








Where do the 12th Congressional District Candidates Stand on Civil Rights and Liberties Issues?

On May 1, 2014, the ACLU of New Jersey and other leading civil rights organization hosted a civil rights and liberties candidates debate in Princeton the 12th Congressional District. Democratic candidates Upendra Chivukula, Linda Greenstein, Bonnie Watson Coleman, Andrew Zwicker and Republican candidate Alieta Eck, squared off on the leading civil rights issues of the day. Inform yourself about the candidates' stances on each civil rights and liberties issues.

	 <p style="text-align: center;">Upendra Chivukula (D)</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Alieta Eck (R)</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Linda Greenstein (D)</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Bonnie Watson Coleman (D)</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Andrew Zwicker (D)</p>
<p>Marijuana Legalization</p>	<p>“Marijuana is an issue of social justice...Marijuana should be looked at in a broader perspective and looked at from a scientific point of view...It is an economic engine, as Colorado has proven.”</p>	<p>“Putting people in jail for holding small amounts of marijuana is not a reasonable approach. Decriminalizing is one thing, but legalizing it is another...I worry about young people using it to excess.”</p>	<p>“I support the legalizing, regulating and taxation [of marijuana]... We don’t need to fill our jails with these people who have done simple possession drug crimes.”</p>	<p>“I most assuredly support changing the laws to the legalization and taxation of marijuana ...Treat it the same way we treat alcohol.”</p>	<p>“I am absolutely in favor of...allowing New Jersey to decide what’s best in terms of recreational marijuana and how it is classified... We need to abolish mandatory sentencing for nonviolent drug crimes.”</p>

<p>Federal funding for needle exchange programs</p>	<p>“I think we should lift the ban on needle exchange programs...that way clean needles are available and that way we can get the diseases controlled.”</p>	<p>“We should keep the question of funding to each state...Needle exchange is like giving free meals to people who are using them for harmful purposes.”</p>	<p>“Of course the goal is always to do more about the root causes of drug addiction but...This is something I have supported on the state level and would support on the federal level.”</p>	<p>“I was very much in support of needle exchange every time it came before [the legislature]. I think there is the issue of public health...We need to get our drug treatment dollars [from the federal government].”</p>	<p>“The issue isn’t the needles; the issue is decreasing the infection rates of HIV and the devastation of AIDS...I am absolutely in support of using federal dollars for [needle exchange programs].</p>
<p>Ending Mass Incarceration</p>	<p>“Mass incarceration could be avoided if we address the large amount of discrimination that goes on...One thing we can do is to reform the bail system...We need to create jobs here and create economic opportunity so that people do not resort to crime.”</p>	<p>“I think for children to be forced to go to schools that are failing is criminal. These children need to be able to go to a school that is safe, where they can learn...I am a proponent of school choice and perhaps that would be a way to reduce the future prison population.”</p>	<p>“We need to have programs in place to prevent recidivism. We need to make sure they can find jobs, stable housing...We need to do everything we can to reduce the prison population and only have the most serious offenders in there.”</p>	<p>“I ran a series of hearings around the state of New Jersey looking at the issue of mass incarceration...I support the clemency program that the federal government has instituted that looks at changing the laws for non-violent crimes.”</p>	<p>“We have 25 percent of the world’s incarceration and half of those are for drug crimes. This disparities are appalling...We have got to abolish the private prison system that...[Which] is not in this to do what is best for every single person in this country.”</p>

<p>Humane Immigration Policy</p>	<p>“Our immigration policies should be fair and compassionate... As we make sure that we are treating people at home well and creating growth here, we also need to create a pathway to the legalization of immigrants.”</p>	<p>“The biggest thing we need to do is secure the border... But once people come in and are law abiding, we should treat them with dignity... We should definitely be trying to keep families together. I do believe that we are a nation of immigrants.</p>	<p>“From top to bottom we need to establish a path to citizenship... There should be some humanity to it... We need to do everything in our power to... keep families together.”</p>	<p>“It is important to create an immigration policy with both the states and federal government that will make a pathway to citizenship accessible... We should not have mandatory detention systems.”</p>	<p>“We must provide a better path to citizenship... Currently undocumented students do not qualify for financial aid for college meaning that their path to education is blocked... It’s appalling that we have been trying to justify pushing people away from American society.”</p>
<p>Voter Suppression</p>	<p>“Democracy is stronger when more people participate in it... We need to make it easier to participate... Same day voter registration would be something that would help.”</p>	<p>“I think that the ID laws are good... It should be the responsibility of the Board of Elections in each town to ensure that everyone has an ID and that they don’t have to pay for it so that no one can say that money is the reason... The only reason I see for groups opposing voter ID is that they may want to allow for fraud and some extra votes to be cast.”</p>	<p>“We need to make sure that the laws on voting are very open to all people... I would support any legislation that would support opportunities for people being able to vote.”</p>	<p>“I would support any legislation that removes barriers to voting... I think we need to make it easier to vote. I don’t think you should have to walk around with a government issued ID in order to vote.”</p>	<p>“There is not a voter fraud problem in this country at all. It has been studied. It does not exist. It’s being used to disenfranchise people... We need to update our Voting Rights Act that allows every single person to vote because that is what this democracy is about.”</p>

