

ACLU
Idaho

2025 **ANNUAL** **NEWSLETTER**





Meeting the Moment: Defending Freedom in an Age of Authoritarianism

Leo Morales, Executive Director

The state of civil liberties today is deeply troubling — frightening, even existential. Like many of you, I've felt a roller coaster of emotions — anger, fear, frustration — and I've caught myself imagining worst-case scenarios for the future of our nation under an authoritarian regime and what that would mean for our lives.

I won't pretend that I'm over these feelings. It's hard to shake them given the magnitude of what's happening. But I'm making a conscious shift by choosing to channel my energy toward building the better future we all deserve.

Yes, things are tough. But now, more than ever, I'm committed to moving forward with hope, strength, and courage.

This year, we've taken several steps forward: filing multiple lawsuits to protect the rights of immigrants, conducting Know Your Rights trainings statewide, sharpening our strategic priorities, and heavily investing in leadership training to grow our activist base. We've also been disciplined in using both traditional and digital media to counter false narratives and showcase community resilience. But the national context we're facing demands more from us — it's pushing us to think more strategically about how we safeguard civil liberties.

We are now staring down the possibility of years under authoritarian rule in the U.S., and that means we must act urgently. Building statewide and national coalitions with long-time allies and new ones is critical to defending our freedoms and pushing back against anti-democratic forces.

Moving forward, our strategy will be multi-pronged: harm reduction, intensified civil resistance organizing, and going on the offensive by uniting the voices of concerned Americans deeply frustrated by an economy that has left them behind. The future of our individual freedoms, civil liberties, and democracy depends on the work we do today as well as the courage and creativity we bring to the fight.

We must plan long-term, act swiftly, and scale our efforts to meet this moment. The ACLU remains a powerful vehicle to counteract anti-democratic forces and hold government accountable.

Thank you for your continued support and solidarity. Let's seize the opportunity to nimbly protect our fundamental constitutional rights and reimagine a new way forward to build the better nation we all deserve.



Rising Threats at the Statehouse: Key Legislative Trends to Watch in 2026

Amy Dundon, Legislative Strategist

The 2026 legislative session is weeks away. While we can't predict the future, our team has spent several months researching the politics likely to shape lawmaker agendas come January. We've analyzed moves in Congress and the courts, charted state legislatures and shifting federal regulations, all while keeping tabs on Idaho's political climate. We also looked to the 2025 legislative session for clues about the upcoming year.

2026 Predictions

Much of the politics of 2025 will carry into 2026: hearings and debates will almost certainly be shaped by the emboldened — and growing — Christian Nationalist flank of the majority party. Extremist policy from these far-right lawmakers will likely define 2026, while competing theories of governance are sure to propel in-party tensions. Stubborn trends we'd hoped would fizzle are instead likely to bubble up in 2026: bills will again undermine the rights and freedoms of trans folks and undocumented immigrants, while the right to protest and speak plainly about race and racism, and the right to vote, access health care, and even our right to an ideologically secular government will remain in peril.

Our Summer Advocacy Efforts

The bleak legislative forecast informs our strategy for the year ahead, and it also shaped our summer advocacy efforts. We worked to build up local power in all corners of Idaho, whether in convening community around public education, attending Pride events and LGBTQ+ resource fairs, supporting a trans-focused paperwork clinic, or in exploratory talks around proactive local policy. Summer advocacy is intentional and strategic: we engage in this work to build community with folks whose rights are under threat. We work to empower ordinary Idahoans to join the fight to defend and protect our precious and increasingly fragile rights and freedoms.

Building People Power: We Need Your Courage

Summer advocacy is also meant to inspire active political engagement — we know this moment demands bravery, and from all of us. In 2026, we will need people power to defend immigrants' rights from unprecedented threats; we expect laws that push constitutional limits and legal norms, and still more anti-immigrant rhetoric that undermines the dignity of our undocumented neighbors. Lawmakers are also likely to hatch new attacks on our First Amendment rights, particularly around protest and dissent. Elsewhere, speech rights may be used for laws that pit religious freedom against the rights of LGBTQ+ folks to access public institutions and spaces. Finally, we anticipate expanded and enhanced police powers and an uptick in the creation of new crimes or enhanced punishments.

