

ACLU

Utah

2025

**LEGISLATIVE
SESSION REPORT**



PRIORITY AREAS

Immigrants' Rights



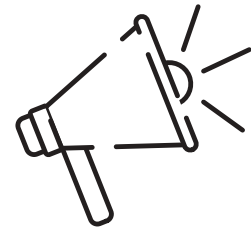
LGBTQ+ Rights

Criminal Legal System



Voting Rights

First Amendment



Disability Rights

Protecting your rights means protecting everyone's

INTRODUCTION

During the 2025 legislative session, the ACLU of Utah fought relentlessly to protect civil rights and liberties against unprecedented government overreach. From the start, the Legislature demonstrated a troubling disregard for individual freedoms, consistently targeting marginalized communities—especially transgender people—for the fourth consecutive year. These attacks threaten not just one group but everyone’s freedoms. When lawmakers reduce the rights of voters, students, families, immigrant communities, patients, and others, they are expanding government control over all Utahns’ lives.

History has shown the devastating impact when governments single out and discriminate against specific communities—this session continued that harmful tradition. Protecting your rights means protecting everyone’s rights. Your voice was crucial in fighting government overreach and preserving civil rights and liberties for every Utahn.

CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

Supported

- [HB383: Court Fine Amendments](#)
- [SB194: Defendant Access to Evidence Amendments](#)

Opposed

- [HB252: State Custody Amendments](#)
- [HB392: Unlicensed Driver Amendments](#)
- [SB90: Mandatory Jail Sentence Amendments](#)
- [HB465: Public Safety Amendment](#)

[COMMENT ON
HB465 HERE](#)

" If the State wants to address unsheltered encampments, it should put its money where the housing is. "

Highlighted Bills



HB252: State Custody Amendments

(Opposed)

Bill sponsor: Rep. Karianne Lisonbee

Floor sponsor: Sen. Derrin Owens

Status: Passed, sent to Governor for signature



Summary: HB252 strips essential protections from transgender people in Utah's correctional facilities, placing them at serious risk of harm. The bill mandates housing assignments based solely on sex assigned at birth for youth in correctional facilities, ignoring gender identity and removing safeguards crucial for safety. It also bans initiating gender-affirming care for incarcerated youth and adults, violating constitutional obligations to provide medically necessary treatment. Rather than protecting vulnerable Utahns, HB252 increases their risk of physical and emotional harm, undermines professional judgment, and prioritizes discrimination over safety.

" Beginning in 2023, you have signed every bill restricting or eroding the rights of trans Utahns the Legislature has sent to your desk—bills that have stripped transgender Utahns of opportunity, dignity, autonomy, essential medical care, and safety. "

[READ OUR VETO LETTER](#)

ACLU Action: We mobilized Utahns against HB252 to contact their legislators to vote against it and we asked the Governor to veto it.

HB383: Court Fine Amendments

Supported

Bill sponsor: Rep. Grant Miller

Floor sponsor: Sen. Todd Weiler

Status: Passed, sent to Governor for signature



Summary: This bill permits a judge to order the cost of any court-ordered treatment or course to be credited toward payment of criminal fines if the treatment or course is completed.

FIRST AMENDMENT

Opposed

- HB77: Flag Display Amendments
- HB473: School Digital Materials Amendments

Highlighted Bills



HB77: Flag Display Amendments

(Opposed)

- **Bill sponsor: Rep. Trevor Lee**
- **Floor sponsor: Sen. Dan McCay**
- **Status: Passed, sent to Governor for signature**



Summary: This bill prohibits the display of Pride flags and other flags in public schools and on state and local government property by government employees. Non-public employees can still bring Pride flags to school and onto public property.

Make no mistake—this isn't about flags, it's about advancing an agenda aimed at erasing LGBTQ+ Utahns from public life.

"From the start, we've said HB77 isn't about protecting personal freedoms—it's about control"

[READ VETO LETTER HERE](#)

415+
MESSAGES
SENT TO LAWMAKERS

ACLU Action: We testified against the bill in committee, mobilized community members to speak in committee against the bill, sent action alerts mobilizing folks to contact their legislators to vote against the bill and asked the Governor to veto it.

