



# A Note to our Supporters

Friend,

It has already been an honor of a lifetime serving as executive director of this incredible organization.

As an ACLU of Nebraska supporter, I know you understand the critical nature of our work and the outsized impact of our team.

For more than 50 years, the ACLU of Nebraska has been hard at work protecting and advancing the rights and freedoms of all people in our beloved state. We did not let up in 2023. In the face of sizable challenges and moments of power alike, we showed up.

This report showcases some of that work. In these pages, you'll find a major legal achievement for Indigenous Justice and religious liberty, an update on our litigation against Nebraska's cruel restrictions on gender-related care and abortion access, community education efforts to address book bans in our public schools, and the launch of a new ballot initiative to ensure that Nebraskans can access abortion care free from government interference.

Each year in our work, there are victories and losses, ups and downs, and lessons learned. And every year around this time, our team is grateful to be able to reflect on the rights and freedoms we were able to defend, the progress we achieved, and the relationships we have made and deepened along the way.

"We the People" are powerful, and we just keep getting stronger. Challenges to our rights will certainly persist, but so will we. It is because of Nebraskans like you that I look forward to 2024 with hope in my heart, energized for the work ahead.



Thank you for being with us,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mindy Rush Chipman".

Mindy Rush Chipman  
she/her/hers  
Executive Director



## CELEBRATING...

**4** new staff members added to the team, increasing our ability to effect change in many of our priority issue areas, including students' rights, racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, immigrants' rights and Smart Justice reform.

**287** new Nebraska Legislature bills and resolutions actively tracked and engaged on in 2023.

**16,589** live phone calls to supporters ahead of the legislative hearing for the defeated near-total abortion ban.

**7** free legal clinics. ACLU of Nebraska lawyers advised people in a variety of civil legal matters free of charge at five clinics hosted by NAACP branches, the Volunteer Lawyers Project and the Center for People this year. We also coordinated and hosted two name-change clinics this year with community partner organizations. These clinics were aimed at helping those in the LGBTQ+ community legally change their name to reflect their chosen name and were open to anyone who needed help navigating the legal name-change process.





# Areas of Impact

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# Legal Program

Our legal impact is as broad as the need, guided by our vision of a freer and fairer Nebraska.

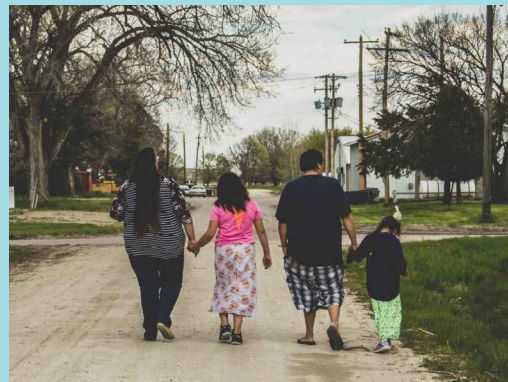
## In 2023, we:

- Sued to challenge the combination of new restrictions on gender-related care for trans youth and a 12-week abortion ban for violating the state constitutional requirement that “no bill shall contain more than one subject.” The case is currently on appeal before the Nebraska Supreme Court.
- Successfully argued for dismissal of a City of Lincoln lawsuit against the Indian Center, Inc., and community members who were seeking to appeal plans for a housing development next to sacred ceremonial grounds. Big Fire Law & Policy Group was co-counsel on the case.
- Filed an appeal in partnership with pro bono counsel on behalf of Jason Storrs and Amber Smith, who were wrongfully physically restrained and tased by law enforcement. The appeal is now under consideration.
- Represented a trans client in the state employee grievance process after they had been fired. The client was reinstated with backpay and full restoration of leave and benefits.
- Launched a lawsuit against Grand Island Northwest Public Schools on behalf of the Nebraska High School Press Association and student journalist Marcus Pennell for claims that school officials shut down the school newspaper for publishing articles on LGBTQ+ topics. The case was unfortunately dismissed because Pennell was no longer a current student, but the judge noted “school administrators would be wise to remember that policies and

decisions to restrict speech in student newspapers [...] may run afoul of the First Amendment if they reflect ‘an effort to suppress expression merely because the public officials oppose a speaker’s view.’”