The upcoming session will be one for the books. Be sure to follow our legislative engagement as it unfolds using our Fast Democracy bill tracker, website, and on our socials.

Follow the ACLU of Idaho!

   @acluidaho  @ACLU of Idaho



Legal Intake: A Troubling Trend for Incarcerated People & Criminal Defendants

Dina Flores-Brewer, Community Intake Manager

This is turning out to be a record year for the Intake Department at the ACLU of Idaho. During a typical year, we receive anywhere between 800 to 1,000 intakes – complaints from the public to the ACLU about different civil rights violations. This year, we’ve received almost **1,100 complaints**, and the year is not over yet. With so many intakes, we are doing our best to respond within a reasonable time. With our two trusty helpers, volunteer intern Andy and volunteer paralegal Avery, we are working hard to respond to every letter and email.

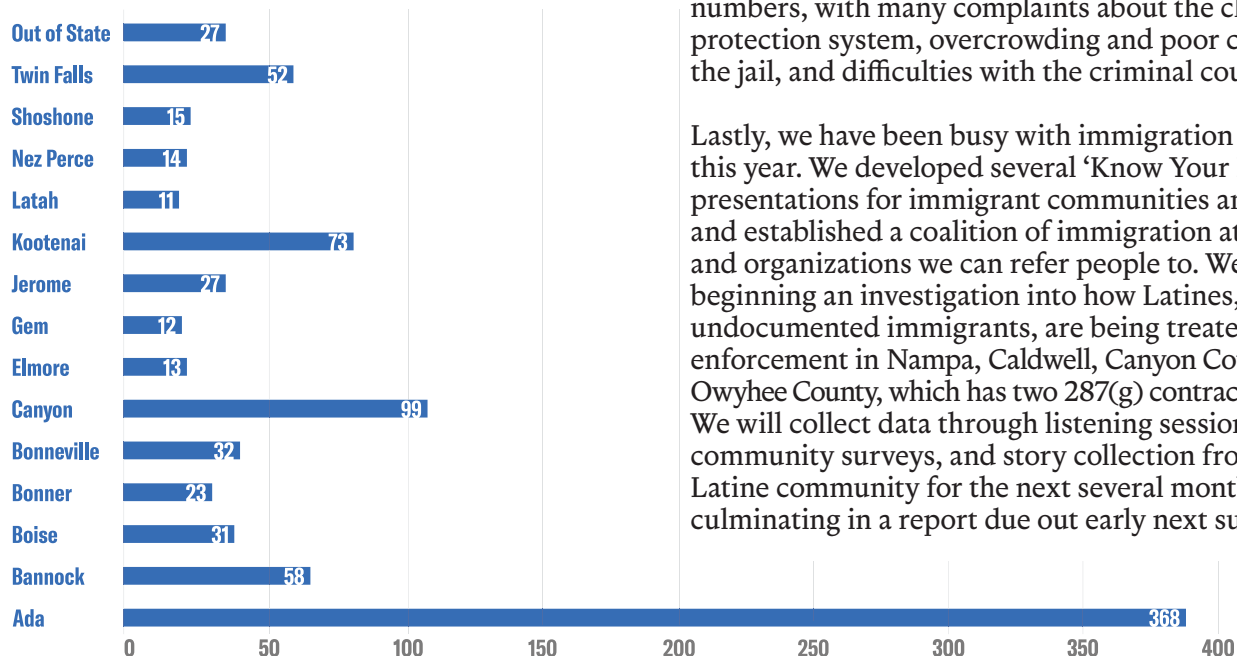
The pattern of complaints is also different this year. We typically see incarcerated rights violations from prisoners as our top area of complaint, but this year

criminal procedure took the lead. This has been driven by complaints about issues created by the new Idaho State Public Defender Office, related to our *Tucker v. Idaho* lawsuit. The lack of an organized, well-funded public defense system has led to people being held without bail for long periods, folks appearing in court without legal representation, and widespread violations of Idahoans’ Sixth Amendment rights.

