

Daring to create a more perfect New Jersey since 1960

CIVIL LIBERTIES

REPORTER

SUMMER 2026

ACLU
New Jersey

aclu-nj.org

IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Immigration Detention Is Anti-American

The Trump administration's mass detention and deportation agenda must be stopped.

Immigration detention threatens the democratic principles our country was founded upon and tears families apart. The Trump administration's dangerous immigration policies and xenophobic rhetoric are actively harming our communities – violating their constitutional rights, spurring fear, and creating fewer safe environments for everyone.

The people being detained at Delaney Hall, a detention facility in Newark, are facing inhumane conditions. At least two people being detained there have died. They are being denied basic human needs they have rights to, such as being subjected to rancid and inedible food, systematic and egregious medical neglect, and coercion into giving up their rights – including by being pressured into signing voluntary departure orders and deportation documents they do not understand. Many resorted to starving themselves to shed light on the abuses inside.

Community members have rallied together outside Delaney Hall in overwhelmingly peaceful demonstrations to call attention to the deplorable conditions on behalf of everyone detained inside. In response, federal and state agents used excessive force, firing pepper balls and tear gas at people gathered outside the facility.

New Jersey isn't the only state where this injustice is happening: hunger strikes to protest the cruelty the people are facing have taken place in facilities in California, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Texas too. In response to these calls for change, federal agents have violently retaliated against protesters and people in detention, even transferring some of those who are participating in hunger strikes thousands of miles away from their families and communities.

The inhumane treatment of people being detained is endemic to immigration

detention. These are not isolated incidents – they reveal the calculated cruelty of the immigration detention system and the Trump administration's entrenched

Continued on page 4

DEMOCRACY & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

ACLU-NJ Takes Legal Action as Trump Administration Targets Rep. LaMonica McIver with Political Charges

Elected officials have every right to exercise their legally authorized oversight responsibilities and disagree with President Trump.

In April, along with the National Women's Law Center and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, we filed an amicus brief in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in support of Rep. LaMonica McIver, who faces federal charges stemming from an oversight visit of Delaney Hall – an immigration detention center in Newark that has subjected people inside to deplorable conditions and inhumane treatment since the day it opened.



Rep. LaMonica McIver demands accountability for Trump administration's cruel immigration detention and deportation agenda.

PHOTO CREDIT: STEVE HOCKSTEIN/
HARVARD STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY

VOTING RIGHTS

After Years of Advocacy, the John R. Lewis Voter Empowerment Act of New Jersey is Signed into Law

For over four years, the John R. Lewis Voter Empowerment Act of New Jersey (NJVEA) has been a priority democracy campaign at the ACLU of New Jersey. After years of tireless collective advocacy and calls for action by the ACLU-NJ, our partners in the NJVRA NOW Coalition, and advocates across the state, we celebrated Gov. Sherrill signing the bill into law in July.

Under the new law, New Jersey will be protected against tactics that suppress and dilute the political power of voters of color, meaning democracy in the Garden State will be that much stronger. This bill will also establish a preclearance program to prevent voter discrimination before it occurs, increase language access and assistance and prohibit deceptive practices at the polls – critical measures as federal voting protections continue to be eroded.

New Jersey is the first state to enact a state-level Voting Rights Act after the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Louisiana v. Callais* – which further gutted federal voting rights safeguards – and we now have some of the strongest voting protections in the nation.

As the federal judiciary relentlessly attacks access to the ballot, particularly for communities that have historically faced disproportionate barriers to voting, states must take bold action to protect and expand these safeguards. We've seen the impact of the deliberate destruction of the federal Voting Rights Act – the racial turnout gap has consistently grown in New Jersey and across the country in the last decade. This bill takes meaningful steps to strengthen our democracy and cements New Jersey as a national leader on voting rights.

New Jerseyans deserve a strong, inclusive, and representative democracy where every voice is heard. There is more work to be done, but the John R. Lewis Voter Empowerment Act of New Jersey will create meaningful progress toward building that reality. ■



ACLU-NJ staff celebrate the signing of the John R. Lewis Voter Empowerment Act of New Jersey with Asw. Reynolds-Jackson.

Immigration detention harms families and communities, and these facilities' conditions are abhorrent. Delaney Hall is one atrocious example of the long-standing cruelty of immigration detention and the abusive nature of the Trump administration's mass detention and deportation machine.