- Joined the Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Coalition, Inc., in filing an amicus brief in support of a Nebraska mother appealing the termination of her parental rights given state officials’ failure to comply with the Indian Child Welfare Act.

## CASE SETTLED



Alice Johnson and Norma LeRoy made national headlines when they sued a north-central Nebraska school district, Cody-Kilgore Unified Schools, alleging that a school employee had cut their children’s hair without parental consent and against their religious beliefs. We were proud to represent this Lakota family alongside the Harvard Law School Religious Freedom Clinic. Together, we achieved a settlement that included protections for students, cultural competency training for school staff and monetary damages for the family. This year also brought a legislative victory in this area. Alice, Norma and their family helped advocate for new protections for Indigenous students and others, a new law detailed on the next page.

# Policy Advocacy

We strive toward a more just Nebraska by advocating before state senators, county commissioners, city leaders, school officials and others.

## In 2023, we:

- Successfully advocated for a new law that protects students' right to wear their natural hair, protective hairstyles, tribal regalia or headdresses. The passage of the bill followed the release of a report we co-authored with I Be Black Girl, #FreeTheHair, Nebraska Indian Education Association and the University of Nebraska College of Law Muslim Law Students' Association.
- Rallied against an unconstitutional drag ban and helped organize strong testimony against the bill in partnership with our friends at OutNebraska, halting its progress in the Nebraska Legislature.
- Submitted comment to the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services regarding proposed changes to mail privileges and successfully secured attorney-client mail protections for all individuals currently incarcerated in Nebraska's prison facilities.
- Testified against restrictive efforts to implement voter ID following voters' approval of the requirement. Thanks to unified testimony and advocacy, lawmakers selected the least harmful option of several bills under consideration.
- Successfully advocated for a southeastern Nebraska sheriff to address misleading mailers sent by a known neo-Nazi leader that falsely claimed the sheriff's office was seeking information on immigration violations.

- Successfully urged a public school district to stop allowing invited presenters to recite prayers before students. All students, regardless of faith or belief, should feel safe and welcome in our public schools. When officials disregard religious neutrality, they violate students' rights to be free of government-imposed religious viewpoints.

## PROTECTING OUR RIGHTS



We are all in on protecting access to abortion care. 2023's work began with a new legislative threat. Thanks to steadfast champions in the legislature, hundreds of Nebraskans turning up at the Capitol, and thousands of calls and emails, a near-total abortion ban fell by just a single vote.

Anti-abortion senators followed the defeat of LB 626 with the passage of a 12-week ban tacked onto a measure restricting gender-related care. We are litigating against that ban, but that is not all. Our team is proud to be one of the leading groups behind a new ballot initiative effort to secure legal access to abortion. The effort launched in November and petitions are now available. Learn more at [ProtectOurRights.com](https://ProtectOurRights.com).

# Community Empowerment

As part of our mission, we prioritize serving those Nebraskans who are most impacted by violations of our civil rights and civil liberties. Our community empowerment efforts rely on authentic relationships, growing partnerships and our team's unwavering commitment to communities across the state.

## In 2023, we:

- Launched a new statewide campaign highlighting the need for Smart Justice reforms as officials move forward on construction of a massive and expensive new prison in Lincoln.
- Created a resource to take on book bans in Nebraska public schools and public libraries, debuting the resource at a convening of Midwest ACLU affiliates during Banned Books Week. Find it at [aclunebraska.org/bannedbooks](https://aclunebraska.org/bannedbooks).
- Hosted a reproductive justice workshop in partnership with I Be Black Girl to provide resources and information on the need to get involved with the 2023 legislative session. Later in the year, we partnered with the Malone Center to develop a Know Your Rights resource for pregnant and postpartum Nebraskans and distributed it at I Be Black Girl's Reproductive Justice Summit. Check it out at [aclunebraska.org/pregnancy-rights](https://aclunebraska.org/pregnancy-rights).
- Once again co-hosted Art from the Inside in Lincoln, an annual exhibition that creates public awareness about incarcerated life through the artworks of the incarcerated and their loved ones.
- Led several Continuing Legal Education

(CLE) trainings on civil rights as well as in-person and virtual presentations to advocates and supporters, including speaking at a national virtual event hosted by the Guttmacher Institute and State Innovation Exchange about our legislative efforts to defend the right to abortion and gender-related care.

