



YEAR IN REVIEW

“We the People” includes all of us, not just those who have economic means and easy access to power. ACLU NorCal engages in litigation, advocacy, organizing, and public education on a variety of critical civil liberties and civil rights issues on behalf of people throughout our region. Our work relies on relationships—with community partners, with clients, and with you.

In 2022, we fought to ensure that “We the People” includes:

San Franciscans Awaiting Trial

With our partners, we filed a class-action lawsuit to prohibit the San Francisco sheriff from subjecting individuals released pretrial on electronic monitoring to unauthorized surveillance, including warrantless “four-way” searches (of their person, residence, vehicle, and property). Contrary to U.S. and California constitutional law, the sheriff is violating the privacy rights of all pre-trial electronic monitoring participants by requiring them to agree to these searches at any time, without a warrant or probable cause, despite a judge ordering release without these conditions. We’re also objecting to the sheriff indefinitely retaining and sharing with other law enforcement agencies GPS location data from electronic monitoring participants.

Hmong American Residents in Siskiyou County

Prior to 2022, we began working with our partner Advancing Justice–Asian Law Caucus to stop discriminatory Siskiyou County ordinances that threaten to dangerously limit the local Hmong community’s access to water. This work continues, and led us to an investigation that uncovered a years-long, systematic campaign of unrelenting racial hostility and persecution against the Asian American community. This includes targeted traffic stops (they are 17 times more likely to be stopped than white motorists), discriminatory search and seizure practices, and illegal property liens. We and our partners filed a new class-action lawsuit, led by four Asian American community members, drawing attention to how county officials, including those at the sheriff’s department, have targeted and threatened Asian Americans to drive them out of the area. Our complaint demands that county officials immediately cease their racially-motivated harassment campaign and take responsibility for the harm they have caused Asian Americans in the area.

People Petitioning the Government

California law requires that public meetings be open and accessible. Transparent government depends on the public’s ability to attend meetings virtually and in person. Virtual meetings are an important tool to lowering barriers to access

and broadening participation. But they don’t replace being able to petition leaders face to face. Officials who are in the same room as their constituents can’t just turn off their cameras or turn down the volume on criticism. Last year, we defeated legislation that would have permanently allowed public meetings to be held only virtually. Similar bills are being considered again this legislative cycle. So, our work continues. Politicians’ convenience should never outweigh democratic values.

Trans and Cisgender Women of Color

ACLU NorCal has assisted in building organizational structures, supported leaders, provided policy expertise, and given financial support to the DecrimSexWorkCA Coalition—a group led by current and former sex workers who are Black, Indigenous, and other women of color. The Coalition scored its first legislative victory when Governor Newsom signed SB 357, the “Safer Streets for All Act,” which repeals a law that resulted in unjust profiling, harassment, and arrests of transgender and cisgender women of color. The Safer Streets for All Act eliminates law enforcement’s ability to target these women based on a belief or assumption that they engage in sex work. It also enables persons convicted under the old law to clear their records, thereby eliminating barriers to employment and safe housing.

Immigrants in the Central Valley

We published “Collusion in California’s Central Valley: The Case for Ending Sheriff Entanglement with ICE.” This report reveals how sheriffs have evaded California laws through chilling tactics, like detaining immigrants longer to allow ICE agents to arrest them, transferring people directly to ICE custody without legal justification, and “releasing” people into non-public areas of jails, where ICE agents arrest them. We estimate that Central Valley sheriffs have turned over more than 1,000 people to ICE since enactment of California’s sanctuary law, which allows law enforcement officers to transfer immigrants to ICE only if convicted of certain crimes. The number of transfers we discovered is nearly three times higher than the figure that sheriffs have officially reported. Our report will be the basis for further local and state advocacy—and continued litigation—to separate local law enforcement from immigration enforcement.



Black Students in Oakland

After we filed a complaint on behalf of “Justice for Oakland Students Coalition,” a multi-racial group of students, parents, and educators working to increase equity for low-income students of color, Attorney General Rob Bonta investigated the Oakland Unified School District’s school closure plan, which disproportionately impacted Black students. Despite strong opposition, and without consulting those impacted, in violation of its own policy the school board voted to close seven schools, merge another two, and eliminate middle school grades at two others. The district has a long history of discriminating against Black students who have suffered from previous school closures. Nearly a year after we filed the complaint, a newly constituted Oakland School Board voted to largely rescind the school closure plan.

Community Members Threatened by Surveillance

ACLU NorCal has long advocated that privacy is an essential right, especially for people facing discrimination and government violations of rights. Yet privacy policy discussions rarely include those communities. To broaden and diversify a long-standing technology and privacy coalition, we coordinated *Intersections*, a day-long convening for leaders from across social movements (racial equity, economic justice, and immigrants’ rights) to discuss emerging issues and strategies to fight for justice and equality on the new digital terrain. The convening generated opportunities for local and state collaboration. Behind lawsuits and legislation, developing these relationships lays the groundwork for building collective power to tackle deeper intersectional work and creating a world where technology is supporting a just and equitable society.