

DEFENDER'S DEBRIEF

UPDATING YOU ON THE RIGHTS & LIBERTIES THAT YOU DEFEND

ACLUNEBRASKA.ORG / 402.476.8091 / JANUARY 2015



A WELCOME FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings!

The ACLU of Nebraska announced my hire as your Executive Director in August 2014. I was honored to be selected for this important role which I see as a continuation of my public service. I was grateful for the flexible start date so I could honor my commitment to manage the successful citizen initiative to raise the minimum wage.

One of my very first acts at the helm of the ACLU of Nebraska was to join seven amazing families, a brilliant legal team, and countless supporters in a jam packed room to announce and celebrate our Freedom to Marry case. That day perfectly set the tone for the type of leadership I have been entrusted to bring to the ACLU of Nebraska.

(Continued on page 2)



*Kayla, Jaden, Susan, Sally and Ella in their Omaha home.
Photo by Jason M. McLaren.*

In November 2014 the ACLU and the law firm of Koenig | Dunne filed a lawsuit on behalf of seven couples who seek state recognition of their marriages or who seek the freedom to marry along with a motion for emergency relief.

Susan and Sally Waters of Omaha are the lead plaintiffs and have been together for seventeen years. In January

OUT FOR FREEDOM
ACLU

2013, Sally was diagnosed with breast cancer which has progressed to stage four.

“We have said publicly before God, our family and our friends that we love each other and are committed to one another and our children. At this moment, I want to spend time loving my children and my wife while knowing that should I die, they will be cared for.”

- Sally Waters

READ MORE 'OUT FOR FREEDOM' STORIES ON PAGE 3!

WELCOME, *continued*

These first few weeks I have been crisscrossing the state to gain a better understanding of our issues, strategies, resources, and goals. I want to thank our talented staff, dedicated board of directors and generous supporters for sharing your ideas to craft a vision for 2015. With your continued support and assistance, we will take our beloved organization to the next level.

I extend to you the following challenge: Let me know what your priorities are (aclunbraska.org/2015_survey), join or renew your membership with the ACLU (aclunbraska.org/join), and commit to at least one advocacy action in 2015.

Working together we will ensure that the constitutional rights afforded to all Nebraskans are respected by all Nebraskans.

In Freedom and Friendship,

Danielle

NEBRASKA PRISON SYSTEM IN CRISIS

Conditions Cross into Unconstitutional Territory

The ACLU of Nebraska has taken the lead in investigating constitutional violations in Nebraska's prison system while advocating for practical solutions that use our resources wisely. Our ground breaking reports are frequently cited by policymakers. To learn more please visit aclunbraska.org/prison_reports.

This fall we welcomed David Fathi, Director of the ACLU National Prison Project to Nebraska to raise awareness about growing constitutional violations in our dysfunctional prison system.

David shared these shocking statistics:

- **Nebraska spends thousands of dollars more per inmate than many other states.**
- **Nebraska inmates are in solitary confinement at a rate over twice the national average.**
- **Nebraska puts more people behind bars for marijuana use, per capita, behind only New York and Washington D.C.**

In December 2014, we filed a lawsuit on behalf of Joshua Franklin who, like half of those behind bars in Nebraska, is serving time for non-violent offenses. Joshua was assaulted multiple times by other inmates and despite his written pleas to prison officials, nothing was done to keep him safe. These assaults led to a series of serious injuries. We believe Nebraska's prison overcrowding crisis is a factor in this and other cases.

If policy makers do not heed the ACLU's warnings, we are prepared to file additional lawsuits challenging Nebraska's prison system.

VISION FOR 2015

- Empower ACLU members to engage in direct advocacy.
- Lead a statewide equality campaign for LGBT Nebraskans and new immigrants.
- Secure systemic reform of Nebraska's prison system.
- Fight back against state level attacks on women's reproductive rights.
- Increase our capacity by focusing on planned giving and donor stewardship.

TO HELP US REACH THESE GOALS
PLEASE MAKE A DONATION TODAY!
ACLUNEBRASKA.ORG/DONATE

OUR FREEDOM TO MARRY CLIENTS!

NICK KRAMER & JASON CADEK

They live in Omaha with their three year old daughter Alice. Jason works in banking, Nicolas in IT. They have been in a relationship for ten years and were legally married in 2013.

JESSICA & KATHLEEN KÄLLSTRÖM-SCHRECKENGOST

They live in Omaha with their infant Sebastian. They are respectively a lawyer and a therapist. The couple has been in a relationship for almost ten years. They were legally married in 2010.

CRYSTAL VON KAMPEN & CARLA MORRIS-VON KAMPEN

Crystal is a disabled veteran and Carla is an advocate for families that have disabled children. The couple resides in Norfolk and has been together for five years and have three adult children.

GREG TUBACH & BIL ROBY

Together for twenty eight years, Greg & Bil live in Lincoln and are waiting to get married in the state they call home.

DR. MARJ PLUMB & DR. TRACY WEITZ

They live in Omaha with their two (very big!) dogs, have been together for over ten years and were legally married in 2008. Both are successful professionals who moved to Nebraska recently for work.