<p>Pay Equity for Women</p>	<p>“It should not be about the gender of the person, but rather about the work that is completed...We need to make sure laws are passed and enforced, because minorities shouldn’t be affected by this... We should be able to collect data and be able to enforce this.”</p>	<p>“I don’t think this is as big of a problem as it is purported to be...I don’t see that there is a tremendous amount of discrimination based on gender, but any time that there is I would be totally opposed to it.”</p>	<p>“If you look across the board, women are getting paid less than men...Certainly this is a federal issue and one I would continue to work on in Congress so we could come to a day where this is not a problem and everyone will be paid equally for equal work.”</p>	<p>“Pay equity ensures that you get paid and your work is valued in the same way as your male counterparts. While working at the division of civil rights I fought against individuals who discriminated against others in employment situations and that’s what I will continue to do in Congress.”</p>	<p>“We have to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act...To make sure this form of discrimination is no longer supported at the federal level...We can make sure that no matter where you live and no matter what you do, you are paid the fair amount regardless of who you are.”</p>
<p>The Balance Between Liberty and Security</p>	<p>“When you try to spy on people and collect information it undermines civil liberties...Even though the technology is there we should not hide behind patriotism to peer into Americans’ privacy; we have to be very careful about that.”</p>	<p>“The Affordable Care Act will be the greatest threat to privacy that that world has ever known. It wants to put all the private medical records...onto cyberspace so the government can get a hold of this information... We should be using the CIA and FBI to prevent another 9/11, but to spy on every citizen...is a violation of our civil liberties.”</p>	<p>“Our privacy is being invaded every single day by the government and by private companies and we need to do everything in our power to have laws in place to make certain this is not taking place...The time has come to end the PATRIOT Act and reign in the NSA.”</p>	<p>“There is a balance here between keeping every person safe and secure and ensuring that we have the privacy that is protected under our Bill of Rights... We cannot live in fear or in a discriminatory way. Yes we do need to reform our PATRIOT Act.</p>	<p>“The U.S.A. PATRIOT Act is one of the most insanely unconstitutional acts that has ever happened... We must stop the NSA from spying on innocent Americans and stop these government programs which invade our privacy using the threat of terrorism to completely throw away our Constitution.”</p>

<p>Edward Snowden: Prosecute or Clemency?</p>	<p>“While I don’t condone the way he went about it, every American deserves a fair trial... Everyone has the right to be whistleblowers and we should strengthen our laws around this.”</p>	<p>“Snowden embarrassed the U.S. in exposing the unwarranted seizure of information from people who are innocent and bringing him home and allowing more exposure of the overreach of our government to light is a good thing to do.”</p>	<p>“What Edward Snowden has done is opened our eyes to what is going on...While I don’t condone the way he went about it, he deserves a fair trial...We need to hear him out...We are lucky he did what he did because it will hopefully make big changes in the future.”</p>	<p>“The exposure of this metadata gathering is very significant to us as citizens of the United States...We need to understand that sometimes we make the right decisions and there are still consequences. I am not in a position at this moment to say that we should grant him clemency.”</p>	<p>“Snowden should come home, and be granted clemency and should be acknowledged as the person who unveiled what the NSA and government was doing... We have to make sure that bills like the Whistle Blower Protection Act are passed and fought for. He did something that was incredibly brave.”</p>
<p>Putting Video of Abortion Clinic Patients and Escorts on Websites</p>	<p>“The law of the land is a woman has the right to choose...If someone is intimidating a woman, I think law enforcement should step in and take care of the situation.”</p>	<p>“I’m not embarrassed to say that I am pro-life...I’m in favor of the Texas law that says any abortionist must have admitting privileges in a hospital within 24 miles of the abortion clinic...[This puts] the woman’s safety as a priority.”</p>	<p>“It is perfectly legal to have time and place boundaries... That would protect protestors first amendment right and it would also keep the women safe.”</p>	<p>“If [videoing] happens they need to be removed and put a certain distance away from the facility so they don’t intimidate nor make a woman feel badly about the decision that she has to make.”</p>	<p>“[Protesters] have the right to protest; they don’t have the right to intimidate or threaten...There needs to be a clear and distinct boundary in between where clinics are and where people can be because once you cross over into intimidation, you cross the line that cannot be crossed.</p>

Federal Minimum Wage	“I believe that you have to raise the minimum wage and, \$10, I don’t know whether that is enough...We need to look at and tie it to the cost of living.”	“I don’t think it’s the job of the government to determine wages because what happens is jobs are lost...The minimum wage laws don’t make a whole lot of sense to me.”	“10.10 is an absolute minimum, I also think we should move towards a living wage.”	“I think it should be a living wage in New Jersey that’s minimally \$16 an hour...we should move toward a living wage.”	“It should be a minimum of \$10.70 because that is that it would be if it had just stayed with inflation.”
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The questions and candidates responses have been edited by ACLU-NJ staff for length and clarity. In the interest of accuracy, we have not included questions and answers where audio recording of the debate was incomplete or unreliable.

American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey
 P.O. Box 32159, Newark, NJ 07102
www.aclu-nj.org