Intakes are spread throughout Idaho’s north, east, and south/southwest counties, with Ada County taking the substantial lead. This is expected since Ada County is Idaho’s most populous county with a large county jail and home to six of Idaho’s ten prisons and two of Idaho’s re-entry centers. Canyon County, our next most populous county, is second on the list of intake numbers, with many complaints about the child protection system, overcrowding and poor conditions at the jail, and difficulties with the criminal court system.

Lastly, we have been busy with immigration issues this year. We developed several ‘Know Your Rights’ presentations for immigrant communities and allies and established a coalition of immigration attorneys and organizations we can refer people to. We are also beginning an investigation into how Latines, particularly undocumented immigrants, are being treated by law enforcement in Nampa, Caldwell, Canyon County and Owyhee County, which has two 287(g) contracts with ICE. We will collect data through listening sessions, community surveys, and story collection from the Latine community for the next several months, culminating in a report due out early next summer.

2025 Intakes by County



Defending Idahoans' Civil Rights in the Courts

Paul Carlos Southwick, Legal Director

Over the past year, the ACLU of Idaho's legal department has stood at the forefront of critical fights to protect the constitutional rights of Idahoans. Our work continues to challenge government overreach to ensure that every person — regardless of immigration status, gender identity, or income—can live with dignity and freedom. We work closely with legal teams at the national ACLU, private law firms and other nonprofit partners to maximize our reach and impact.

KEY CASES

Dauids v. Adams

In *Dauids v. Adams*, filed on June 26, 2025, we challenge the constitutionality of Idaho House Bill 135, which, in part, mandates immigration status verification for recipients of some federally funded services, including the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program and AIDS Drug Assistance Program. Our plaintiffs include a medical professional and five patients living with HIV. We successfully pursued class action certification and a preliminary injunction. That preliminary injunction preserves access to life-saving HIV treatment for our plaintiffs and all immigrants in Idaho who would have been harmed by the new law.

Robison v. Labrador

In *Robison v. Labrador*, filed on June 28, 2024, we continue to challenge the state's attempted denial of gender-affirming hormone therapy for transgender incarcerated individuals in state prisons. The Idaho Department of Correction attempted to deny access to such treatment pursuant to House Bill 668, which forbids public funds and public facilities from being used to provide gender-affirming medical care. We successfully pursued both class action certification and a preliminary injunction. Because of our lawsuit, all individuals in Idaho state prisons who have been or will be diagnosed with gender dysphoria, are entitled to receive gender-affirming hormone therapy if prescribed by a medical professional.



To learn about
all our active cases, visit
acluidaho.org/cases-page

7 Injunctions Won since July 1, 2024

Since July 1, 2024, we have won injunctions in the following cases against three state laws:

(An injunction means the law, or a portion of the law, is temporarily blocked)

Robinson v. Labrador - Five Injunctions

- The Prison Litigation Reform Act requires injunctions to be renewed every 90 days and our requests have all been granted so far.
- Protecting access to gender-affirming medical care in Idaho prisons.

IORC v. Labrador - One Injunction

- Stopping the Idaho legislature from circumventing federal immigration enforcement.

Dauids v. Adams - One Injunction

- Preserving access to life-saving HIV treatment for immigrants in Idaho.

Since July 1, 2024, we've had cases before the following courts & one federal agency:

- Supreme Court of the United States - One
- Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals - Three
- Federal District Court - Seven
- Idaho Supreme Court - One





Building Resilience: How the Advocacy Team is Preparing for the Challenges Ahead

Ruby Mendez-Mota, Interim Advocacy Director

The growth of our advocacy team reflects the deepening commitment and resilience we bring to our work. With a strong, skilled team, we're ready to face the difficult challenges ahead and support Idaho's trans, immigrant, and incarcerated communities with clarity and care as we move into 2026.