DR. TOM MADDOX & RANDY CLARK

Tom is a native Nebraskan who graduated from the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Randy is a CPA. The couple has been together for over 30 years and were married in 2008. They currently own property in Nebraska and reside in California.



ENSURING FULL EQUALITY Beyond the Freedom to Marry

Support the Equality Agenda

#Out4Freedom

Sign the petition >>

ACLU

Learn more about the Equality Agenda
aclunbraska.org/equalityagenda

End discrimination in the workplace, housing and public accommodations (*legislation pending*).

Give children in foster care the opportunity to be placed in the loving stable home of gay or lesbian Nebraskans (*lawsuit pending*).

Ensure transgender Nebraskans have equal access to mental health care and safe supportive schools.



SUPPORT THE FREEDOM TO
MARRY IN NEBRASKA!
DONATE TO THE ACLU TODAY.
WWW.ACLUNEBRASKA.ORG/DONATE

The ACLU plans to reduce America's
prison population in half by 2020.

END THE FAILED WAR ON DRUGS.

Per capita, Nebraska sends more people to prison for marijuana than anywhere else in the US except New York and Washington D.C.

MAKE THE SENTENCE FIT THE CRIME.

Extreme sentencing laws and mandatory minimum laws strip judges of their ability to make the sentence actually fit the crime.

ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY INCARCERATION.

Roughly half of Nebraska's inmates are behind bars for nonviolent offenses.

INVEST IN BETTER SYSTEMS.

Problems like mental illness, substance abuse, and homelessness should be addressed as public health issues —not criminal justice.

JOIN TODAY OR RENEW YOUR
MEMBERSHIP TO HELP END
MASS INCARCERATION IN
NEBRASKA.

ACLUNEBRASKA.ORG/JOIN

PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF NEW IMMIGRANTS

In December 2014 the Omaha World Herald published poll results that showed a clear majority of Nebraskans (63%) support common sense immigration reform. However, that broad public support is frequently undermined by some political leaders and law enforcement officials who fail to respect the constitutional rights of new immigrants.

To help the ACLU of Nebraska work more effectively with new immigrants, a generous donor supported the hiring of Guillermo Guzmán as a community organizer based out of Omaha. Guillermo moved to the United States from Mexico when he was a teenager and is a recent graduate of Creighton Law School.

With Guillermo's legal expertise and community connections, we are providing better outreach to new immigrant communities, providing more Know Your Rights trainings to Spanish-speaking audiences, and expanding our efforts to bring impact litigation and policy solutions to ensure justice for new immigrants.



Joel Donahue, Staff Attorney; Danielle Conrad, Executive Director; Maria Funk, Office Manager; Tyler Richard, Communications Director; Amy Miller, Legal Director; Guillermo Guzmán, Community Organizer; Alan Peterson, Government Liaison.

Joel Donahue has been integral to the ACLU's prison reform work. He left the ACLU in January and we wish him well!

YOU CAN MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE WITH THE ACLU OF NEBRASKA

1. MAKE A GIFT TODAY

The ACLU comprises two organizations which gives donors and the ACLU the flexibility and resources to fight for freedom, justice and equality.

- Gifts to the American Civil Liberties Union of Nebraska qualify for ACLU membership and support our legislative work in Congress and the Nebraska Legislature. Gifts are non-tax deductible. Join or renew online today: aclunebbraska.org/join
- Gifts to the ACLU of Nebraska Foundation support our litigation and public education work. Gifts are tax deductible. Make a tax-deductible contribution today: aclunebbraska.org/donate.

Because of how the ACLU is structured, gifts to either the Nebraska or National office will ensure the same local impact.

For more information about giving options, contact Tyler Richard, Communications Director, at 402.476.8091 x104 or trichard@aclunebbraska.org.

By including the ACLU in your will, you can leave a legacy of liberty for generations to come.

Thousands of passionate civil libertarians have stepped forward and expressed their most cherished values by making a deeply meaningful gift to the ACLU in their estate plans.

We invite you to join this special group of ACLU supporters who have made freedom, justice, and equality their personal legacy by remembering the ACLU in your estate plans.

To learn more, or to take advantage of our estate planning resources, visit www.aclu.org/legacy or call toll-free 877-867-1025.



Community Services Fund of Nebraska

2. TAKE ACTION

Make your voice heard through our online action network—ACLU Action—and protect civil liberties in your community and across the country. Check out ACLU Action's grassroots campaigns and sign up today at aclunebbraska.org/action.

Join the Conversation:

twitter.com/acluofne

facebook.com/aclunebbraska

instagram.com/acluofne

3. JOIN OUR TEAM

Our eighteen-member board guides the direction of the ACLU's work in Nebraska. We are always looking for new members to join the board or committees. To learn more, contact Office Manager Maria Funk at 402.476.8091 x103 or mfunk@aclunebbraska.org

We care about your privacy. View our privacy policy at aclunebbraska.org/privacypolicy