On May 9, 2025, Rep. McIver joined fellow elected officials in visiting Delaney Hall as part of their congressional duties. During this oversight visit, Newark Mayor Ras Baraka was arrested for trespassing, and Rep. McIver was later charged with interfering with an arrest. She moved to dismiss the charges due to her legislative immunity and because they were clearly political retribution. Her motion was denied.

Our brief argues that Rep. McIver is being wrongfully targeted for leveraging

Continued on page 2

In Pursuit of Justice: Celebrating 65 Years of the ACLU of New Jersey

Our 65-year history has taught us that we're stronger together, especially when times are most challenging. We know that in this crucial moment, defending democracy requires all of us.

On June 9, 2026, at the Newark Museum of Art, we hosted "In Pursuit of Justice: Celebrating 65 Years of the ACLU of New Jersey." Over 300 community partners, supporters, friends, and staff members joined us for an evening of solidarity and community as we celebrated our shared belief in a future of liberty and justice for all.

We had the honor of having Michelle Buteau – actress, comedian, producer, and writer – serve as event host and emcee. Throughout the night, she combined her characteristic wit with poignant stories about the importance of sticking to our values and supporting each other in times of peril, inspiring laughs and community connection.

Vanita Gupta received the Roger Baldwin Award, given for exceptional or lifetime contributions to civil liberties in the United States. She is director of the Center for Law and Public Trust at NYU Law and served as the 19th Associate Attorney General of the United States. Previously, she led the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and was the ACLU's deputy legal director.

We also honored the ACLU-NJ's Clemency Project partners, including the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, Jason Flom, Lowenstein Sandler LLP, New Jersey Office of the Public Defender, NYU School of Law, Princeton University, Reform Alliance, Returning Citizens Support Group, Rutgers Law School, and Vital Projects Fund, along with some Clemency Project clients.

As our nation grapples with ongoing attacks on our rights, the ACLU-NJ has continued forging the nation's strongest firewall for freedom to ensure civil rights and liberties are protected for all, regardless of who holds the White House.

We've been on the front lines of freedom for more than six decades, and we're ready to continue fighting for generations to come. Together, we will ensure communities thrive, and democracy prevails. ■



Community partners, supporters, and friends celebrate 65 years of the ACLU of New Jersey at the Newark Museum of Art.

PHOTO CREDIT: FABIENNE CALKINS



Thank You to Our Sponsors

JUSTICE CHAMPION

Nissenbaum Law Group, LLC
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Elizabeth & Stephen Silverman

FREEDOM FIGHTER

Ahara Advisors
Lowenstein Sandler LLP
Prudential Financial
Puffin Foundation, Ltd.

CREATIVE FOR CHANGE

Joseph & Colette Parsons

LIBERTY DEFENDER

Bonnie Berman Cushing
Scott & Karen Goldman
David L. Harris, Esq.
Cláudia & Samit Hirawat
Ellen Samuel Luger
Lawrence Lustberg, Esq.
In loving memory of
Edith & Emil Oxfeld
Ruth J. Zowader
Anonymous

RIGHTS PROTECTOR

Connell Foley LLP
FBT Gibbons
Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation
Guston Law PC
NJEA
PSE&G
Wendy Sealey & Inez Gonzalez
Sills Cummis & Gross
Amol Sinha & Naju Lathia
Neil A. Steiner, Dechert LLP



Rep. LaMonica McIver

Continued from page 1

her oversight powers at Delaney Hall. This attack by the federal government cannot be separated from the fact that Rep. McIver is a Black woman who has vocally disagreed with the Trump administration.

Elected officials represent the people, not the administration's interests, and no elected official should be targeted for doing their job.

As the Trump administration attempts to use intimidation tactics to silence opposition through fear, we are fighting in the courts to dismiss the charges against Rep. McIver – the pillars of our democracy depend on it. ■



People rally in support of Rep. LaMonica McIver in front of the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey in Newark.



PHOTO CREDIT: STEVE HOCKSTEIN/HARVARD STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY

CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS



A Conversation with Ed Barocas:

“I never felt such a sense of strength as when I would stand up for someone who was being wronged.”

This interview has been edited for length. To read the full interview, visit aclu-nj.org.

