



TO: Members of the House Committee on Government Operations
FROM: Jay Diaz, Staff Attorney, ACLU-VT
DATE: January 12, 2017
SUBJECT: An introduction to the ACLU-VT's 2017-18 goals and priorities

What is the American Civil Liberties Union of Vermont (ACLU-VT)?

ACLU-VT is a non-profit advocacy and public education organization dedicated to defending the constitutional and civil rights of Vermonters. In a variety of subject matter areas, we seek to strengthen the liberties enshrined in the United States and Vermont Constitutions through lobbying, litigation, and public education.ⁱ

What are the ACLU-VT's priorities for Vermont?

- 1) **Criminal Justice Reform**: Despite substantial progress in recent years, Vermont still has work to do to reduce incarceration and protect people's freedom. The ACLU-VT is joining the national Campaign for Smart Justice to win lasting criminal justice reform – including police oversight, fair treatment of low-income communities and people of color, and an end to mass incarceration.
- 2) **Privacy**: Protecting Vermonters' right to privacy amidst technological advancements and the proliferation of law enforcement surveillance tools.
- 3) **Open and Accountable Government**: Strengthening the democratic process by holding public officials and bodies to the highest standards of transparency and accountability – modernizing open meetings law, enhancing access to public records,ⁱⁱ strict conflict of interest rules, candidate financial disclosures, and a state ethics commission.
- 4) **Protecting Vulnerable Populations**: Defending the most vulnerable among us – children, low-income families, homeless individuals, minority religious faiths, people with disabilities, immigrants, among others – to ensure that constitutional and civil rights are enjoyed by *all* Vermont residents.

Priority Issues for the 2017-18 Biennium

- Decertification of Poice (H.22) (support with concerns for specific language)
- Police Body Camera Policy (reject unless significant changes)
- State Ethics Commission and Financial Disclosure (support)
- Upgrading Open Meeting and Public Records Law (support)
- Criminal and Youth Justice Reform (e.g. police use of force data collection, bail reform, sentencing reductions, prison population reduction, prison addiction treatment)
- Countering the Trump Administration's potential assault on individual rights

ⁱ With over 3,000 members throughout Vermont and more than one million members, activists, and supporters nationwide, we aim to ensure that a “more perfect union” is realized for all while saving Vermonters’ time, money, and futures.

ⁱⁱ For an example of a state open data portal, please visit <https://data.ct.gov/>. Regarding police, court, and corrections statistics, it offers a wealth of regularly updated data to the public that can be analyzed, studied, and acted upon.