Transgender Justice

The past few years have made it clear that attacks on trans people are not slowing down. We are continuing to defend against dangerous legislation while staying rooted in what matters most: supporting trans people as they navigate systems of power and reducing harm however we can. We are strengthening relationships with directly impacted people, their families, and organizations both in Idaho and in neighboring states. We're also investing in long-term leadership: our Trans Futures Leadership program is training five emerging trans leaders from across the state to organize, advocate, and lead in response to ongoing policy attacks.

Immigrant Rights

On the immigrant rights front, we know the next legislative session will bring more harm. Lawmakers are becoming bolder in their anti-immigrant rhetoric and more willing to introduce policies modeled after other anti-immigrant states. We expect to see bills that target undocumented people, seeking to make Idaho an undesirable place for them to live. In response, we are preparing. We're tracking legislative trends, meeting with partners and prepping with the national ACLU office, and developing rapid response strategies to ensure directly impacted communities are informed, supported, and ready to mobilize. To continue building leadership in our immigrant rights work, we are also transitioning to phase two of our SOMOS program, with a new focus on bringing white allies into deeper solidarity with the Latine community.

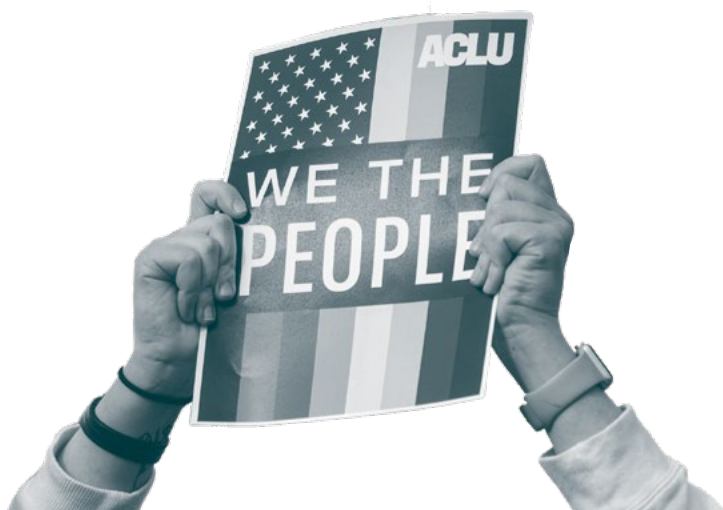
Criminal Legal Advocacy

We are also advocating for the constitutional rights of those impacted by the criminal legal system. This includes working strategically in the statehouse to fight policies that contribute to over-criminalization and mass incarceration, as well as empowering defendants, prisoners, and folks with convictions to know and exercise their rights.

Looking Ahead: What Next

Across all areas of work, we're focused on harm reduction, leadership development, and building strong, sustainable advocacy rooted in community. Our programs are not just about resisting the next bad bill. They're about equipping people with the tools and networks they need to lead.

Looking ahead, our team is preparing with intention as we continue expanding our capacity to engage with communities. We've built solid workplans that center the communities we serve, informed by ongoing conversations, feedback, and shared leadership with those on the ground. We're investing in people and partnerships, from grassroots collaborators to emerging leaders. Above all, we're making sure we have the capacity to keep showing up for the long haul, guided by a vision that prioritizes trust with community and sustained impact over quick wins.



SOMOS Program: Empowering Immigrant Voices in Idaho

Rosseli Guerrero, Communications & Advocacy Fellow



In response to the rising anti-immigrant rhetoric in Idaho, the SOMOS program was established. This two-year initiative aims to uplift Latino/a/e/x and immigrant leaders by equipping them with the tools to share their own stories, advocate for their communities, and transform how Idaho perceives our community.