For nearly two decades, Ed Barocas served as legal director at the ACLU of New Jersey. Throughout his tenure, he oversaw landmark cases involving free speech, same-sex marriage, religious freedom, government secrecy, and more, shaping New Jersey’s civil rights landscape with the unwavering mission to build a fair and equitable New Jersey for all.

He has now published a memoir, *Chasing Justice and Butterflies: A Memoir of Overcoming and Becoming*, chronicling his legal career and personal anecdotes with curiosity and wit.

We spoke with Barocas about writing his memoir, his time as the ACLU-NJ Legal Director, and his hopes for the impact of telling his story.

ACLU-NJ: What inspired you to become a public interest lawyer?

Ed Barocas: As I explain in my memoir, as a little kid, I had two heroes: Curious George and Horton the Elephant (from *Horton Hears a Who*). My work allowed me to feel like my childhood heroes: like Curious George, I always had a sense of awe and excitement because the cases were never dull, and I was able to help ensure that others could live to their true nature or outside the box. And like Horton the Elephant, I got to be the voice of those who needed one. I look back now with both the child and adult in me quite fulfilled.

ACLU-NJ: What was the most impactful issue you worked on while you were legal director of the ACLU-NJ?

Barocas: I was asked during the ACLU-NJ Legal Director job interview what would be the two most important issues facing New Jersey’s civil rights arena over the next five years. I answered same-sex marriage and legalization of marijuana. Clearly, the ACLU-NJ’s battles leading up to, during, and even after obtaining marriage equality cannot be minimized. But as I drove into our Newark office on the morning of September 11, 2001, the entire focus of our organization changed on a dime. The ACLU became the main



Ed Barocas served as the legal director of the ACLU of New Jersey for nearly two decades, and has now published a memoir about his legal career and personal life.

bulwark against illegal government surveillance, secret roundups of immigrants, harsh tactics to quell dissent, and government secrecy – all issues that resonate today. New Jersey was at the heart of many of those battles during the 2000s. So, I think the most important impact was making sure the government knew that their excesses, even during times of crises, would neither go unseen nor unchecked. We would be there to watch and to challenge them.

ACLU-NJ: How do you think your lived experiences influenced how you approached the legal work you led at the ACLU-NJ?

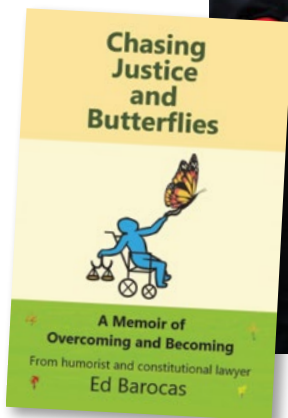
Barocas: As a child, I knew I had a disability that would get worse throughout my life. But I always had a close family, a strong personality, and many close friends, so knowing I was somehow different did not devolve into feeling like an outcast. The understanding of being different was instead directed outward, as empathy for others who were different from “the norm.” Because I had the security of family and friends at a young age, I felt empowered to speak out for other “outsider-the-boxers”

who were bullied or excluded and were afraid or unable to speak up for themselves. From grade school and beyond, I reveled in taking up the cause of the underdogs. I never felt such a sense of strength as when I would stand up for someone who was being wronged, especially when I succeeded in setting things right.

ACLU-NJ: What do you hope readers take away from your memoir?

Barocas: I think there are really two themes: one is about living life with joy and positivity and humor, regardless of what obstacles may be present. I would love if this book could help inspire people, not just those with disabilities, but anyone, to do so. We all have obstacles, some more obvious or greater than others. But how we deal with them determines the life we live.

The second is about living a life with meaning. For me, that meant taking a cue from my childhood hero Horton the Elephant and becoming a voice for the marginalized. That is why I was so passionate about being a lawyer and fighting for civil rights. ■



The ACLU of New Jersey was the featured organization for the Newark stop of Bruce Springsteen and The E Street Band’s Land of Hope and Dreams American Tour at the Prudential Center on April 20, 2026.

ACLU-NJ representatives attended the night of the show to talk to concertgoers about its work.

The partnership with ACLU-NJ comes on the heels of the national ACLU campaign to defend birthright citizenship, in which Springsteen’s “Born in the U.S.A.” was featured.



