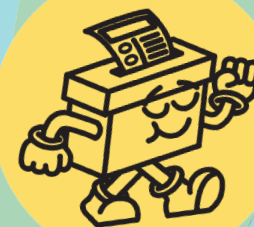
In The Legislature

Our policy team worked hard at the state legislature to push for a simpler process for Tennesseans with felony convictions to regain their right to vote. Right now, more than 475,000 people are disenfranchised in Tennessee. Due to deep racial disparities in the criminal legal system, a staggering 21% of voting-age Black men in the state are denied the right to vote. This year we and our partners were able to **remove the requirement that gun rights** must be restored in order to restore voting rights. Although the separation of gun rights from voting rights is a much-needed change, unfortunately this legislation codifies voting rights restoration as a judicial process in

the court system, thus requiring petition filing costs and potential attorney fees. We will continue to advocate for elimination of financial barriers to the ballot box.

We also successfully blocked two harmful bills during the last two legislative sessions. In 2024, we stopped a proposal that would have **required new voters to declare a political party — or choose "unaffiliated" — to vote in primaries**, threatening voter privacy and choice. In 2025, we defeated a bill that would have allowed **unlimited citizen challenges to other voters' eligibility**, risking voter intimidation and placing heavy burdens on election officials.

**VOTE YOUR
RIGHTS**



**VOTE YOUR
★ RIGHTS ★**

Trans Justice

All Tennesseans deserve the freedom to be, no matter who you are or how you express yourself. These past two years have been historic in the fight for trans rights — statewide and nationwide.

A Historic Case, and What Comes Next

Our team has been tirelessly working to stop anti-trans legislation from passing in Tennessee, including actively opposing the 2023 law that banned gender-affirming care for minors. After over a year of battling at the state level, **we took our challenge to the United States Supreme Court.**

On December 4, 2024, **oral arguments were heard in the landmark Supreme Court case *U.S. v. Skrmetti***, with oral arguments presented by ACLU Staff Attorney Chase Strangio – marking the first time an openly trans attorney argued at the Supreme Court – and casework being completed by ACLU-TN Senior Staff Attorney Lucas Cameron-Vaughn.

While part of our team was completing oral arguments inside the Supreme Court building, **other ACLU-TN team members rallied alongside community partners from across the nation to support trans community members' right to critical gender-affirming care.** We heard inspiring speeches from key figures and allies in the fight for trans justice, including one of our partners, TaMeshia Prewitt of OUTMemphis.

In June 2025, the Supreme Court ruled that the gender-affirming care ban in Tennessee could remain in effect. Despite the verdict in this case, we know the fight for trans rights continues no matter what, in the courthouse and in the streets – and we will continue our mission to ensure all Tennesseans have the freedom to be themselves.



ACLU-TN Files Lawsuit To Strike Down Driver's License Rule Mandating Discrimination Against Trans People

The Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security created a new rule that bans transgender people from changing the gender marker on their drivers' license. In April 2024, the ACLU of Tennessee, along with Holland & Associates PC, filed a legal challenge on behalf of a transgender woman in rural Tennessee to stop this harmful practice. The case was later joined by a second trans woman, Chrissy Miller, who had successfully changed the sex designation on her driver's license, but was told several months later that she must surrender her license or face cancellation of her driving privileges — a move that was later stopped by the Davidson County Chancery Court. The case, *Doe et al. v. Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security et al.*, seeks to ensure that transgender individuals can obtain identification that reflects who they truly are. This case is still pending.