Year One: Building Awareness and Advocacy

During the first year, participants engaged in workshops that focused on understanding systems of power, oppression, and racism, as well as using storytelling for advocacy. They crafted anti-immigrant messaging with the goal of changing Idahoans' perspectives on the immigrant community. These messages were later evaluated by Rathbone Falvey Research, who conducted a survey to gauge Idahoans' sentiments toward immigrants. The phrase that resonated statewide was, "We are teachers. We are military members. We are Idaho." This message became the cornerstone of our storytelling efforts.

Year Two: Shifting the Narrative

Interviews with various community members were conducted to share narratives that humanize the immigrant experience and showcase the essential contributions of Latino/e and immigrant communities in Idaho. These stories culminated in a video advertising campaign, reaching audiences across social media and streaming platforms. Rathbone Falvey Research is now evaluating whether this message shifted Idahoans' perspective on immigrants.

Fostering Community and Connection

At the heart of SOMOS lies community care and connection. The program hosts monthly gatherings known as "SOMOS Chismosos," which are informal spaces where participants gather to laugh, vent, and reflect on the challenges faced by our community. These gatherings have become sources of strength, allowing for honest discussions about fear and frustration while also celebrating joy, identity, and cultural pride.

Additionally, SOMOS participants attended leadership workshops led by Jaime Lima. His sessions on teamwork, group alignment, and collaborative critical thinking helped establish a robust foundation for shared leadership. Through these experiences, participants evolved not only as storytellers but also as organizers and leaders in their community.

What's Next: SOMOS 2.0

As we wrap up the first phase of our SOMOS program, we're excited to launch SOMOS 2.0. This next phase, which will run through October of 2027, brings white allies into deeper, more thoughtful solidarity with the Latine community. Through SOMOS 2.0, we will be training white allies to take informed action, shift harmful narratives, and help open doors to power through organizing, storytelling, and strategic communications.

Through every workshop, story, and gathering, SOMOS continues to remind Idaho that power flourishes when communities unite to speak, lead, and dream boldly.

Fighting Fear with Facts & Fortitude:

The Communications Department's Goals for 2026

Rebecca De León, Communications Director

As our civil and human rights are being challenged through legislation, in the courts, and with public narrative, crafting a well-structured and strategic communications plan is a tall order. But we remain unwavering in our dedication to meet the challenge head-on with fierce conviction and a sprinkle of fun.

Rampant disinformation has been the far-right's modus operandi for years now, sowing divisiveness and hostility among Americans. A divided nation is easier to control; ignorance and bigotry make a population easier to manipulate.

Therefore, the ACLU of Idaho's communications goal is to cut through the noise as a voice of reason, correct disinformation, hold government officials accountable, engage newly activated people, and foster unity where peace seems impossible.

We certainly have our work cut out for us.

Thankfully, we have the playbook for countering hatred; people in this country have been fighting for equal rights since our country's inception, often to great success.

"Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

What we have learned from those who have fought these battles before us is that we must counter fear-based, dehumanizing narratives with love, joy, truth, resilience, and determination. It is not enough to be on the right side of the issue; we must mobilize the masses to defend, withstand, and remain constant in upholding the values of dignity, equity, and justice. **It isn't enough to believe — we must also act.**

Thankfully, our comms team is more robust than ever before — now three people strong — reflecting a thoughtful investment in the organization's outreach efforts.

Over the past year, Rosseli Guerrero transitioned from the ACLU of Idaho's Advocacy Department over to Communications, where she has injected creativity, savvy, and critical thinking into our messaging. Rosseli is responsible for pushing videos and creative approaches in communications for both the ACLU of Idaho and SOMOS. She joins Taylor Munson, who was new to the organization last year. Taylor has worked magic for all our outward-facing materials with her uncanny ability to make complex issues accessible to people of any background, her consistency in delivering high-quality branded materials, and her sweet and determined spirit.