HB473: School Digital Materials Amendments

(Opposed)

- **Bill sponsor: Rep. Nicholeen Peck**
- **Floor sponsor: Sen. Keven Stratton**
- **Status: Failed**

Summary: This bill would have expanded many of the requirements under the problematic 2024 sensitive materials bill, HB29, to online databases and other digital resources in schools. It would have created a “digital materials regulator” to oversee digital databases available in public K-12 schools and allowed the regulator to impose stiff fines on vendors if they deemed inappropriate content was available. The bill would have also required school districts to advertise to parents how they could report materials for sensitive materials review and violations.

ACLU Action: In coalition with Let Utah Read, we testified in committee and facilitated community members' actions in opposition to the bill.

IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Opposed

- HB178: Noncitizen Health Insurance Policies Amendments
- HB183: Noncitizen Restricted Person Amendments
- HB214: Employer Verification Amendments
- HB226: Criminal Amendments
- HB284: International Money Transmission Amendments

Highlighted Bills



HB214: Employer Verification Amendments **(Opposed)**

- **Bill sponsor: Rep. Neil Walter**
- **Status: Failed**

Summary: This bill would have required all employers with five or more employees to verify their workforce using E-Verify—a vast increase from the current requirement of 150 employees. In addition to placing a heavy burden on small businesses, it would have subjected prospective employees to the possibility of being incorrectly flagged as ineligible to work by the flawed E-Verify system, restricting their right to employment.

ACLU Action: We collaborated with the Utah Immigrant Advocacy Coalition and other stakeholders to defeat this bill.

HB226: Criminal Amendments (Opposed)

- **Bill sponsor: Rep. Candice Pierucci**
- **Floor sponsor: Sen. Dan McCay**
- **Status: Passed, sent to Governor for signature**

Summary: HB226 reverses a law passed unanimously in 2019 that removed the threat of automatic deportation for immigrants and refugees by reducing the maximum penalty for certain misdemeanors to 364 days. Although amended during the session, the bill still subjects immigrants and refugees—including green card holders—to severe immigration consequences. It also requires prisons and jails to notify ICE upon releasing undocumented individuals after serving their sentence, significantly entangling local law enforcement with immigration enforcement.

“**HB226 inextricably links the civil immigration system and the criminal legal system, making automatic deportation an additional penalty for minor criminal convictions. Immigrants and refugees are vital members of our communities, and if HB226 becomes law, it will deliver lasting, disproportionate harm to people we know and care about.**”

[READ VETO LETTER HERE](#)

375+
MESSAGES
SENT TO LAWMAKERS

ACLU Action: We testified against this bill in committee and mobilized different stakeholders to testify. We sent out action alerts and a veto letter.

LGBTQ+ RIGHTS

Opposed

- HB250: Public Employee Gender-specific Guidance
- HB269: Privacy Protections in Sex-Designated Areas
- HB521: Transgender Medical Procedures Amendments
- SB320: Physician Practice Amendments

Highlighted Bills



HB269: Privacy Protections in Sex-Designated Areas (Opposed)

- **Bill sponsor: Rep. Stephanie Gricius**
- **Floor sponsor: Sen. Brady Brammer**
- **Status: Signed into law by Governor Cox**

Summary: This law forces public colleges and universities to assign housing in sex-segregated dorms without respecting a student's gender identity. It requires schools to assign housing based on the sex assigned at birth. Trans students will have to live in co-ed, multigender dorms, or off campus. HB269 perpetuates discrimination, needlessly imposes barriers to accessing higher education, and will result in harm to transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming Utahns.

▼▼ **Everyone's rights are undermined when anyone's rights are jeopardized.** ▼▼

[READ VETO LETTER HERE](#)

1.34K
MESSAGES
SENT TO LAWMAKERS

ACLU Action: We testified against the bill in committee, mobilized community members to speak in committee against it, sent action alerts mobilizing folks to contact their legislators to vote against it, and asked the Governor to veto it.

ANTI-LGBTQ+ BILLS THAT FAILED

HB250: Public Employee Gender-specific Guidance **Rep. Nicholeen Peck (Opposed)**

Summary: This bill would have prohibited school districts and public employers from disciplining employees who refuse to use the appropriate pronouns, names, and other gender-specific language for their students, colleagues, and others as long as doing so conflicted with the employee's religious or moral beliefs.

“ All of our kids deserve to feel safe and be safe in schools, including transgender, nonbinary, and genderqueer kids, regardless of how many times they change their minds. ”

[READ OUR TESTIMONY](#)

HB521: Transgender Medical Procedures Amendments **Rep. Nicholeen Peck (Opposed)**

Summary: This bill sought to ban the use of public funds for gender-affirming care. It would have prohibited the use of Medicaid or the state health insurance plan to pay for gender-affirming care and banned care for those incarcerated in Utah's prisons and jails. It also would have impacted gender-affirming care provided by Utah's public university health providers and other medical providers that accept state funding.