- Commissioned an accessibility audit focused on our events and digital communication, increasing our ability to reach and fully include as many Nebraskans as possible in our work.



This year, we once again provided LGBTQ+ community members with information about their rights at Pride events across the state, stretching from Omaha to Norfolk to Scottsbluff. Our robust presence across the state came at a pivotal time as it followed the May passage of anti-trans legislation restricting young transgender Nebraskans' access to medically necessary care. Two months later, we once again prioritized urgent community education for trans and nonbinary Nebraskans in the wake of an anti-trans executive order issued by Gov. Pillen. Learn more at our website [TransNebraska.org](https://TransNebraska.org).





“Thank you for all your hard work this past year. I know the fight for human rights is not over, so I thank you for your continued dedication and strong efforts.”

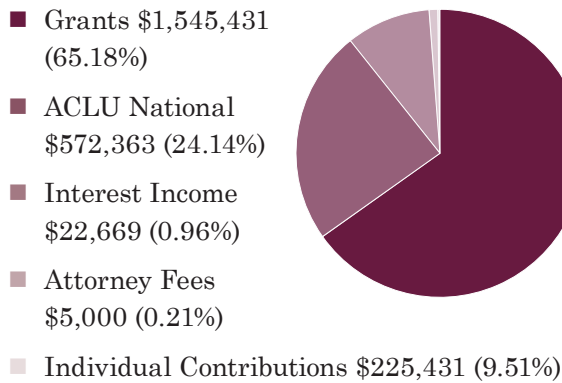
A note of gratitude sent from a community supporter.



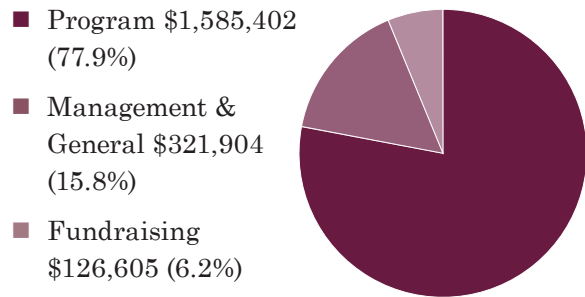
## 2023 Fiscal Year Financials

### Foundation

**Revenues: \$2,370,894**

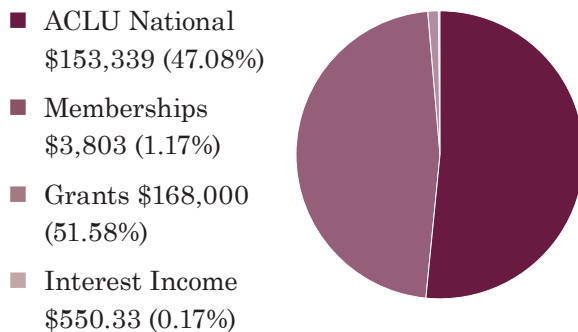


**Expenses: \$2,033,911**

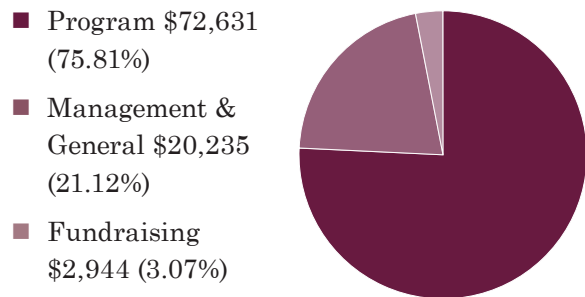


### Union

**Revenues: \$325,692**



**Expenses: \$95,810**



The ACLU of Nebraska is proud to be entirely funded by individual supporters and private foundations. We take no government funds, allowing us to be an independent watchdog and bring litigation against government entities with no conflicts of interest.