Together, we can take on the daunting task of countering hate and misinformation by leading with love, unity, innovation, and the time-tested tradition of going high when they go low.



Kelsey Dillon
Director of Philanthropy

ACLU
Idaho

A Time for Action

Kelsey Dillon Director of Philanthropy

Every generation faces a defining moment; a time when silence becomes complicity, and action becomes the only choice. This is ours. What's happening isn't policymaking; it's a calculated dismantling of our rights.

Across the country and right here in Idaho, ICE is terrorizing immigrant communities, kidnapping people off the street, tearing families apart, and even detaining people with lawful status. Programs like 287(g) are turning local police into immigration agents, eroding trust and endangering the very people they're supposed to protect.

It's unjust. It's dangerous. And it has not gone unchallenged.

The ACLU of Idaho is meeting this moment head on — uniting our resources, defending the most vulnerable, and going on the offensive with clarity and conviction. But we cannot do it without your support.

Your gift powers the legal challenges, community defense, and advocacy that stop these attacks in their tracks. When you give, you're standing up for every person whose rights are under fire, and helping ensure Idaho remains a place where freedom and equality mean something.

The threats are rising, but so is our collective power and resolve. They think they have momentum. But we have a movement, one built on courage, creativity, and an unshakable belief that no one is free until everyone is free.

We are here. We are ready.
We are the resistance.

You can also make a lasting impact through a legacy gift. By including the ACLU in your will, trust, or other planned giving. Legacy gifts ensure that the fight for civil liberties and civil rights continues for generations and that your values live on in a more just and equitable future.

Join us, make your gift today and help protect freedom for the future.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT Consolidated Audited Financial Statement for ACLU of Idaho C3 & C4 from 4/1/2024 - 3/31/2025

REVENUE

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Total from national | \$695,123 |
| Annual fund | \$481,195 |
| Contributed non-financial assets | \$40,815 |
| Legal settlements | \$54,000 |
| Investment income (loss) | \$150,578 |
| Other income | \$4,825 |
| TOTAL REVENUE | \$1,426,536 |

EXPENSES

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Legal | \$563,051 |
| Advocacy | \$481,083 |
| Communication | \$233,508 |
| Lobbying | \$23,203 |
| Administration | \$368,576 |
| Fundraising | \$298,504 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | \$1,967,925 |



VIRAGO (THEY/THEM)

LEADING A STATEWIDE VOLUNTEER NETWORK

As we witness unprecedented government overreach and severe threats to our constitutional freedoms, a wave of people in Idaho are eager to volunteer in support of our mission. This new energy led to the creation of our first structured volunteer program, and a passionate activist named Virago stepped up to lead the effort.

Establishing an organized volunteer program was a daunting task for the ACLU of Idaho team. Virago's commitment to human rights work,

organizational skills, and leadership abilities have been critical to the success of coordinating our new group of volunteers.

In the last few months alone, Virago has led statewide outreach to organize volunteers across Idaho and supported multiple rallies for our immigrant and trans communities. For their day job, Virago works at Idaho schools and colleges to monitor and enforce civil rights protections. We are grateful for Virago's hard work and leadership as they continue helping us build a robust volunteer network of Idahoans to advocate for our rights and freedoms.



ROSE-HERMANCE RONY (SHE/HER)

EMPOWERING IDAHO IMMIGRANTS

In response to rising immigration enforcement and increasing challenges for immigrant communities, the ACLU of Idaho formed the Immigration Attorney Coalition. Among the coalition attorneys is Rose-Hermance Rony, a fierce advocate for immigrant justice and equity, who has been working alongside the ACLU.

Originally from Haiti, Rose-Hermance moved to the U.S. as a teenager and has since followed her passion for law and education. Rose-Hermance serves as the Legal

Services Program Director and Managing Attorney for Familias Unidas, a program of the Community Council of Idaho, that provides affordable immigration legal services with a focus on victims of violence.

