

ACLU Kansas Legislative Update – January 2014

By Holly Weatherford, Advocacy Director

As the 2014 Kansas Legislative Session convenes, the ACLU will be there working to protect and promote civil liberties in Kansas. Before we preview what's in store for this year, we want to briefly review some of the challenges and successes from the 2013 legislative session.

Looking Back at 2013

Immigrants' Rights: Since 2011, the ACLU has been a leader in a diverse coalition of organizations and individuals (Kansas Stronger Together) working together to stop anti-immigrant bills in the Legislature. The 2013 session was especially successful because not a single anti-immigrant measure made it out of a legislative committee. In fact SB 140, the Arizona-style racial profiling legislation, never received a legislative hearing.



Reproductive Freedom: The ACLU works in coalition with civic, religious, and health organizations from across Kansas to protect reproductive freedom in Kansas. The Governor signed two abortion restriction bills into law in 2013, which include a declaration that life begins at fertilization, a requirement that physicians convey medically inaccurate information to patients, and multiple tax liabilities for patients, as well as providers, and others who facilitate access to abortion services. Although it's hard to imagine how this law could be worse, earlier versions would have barred parents from volunteering at their child's school if the parent works at a hospital or clinic where abortions are provided.

Religious Freedom: Since 2011, there has been a significant increase in the number of bills introduced in the legislature claiming to promote religious freedom. Unfortunately, following 2 years of fierce opposition from the ACLU and LGBT rights advocates, a new law was signed allowing individuals and institutions to discriminate – by refusing to provide services to women and LGBT people – based on religious objections.

Drug Testing for Public Benefits: The ACLU has confronted mandatory drug testing legislation in Kansas multiple times in recent years and, at times, as the lone opponent to the legislation. In 2013, The Governor signed into law drug testing for cash assistance applicants and recipients and for unemployment benefits. While we lost the fight in the legislature, we will be closely monitoring the rulemaking process and implementation.

Looking Forward to 2014

Our work is never done! This session, we will continue to protect the civil liberties of all Kansans. We anticipate challenges to reproductive freedom, voting rights, religious freedom, and immigrants' rights to name a few. We are also excited to advance important civil liberties' protections. The issues listed below comprise the ACLU of Kansas' proactive legislative priorities:

Privacy: While technology has advanced rapidly in recent years, our laws have not kept pace. We will work with legislators to enact online privacy protections and bring government surveillance practices in line with the Constitution.

Criminal Justice: We anticipate discussions about prison expansion, mandatory minimum sentences, and repealing the death penalty. We will advocate in the legislature for a criminal justice system that fosters public safety by reducing over-incarceration and recidivism.

Government Transparency: Government of and by the people requires that people know what the government is up to; that is why we will support efforts to make access to our public records less costly and access to open meetings more convenient for citizens.

**WE HOPE YOU WILL JOIN US AND TAKE ACTION IN SUPPORT OF CIVIL LIBERTIES.
SIGN UP FOR OUR EMAIL OR FACEBOOK ALERTS AT [ACLUKANSAS.ORG](http://aclukansas.org).**