SB320: Physician Practice Amendments **Sen. Evan Vickers (Opposed)**

Summary: This bill would have permitted doctors to deny medical care based on their personal, medical, moral, religious, or ethical beliefs, which could have prevented LGBTQ+ Utahns from accessing care.

VOTING & PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Opposed

- HB69: Government Records and Information Amendments
- HB300: Amendments to Election Law
- HB445: Revisions to Election Law
- SB73: Statewide Initiatives Amendments
- SB277: Government Records Management Amendments
- SJR2: Proposal to Amend the Utah Constitution | Statewide Initiatives

Highlighted Bills



HB69: Government Records and Information Amendments

(Opposed)

- **Bill sponsor: Rep. Stephanie Gricius**
- **Floor sponsor: Sen. Calvin Musselman**
- **Status: Passed, sent to Governor for signature**

Summary: HB69 was initially designed to protect voter records from improper disclosure by county clerks following an incident in which a clerk revealed the method by which some elected officials voted. However, the final bill included troubling amendments limiting transparency. Now, even if someone successfully appeals a denied public records request (GRAMA), they cannot recover legal fees unless they prove the government acted intentionally in bad faith. This unfairly burdens citizens seeking transparency, weakens government accountability, and discourages Utahns from pursuing rightful access to public information.

HB300: Amendments to Election Law

(Opposed)



- **Bill sponsor: Rep. Jefferson Burton**
- **Floor sponsor: Sen. Michael McKell**
- **Status: Passed, sent to Governor for signature**

Summary: The final version of this bill significantly restricts voting access by requiring voters to opt in to receive a mail ballot rather than receiving one automatically. It also demands that voters provide the last four digits of a government-issued ID when returning their mail ballot—a hurdle disproportionately impacting seniors, voters with disabilities, Indigenous communities, rural Utahns, and others who face systemic barriers to obtaining identification. Additionally, the bill mandates ballots be received by Election Day rather than simply postmarked by the day before, leaving voters uncertain whether timely-mailed ballots will be counted.

“**HB300 is not responsive to any problem. Utah’s election audits have found no credible evidence of widespread fraud, yet lawmakers continue to push policy based on unproven conspiracy theories from a vocal minority. Rather than dispelling these false claims, the Legislature has amplified a baseless narrative undermining confidence in Utah’s elections.**”

[READ OUR VETO LETTER](#)

Despite overwhelming public opposition, lawmakers passed HB300, disregarding evidence-based assessments confirming Utah's elections are secure, reliable, and trusted. Indeed, vote by mail is used by more than 96% of voters statewide. Rather than responding to a legitimate issue, legislators continue to amplify unsubstantiated conspiracy theories from a vocal minority, undermining public confidence in our elections. By imposing unnecessary barriers, HB300 significantly restricts voting accessibility, weakening our democracy and silencing voices that deserve to be heard.

Protecting your rights means protecting everyone's rights. When lawmakers restrict voting for some Utahns, they weaken participatory democracy.

1.15K
MESSAGES
SENT TO LAWMAKERS

ACLU Action: We testified against this bill in committee and mobilized different stakeholders to testify as well. Working in coalition with Let Utah Vote, we rallied voters in opposition to this bill, circulated action alerts, and sent a veto letter to Governor Cox.

SB73: Statewide Initiatives Amendments

(Opposed)

- **Bill sponsor: Sen. Lincoln Fillmore**
- **Floor sponsor: Rep. Jason Kyle**
- **Status: Passed, sent to Governor for signature**

Summary: This bill creates significant new obstacles for Utahns who want to organize ballot initiatives. It requires initiative sponsors—regular citizens—to identify specific funding sources for their proposals and detail how passing their initiative would financially impact other existing state programs. Additionally, the bill requires initiative sponsors to adhere to the same publishing requirements as the Legislature for proposed constitutional amendments. This effectively discourages grassroots democracy by making it much harder and more costly for Utahns to participate directly in shaping laws that affect their communities.

ACLU Action: We helped mobilize different stakeholders to testify. In coalition with Let Utah Vote, we held a rally and sent out action alerts and a veto letter.