TRIBUTES

In honor of Rebecca Aguas
Jayne Bialkowski
Femke Deruyter

**In honor of
All the Victims of ICE**
Nicole Depasquale

In memory of Phil Anderson
Barbara Kuppersmith

In honor of Jennifer Archibald
Book Club & Elysa Foxman

In honor of Gretchen Beer
Diane Stahly

**In memory of
Puneet Bhandari**
Narendra Bhandari

**In memory of
Jo-Anne Bianchi Kramer**
Joan & Mark Halpern

**In honor of
Carol Ann Borthwick**
Stephen Rathe

In honor of Anne Brown
Linda Brown

In honor of Patra Brown
Nancy Hedinger

In honor of Yvonne Casuso
Jane's Giving Fund
Mary Martinez

**In memory of
MaryAnn Chamides**
Karen McDermott

**In memory of Pronoy K &
Swapana Chatterjee**
Chatterjee Family

In honor of James Comer
Alexander Shalom

In honor of Barbara Crowley
Salome Crowley

In memory of Elliot W. Dann
Jennifer Dann-Phillips, Geoffrey
Dann & Deborah Fields

In honor of Delaney Hall fight
Farah Jaffer

**In honor of the Delaney Hall
Hunger Strikers**
David Weiner

In honor of Diane DuBrule
Melissa Honohan

In memory of Vincenza Ercole
Rebecca Bunting

In memory of A. Vincent Field
John & Judith Field

In memory of Fred Fox
Therese Mauch

In honor of Friends of Melissa
Melissa Scott

In honor of Sue Gartman
Reva & Steve Fishner

**In honor of Mackenzie & Zack
Gibson-Greenspon**
Nancy Gibson

In honor of Corry Gunson
Diane Fisher

In honor of Lonnie Hanover
Amy Fleischman

**In honor of
Matthew Hipplewith**
Khay Muhammad

**In honor of the
Hirawat Family**
Dr. Ahadi Bugg-Levine

In memory of Keith Jones
Toni Jones Johnson

In honor of Tracey Kelley
Susan Schear

In memory of Harry Keyishian
Kimberly Schamber
Elissa Teeple
Diane DuBrule

In honor of Deen Khalil
Ruth O'Herron

In honor of Mahmoud Khalil
Farah Jaffer
John & Daphne Mascarello

In honor of Andy Kim
Cynthia Mitchell

In honor of Philip Lebovitz
Brian Lebovitz

In honor of Linn
Angela Leaney

In memory of Sam Liss
The Metuchen Fund

In honor of Justin Loughry
Herbert Ian Wachstein

In honor of Elizabeth Mabrey
Gawain Lau

In memory of Edward Mach
Erin Meyer

In memory of Michael Maher
Dr. Janet Denlinger

In memory of John McFarlane
Russell McTague

In honor of LaMonica McIver
Claire King

In honor of Michael
Kiley Lin

**In memory of
Art & Lynn Miller**
Stephen Eisdorfer

In honor of Sammy Moore
Christina Holder
Denise Panzer
Nigeria Parrott
Jen Winter

In memory of Ted Moskowitz
Gerald Bernstein

In honor of Alex Mott
Carol Lampson

**In honor of
Theresa Musto Fitzsimmons**
Lisa Vitelli

**In honor of
Neighborhood Action**
Kristy Lynch

**In honor of the
No Kings Protest**
Bethany Sutcliffe

In honor of DaWuan Norwood
League of Women Voters Montclair

**In honor of the Odendahl-
Bustamonte Family**
John Dauenhauser

In honor of Moses Oliva
Scott Dill & Jackie Schwartz

In memory of Olga Ortiz
Carmelo Ortiz

**In honor of
Nancy & Ellen Oxfeld**
Laura Kramer

In memory of Angelina Parise
Melissa Walter

In honor of Joe Parsons
Steven Cramer

**In honor of
Joe & Colette Parsons**
Stephanie Faison

In honor of Pat & Susie
Miles Gilmore
Katherine Hay

In memory of James Peoples
Ellen & Paul Dulberger
Karen O'Brien
Patricia Roullard & Deepal
Moonesinghe
James Saslow
Jonathan Silin & David Townsend

In memory of James Pollak
Henry Pollak & Katherine Moldave

In honor of Susan Posen
Chinenye Nwachuku

In honor of Liam Ramos
Tanya Perez

**In honor of
Maureen Richardson**
Sheldon Horowitz

In honor of Holly Robertson
Levi Sturgeon

In honor of Susie Robertson
James Cashel

**In memory of
William Robertson**
Kim Dowd
Levi Sturgeon

In honor of Ezra Rosenberg
Naomi & Morton Rosenberg
The Dorothy & Joseph Highland
Family Fund