Rose-Hermance has also been integral to the ACLU's immigrant rights work this year by offering valuable insight to strengthen our litigation and advocacy efforts.

Thank you Rose-Hermance for empowering and uplifting immigrants in Idaho, helping them find safety, stability, and hope as they navigate the complex immigration legal system.



MIGUEL ANGEL ALMEIDA (HE/HIM)

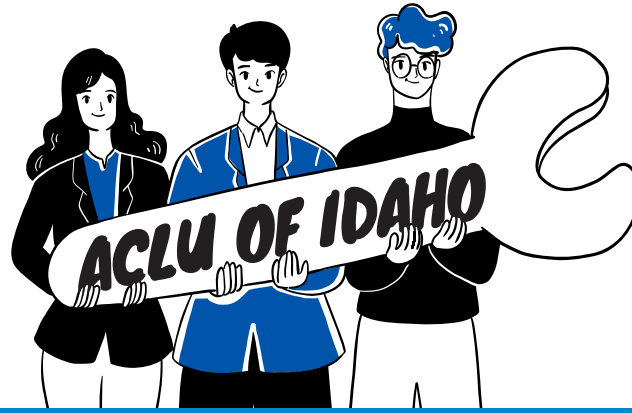
ADVOCACY THROUGH ART

We are proud to recognize Miguel Almeida, a first-generation Mexican American artist and activist in Idaho. If you live in the Treasure Valley, you've likely seen Miguel's artistic touch, whether on a mural, coffee cup, or library card.

Miguel's talents are multifaceted — he uses a variety of mediums for his art, including illustrations, paintings, and murals. Miguel is known in the community for his altruism and dedication to supporting causes that are meaningful to him. Much of his

personal artwork is inspired by his Mexican heritage, and he sees art as a means to advocate for Latine and immigrant communities in Idaho.

The ACLU of Idaho has been fortunate enough to work with Miguel over the years. Recently, he partnered with our SOMOS program to create a unique illustration featuring two birds. Miguel drew inspiration for this visual from the obstacles and challenges faced by the undocumented community. In his words, these birds represent “how freely those of us with a piece of paper get to fly, while others without that piece of paper don't get to fly as freely.”



Board of Directors Elections

Each year, our Board Nominating Committee carefully considers the applications of potential board members to join the group of people who govern and direct the Idaho affiliate of the ACLU. If you would like to be considered for nomination by the Board Nominating Committee, you must be a member in good standing and submit a brief statement of interest.

Nominations may also be submitted by petition. Nomination petitions must include a statement of interest with a short statement of petitioner's background and qualifications and be signed by ten (10) current ACLU of Idaho members that includes the name and address of the nominee.

All submissions must be received by the ACLU of Idaho at P.O. Box 1897, Boise, ID 83701 by **January 17, 2026**.

Members of the ACLU of Idaho Board of Directors serve three-year terms. The election results will be announced at the **Annual Membership Meeting on February 17, 2026**. For full membership meeting details and to RSVP, please visit acluidaho.org/event/2026-membership-meeting.

If you have questions about the nomination or petition process, or the Annual Membership Meeting, please contact **Nissa Nagel** at (208) 344-9750 extension 1209 or at admin@acluidaho.org.

2025 ACLU OF IDAHO STAFF

Amy Collins, Director of Finance & Administration
Amy Dundon, Legislative Strategist
Dina Flores-Brewer, Community Intake Manager
Emily Croston, Staff Attorney
Jenna Damron, Statewide LGBTQ+ Rights Strategist
Kelsey Dillon, Director of Philanthropy
Leo Morales, Executive Director
Logan Self, Donor Relations Officer
Melanie Figueroa, Immigrant Rights Advocacy Fellow
Nissa Nagel, Office Coordinator
Paul Carlos Southwick, Legal Director
Rebecca De León, Communications Director
Rosseli Guerrero, Communications & Advocacy Fellow
Ruby Mendez-Mota, Interim Advocacy Director
Taylor Munson, Communications Manager

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