SB277: Government Records Management Amendments

(Opposed)

- **Bill sponsor: Sen. Michael McKell**
- **Floor sponsor: Rep. Jefferson Moss**
- **Status: Passed, sent to Governor for signature**

Summary: SB277 replaces the independent State Records Committee with a new Government Records Office led by an attorney director, who will now oversee decisions about public records (GRAMA) requests. While the final bill retains the balancing test—which weighs public interest in accessing information against the government’s interest in confidentiality—the shift to a government-controlled office raises concerns about impartiality and reduces transparency and accountability.

OTHER VOTINGS & PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY BILLS

HB445: Revisions to Election Law | Rep. Doug Fiefia

- **Status:** Failed **(Opposed)**

Summary: Originally, this bill would have eliminated Election Day voter registration and required all Utahns to register to vote at least 29 days before an election. After hearing overwhelming opposition, Rep. Fiefia removed that provision. However, the bill still included provisions imposing unnecessary and arbitrary deadlines on clerks for counting ballots and changing the postmark deadline for mail ballots to require they be received by Election Day.

ACLU Action: We testified against this bill in committee and sent out action alerts.

SJR2: Proposal to Amend Utah Constitution Statewide Initiatives | Sen. Lincoln Fillmore

- **Status:** Passed, sent to Governor for signature **(Opposed)**

Summary: Under this legislation, the public will vote on a proposed constitutional amendment that would increase the threshold needed to pass any citizen-led ballot initiative that imposes a new or increases an existing tax from a simple majority to 60%.

ACLU Action: We held a rally for Governor Cox to veto with the Let Utah Vote Coalition and encouraged the Let Utah Vote action alert.

PROTECTING YOUR RIGHTS MEANS PROTECTING EVERYONE'S

(Other bills impacting civil rights and liberties)

Opposed

- **HB451: Judicial Election Amendments**
- **HB512: Judicial Retention Changes**
- **SB296: Judicial Amendments**
- **SB199: Guardianship Amendments**

Highlighted bills



HB451: Judicial Election Amendments

(Opposed)

- **Bill sponsor: Rep. Jason Kyle**
- **Status: Failed**



Summary: This bill would have raised the threshold for voting to retain a judge from a simple majority to at least 67% of the vote.

HB512: Judicial Retention Changes

(Opposed)

- **Bill sponsor: Rep. Karianne Lisonbee**
- **Floor sponsor: Sen. Chris Wilson**
- **Status: Failed**

Summary: This bill would have created a new legislative committee to evaluate state judges and issue recommendations for retention elections—duplicating and overshadowing the existing Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission.

Recommendations from this legislative committee would have appeared directly on voters' ballots, politicizing judicial retention elections and undermining judicial independence. Due to opposition from the judiciary and the Utah State Bar, HB512 did not advance this session but will likely return for discussion during interim sessions before the general 2026 legislative session.

ACLU action: Activated Let Utah Vote members to take action against the bill.

SB296: Judicial Amendments

(Opposed)

- **Bill sponsor: Sen. Chris Wilson**
- **Floor sponsor: Rep. Casey Snider**
- **Status: Passed, sent to Governor for signature**

Summary: SB296 shifts the authority to select the Chief Justice of the Utah Supreme Court from fellow justices to the Governor, who will now appoint the Chief Justice every four years. This change undermines judicial independence and disrupts the essential balance of power between branches of government.

ACLU action: Encouraged Let Utah Vote members to take action against the bill.

SB199: Guardianship Amendments

(Opposed)

- **Bill sponsor: Sen. Keven Stratton**
- **Floor sponsor: Rep. Steve Eliason**
- **Status: Passed, sent to Governor for signature**



Summary: This bill creates an enhanced guardianship for people deemed to have a “severe intellectual disability.” In the bill, “severe intellectual disability” is defined circularly, requiring that only one medical provider deem the person as such. This guardianship strips the person of their right to counsel in guardianship proceedings and right to associate with friends and family, as well as creating a preference for full, rather than limited, guardianships for these individuals. It reverses the system of due process, autonomy, and dignity protections that Utah has only recently put into law over the last 15 years.

▼ **Rather than protecting Utahns with disabilities, SB199 places them at heightened risk by increasing their vulnerability and isolation. Research consistently demonstrates that supporting autonomy and self-determination helps prevent abuse and neglect. By removing critical checks and balances, SB199 jeopardizes the safety and dignity of those it purports to protect—especially individuals whose guardians may not act in their best interests. ▼**

[READ OUR VETO LETTER](#)

ACLU action: We sent a letter to all members of the Legislature asking them to vote against the bill, signed by the national ACLU and 6 other disability rights organizations, and sent a letter asking Governor Cox to veto.