In memory of Martin Russo
Emma Russo

In honor of James Sales
Charlotte Gagnier

In honor of Hassan Sekelsky
Arifa Khandwalla

**In honor of Anelise & Charles
Shrout/Coes**
Tim Shrout

**In honor of
Elizabeth & Steve Silverman**
Joan Weidner

In honor of Amol Sinha
Insha Rahman

**In honor of
Amol Sinha's leadership**
Ryan P. Haygood

**In honor of
Patricia Soteropoulos**
James Cashel

In honor of Dennis Statue
Kristy Amory

In memory of Joyce St. Clair
Jennifer St. Clair

**In honor of
Tamar, Eric, Solomon, Noam**
Beth Sandweiss

In memory of Ralph Tolomeo
Karen Garfing

**In honor of Luis Angel
Torres Rodriguez**
Anonymous

In honor of Margaux Trexler
Caroline Griffin & Henry Dugan

In honor of Rebecca Uwakwe
CJ Griffin

In honor of Janet Viera
Craig Viera

In honor of Wayne
Wayne Dembling

In honor of Liza Weisberg
David Jacobs
Joel Kazis
Eileen McInerney
Barbara Piercy

**In memory of
Reverend Albert E. R. Zug**
Singer & Fedun, LLC

Tributes are contributions made to honor or remember special friends, family, colleagues, and occasions. To have your tribute appear in the *Civil Liberties Reporter*, please contact the ACLU-NJ office at: 973-642-2086 or P.O. Box 32159, Newark, NJ 07102.

CIVIL LIBERTIES REPORTER

Published by the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey, P.O. Box 32159, Newark, NJ 07102
973-642-2086 | info@aclu-nj.org | aclu-nj.org

ISSN: 0009-7934

LIGHT THE TORCH OF LIBERTY

Help the ACLU of New Jersey build a safe and free future by investing in its mission. Defend liberty by making a tax-deductible gift to the ACLU-NJ Foundation. For more information on the many ways to give, call us at 973-642-2086. Visit our website to make a gift today: aclu-nj.org/donate

Delaney Hall

Continued from page 1

interest in profit over people. In fact, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) just received another \$70 billion in funding that will further protect the private corporations running immigration detention facilities over the health and safety of communities, almost doubling the \$75 billion the agency received in 2025.

This reality underscores that, for the Trump administration, cruelty is the point.

As we grapple with the federal government's attacks on our communities, it is important to note that state-level action can meaningfully improve the lives of New Jerseyans. In early 2026, the ACLU of New Jersey, alongside partners, worked to pass three bills after years of advocacy – the Safe Communities Act, the Privacy Protection Act, and the Immigrant Trust Directive codification – which help to ensure that all residents, regardless of immigration status, can access essential services without fear of detention and deportation.

More recently, after advocacy from the ACLU-NJ and partners, New Jersey committed \$20.2 million in the FY2027 state



budget to legal representation for detained immigrants facing deportation, more than doubling last year's funding levels. This increased funding will help ensure that more people have access to due process during their immigration proceedings.

We continue to call for the end of the Trump administration's detention and deportation machine, including the closure of Delaney Hall, a facility that has subjected those inside to abusive conditions since the day it opened.

Together, we can stop the Trump administration's detention and deportation agenda – because we cannot let these threats to human rights continue. ■

INSIDE:

- 1 | Immigration Detention Is Anti-American
- 1 | After Years of Advocacy, the John R. Lewis Voter Empowerment Act of New Jersey is Signed into Law
- 1 | ACLU-NJ Takes Legal Action as Trump Administration Targets Rep. LaMonica McIver with Political Charges
- 2 | In Pursuit of Justice: Celebrating 65 Years of the ACLU of New Jersey
- 3 | A Conversation with Ed Barocas
- 3 | ACLU-NJ featured on the Bruce Springsteen and The E Street Band's Land of Hope and Dreams American Tour
- 4 | Tributes

ACLU
New Jersey
American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey
P.O. Box 32159
Newark, NJ 07102

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Newark, NJ
Permit No. 6593