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Aloha from Executive Director Joshua Wisch

Last year was tough. It saw attempts to punish Americans based on their faith, nation of origin, race, sexual identity, and financial status. Our highest government officials did and said things that unleashed waves of intolerance. At times, it seemed our country was leaping backwards.

But we also saw our republic’s resilience.

The press was attacked for reporting facts, but newspaper subscriptions swelled. Muslims were the target of an unconstitutional travel ban, but lawyers raced to airports to represent them. Civil liberties were attacked daily, but ACLU membership skyrocketed.

Simply put, the governed began to reassert their authority over the governors.

And as the new year begins, we at the ACLU of Hawaii are going through big changes. Vanessa Chong, our Executive Director for over thirty years, has stepped down to begin a well-earned retirement. Vanessa, in partnership with a talented staff and Board and with extraordinary support from supporters statewide, grew this affiliate and turned it into the impactful force it is today. Barbara Ankersmit, our ten-year board president who has overseen our tremendous growth, has passed the torch to Marianita “Nita” Lopez. We owe them a great debt.

With the help of our board, staff, and — most importantly — all of you, we will honor this legacy by intensifying our capacity to safeguard the civil liberties of the people of Hawaii’s.

Last year we were involved in issues as varied as abortion rights, immigration, jail conditions, and police accountability. As this year’s legislative session begins we’ll be working on bail reform, marijuana legalization, voting rights, privacy rights, and more.

We’re not slowing down and we’ll be ready to take action whenever civil liberties are threatened.

As we move forward, I want to reach out to me. We need your support as we continue this increasingly important work.

These are tough times, but the fight is worth it — and the ACLU of Hawaii has your back.

- Joshua Wisch

The ACLU of Hawaii Staff L-R: Executive Assistant Tracey Tokukoa, Deputy Director Kit Grant, Legal & Legislative Assistant George Cordero, Legal Director Mateo Caballero, Vanessa Chong, Executive Director Joshua Wisch, Legal Fellow Ainsley Dowling.

The ACLU of Hawaii Board of Directors: leadership, good governance, and community ties! L-R: Patrick Y. Taomae, Jackie Young, Barbara Ankersmit (outgoing President and incoming At-Large member), Marianita Lopez (incoming President), Executive Director Joshua Wisch, Treasurer Rick Schneider, incoming Vice President Barbara Franklin, George Atkins. Joining meeting remotely and not pictured: Ibrahim Aoude, Secretary Roger W. Fonseca, Jeff Hong. At-Large member Pamela Lichty, Esther Solomon, Equity Officer and National Board Representative Misaki Takabayashi, A. Joris Watland. Congratulations, and mahalo for your service!

The ACLU of Hawaii can vote in board elections. To become a “card carrying member” of the ACLU, please visit www.acluhi.org/join or we will gladly mail you an application, contact us at office@acluhi.org.

One team, one mission: civil liberties & civil rights for all!

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My kōkua (help) toward ACLU’s work for fundamental rights:

Tax deductible. Make checks payable to “ACLU-HI Foundation” and mail to P.O. Box 3410, Honolulu HI 96801.

To give online via PayPal, visit: www.acluhi.org/donate/

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Ace of Spades

“Lucky Fool” 2018

Board election complete, bylaws updated!

Big mahalo to all who voted in our recent Board Elections and revisions to our bylaws! Winners of our Bylaws mailer tee-shirt drawing will be notified by mail.

Elected to the Board of Directors for a two-year volunteer term: George Atkins, Roger W. Fonseca, Pamela G. Lichty, Misaki Takabayashi, A. Joris Watland. Congratulations, and mahalo for your service!

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Legal program update

The work of the ACLU of Hawaii’s legal program would be impossible without the generous volunteer support of our Litigation Committee. Each year, our members have donated each of their year’s most brilliant legal minds in our community. Two of those attorneys are Clare Hanus and Kevin Block, whose contributions as civil rights and immigration attorneys were honored at the annual Hawaii State Bar Association’s Pro Bono Celebration in 2017!

Some of our recent and ongoing work includes:

Discrimination and immigration:
• Submitted a friend of the court brief in the State’s lawsuit challenging politically driven Food and Drug Administration (FDA) restrictions on Mifeprex to prescribe the pill to his patients, is the lead plaintiff.

The initial Trump Muslim Ban abrupted many of the brightest legal minds in our community. A swift court order blocked its implementation, but it’s still unclear if courts will ultimately throw it out. As a national organization, coordinated ACLU Freedom of Information Act effort to better understand what airport officials knew, when, and why they did.

• We’ve participated in numerous public and private meetings of immigrant groups concerned about Hawaii’s disproportionate share of immigrants and their rights during the Trump administration.

Abortion rights:
In Chelius v. Wright, we joined forces with the national ACLU’s Reproductive Freedom Project to file a federal lawsuit challenging political restrictions on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) restrictions on Mifepristone, a safe and proven abortion medication commonly known as the abortion pill. The FDA regulations unnecessarily preclude doctors from writing prescriptions for Mifepristone that are necessary to preserve or improve women’s health.

Civil rights in the 2018 legislature

The ACLU of Hawaii advocates for the rights of all people, and local lawmakers to protect the rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and the Hawai‘i Constitution. We’re ready to respond to bills, measures, rules or policies that affect civil rights and civil liberties.

Hawai‘i Campaign for Smart Justice - fixing our broken bail system:
With our local jails and prisons critically over-crowded, and a growing reliance on for-profit prisons, Hawai‘i needs to take a hard look at who it locks up, why, and what the burden of housing the many incarcerated criminals creates. That burden alone reduces our state constitution, it’s unconscionable. We support bills that protect our social media account information from unwarranted inquiries.

Aloha without borders:
Side-by-side with immigrants’ rights groups and community allies, we will continue to push for laws that prohibit the Trump Administration’s efforts to enlist local law enforcement into its unconstitutional and xenophobic immigration enforcement policies.

Community control over policing policies:
The ACLU has fought for years to expand surveillance technologies, military-grade equipment, and federal immigration and drug enforcement can create a creeping oppressive environment for communities of color, protesters, and immigrants.

In Hawaii, decisions concerning these libero-policing policies are made by police departments behind closed doors without any knowledge or input from the public or their elected officials. To bring much needed transparency and accountability to this process, we hope to work with county councils to pass ordinances that ensure community-defining policies are made by police departments.

Join our mailing list!
Get email updates on ACLU actions, local and national, alongside over 10,000 other Hawai‘i activists. www.aclu.org/action

The ACLU of Hawaii’s grassroots advocacy movement, People Power (www.peoplenever.org), is active in Hawaii, and does weekly lobby visits at the legislature, civil rights events, great meetups and events - please check them out!