PROTECTING OUR RIGHTS: VETO LETTERS SENT TO GOVERNOR COX



Each year, we urge the Governor to veto legislation threatening civil rights and liberties. In 2025, we made six requests. The Governor's veto power is not symbolic—it is a necessary check to prevent harmful legislation from becoming law.

6 VETO LETTERS SENT TO GOVERNOR COX

ACLU
Utah

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF UTAH
3115 S. STATE ST., SUITE #310 SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84111
(801) 521-9862 PHONE • ACLU@ACLUUTAH.ORG
WWW.ACLUUTAH.ORG

Monday, February 10, 2025
Dear Governor Spencer Cox:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Utah (ACLU of Utah) strongly urges you to veto House Bill 369, misleadingly titled Privacy Protections in Sex-Designated Areas. This bill perpetuates discrimination, needlessly imposes barriers to access higher education, and will result in harm to transgender, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming Utahns. Beyond the harm this bill would impose on students, HB269 is unnecessary—Utah's colleges and universities have long managed student housing effectively without government interference in roommate assignments.

HB269 would force public colleges and universities to assign dormitory housing without respecting a student's gender identity. It sets a troubling precedent for government overreach into personal decisions. College students are at a pivotal stage, learning to navigate independence and how to interact with and respect others. Restricting their ability to make personal choices about housing doesn't just undermine their autonomy—it also limits opportunities for all students to learn how to live, engage, and, as you've encouraged, disagree better.

HB269 relegates transgender students to gender-neutral or single-occupant dormitories, yet these options do not exist at all public colleges and universities in Utah. As a result, students may be evicted from campus housing entirely pending the completion of the Utah System of Higher Education's rulemaking process to expand access to these facilities. Even if such housing were available statewide, this legislation risks creating a separate, unequal, and stigmatizing system that isolates rather than includes.

History has shown us the dangers of using the state to single out, marginalize, and discriminate against specific communities. In our country—and even here in Utah—Black students were segregated under the pretense of "protection," and religious minorities were refused service. HB269 resurrects this discriminatory logic, targeting trans students in the name of control. Utah will look back with shame on this series of laws that discriminate against trans people.

For four consecutive years, the Legislature has sent bills to your desk directly targeting the rights of transgender and nonbinary Utahns. These laws, and now HB269, were flawed from their inception and represent a concerted effort to undermine a specific population's civil rights and liberties. When those in power single out and attack a particular group, it erodes the rights of everyone and fuels hostility that extends beyond the laws themselves.

HB269 contains provisions that, at a minimum, raise serious constitutional concerns. Under the United States and Utah Constitutions, laws are required to treat everyone fairly and equally. HB269 falls well short of that promise.

Everyone's rights are at risk when anyone's rights are jeopardized. Utah laws should not intrude into every facet of people's lives. HB269 is not about protection—it weaponizes language like "privacy" to justify discrimination, ultimately attempting to erase trans people from public life. These attacks harm trans people and anyone perceived as a threat by leaders who are supposed to represent all of us. As Governor, you can stop this intrusion into Utahns' personal lives by vetoing HB269.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We trust that you will carefully consider the consequences HB269 poses to Utahns' civil rights, individual freedoms, and personal dignity. We urge you to veto this unnecessary and harmful bill.

Sincerely,

Brittny Nystrom
Executive Director
ACLU of Utah

CC:
Lt. Governor Deidre Henderson
Jon Pierpont
Neil Abercrombie
Jennifer Napier-Pearce

ACLU
Utah

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF UTAH
3115 S. STATE ST., SUITE #310 SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84111
(801) 521-9862 PHONE • ACLU@ACLUUTAH.ORG
WWW.ACLUUTAH.ORG

Monday, March 3, 2025
Dear Governor Spencer Cox:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Utah (ACLU of Utah) urges you to veto HB252—State Custody Amendments, a bill that would put transgender people in Utah's correctional and secure care facilities at grave risk of harm. HB252 strips decision-making power from those best positioned to ensure the safety of trans youth in state custody and bans initiating medically necessary care for both trans adults and youths in violation of Utah's constitutional obligations.

HB252 removes even the basic housing review risk assessment process for youth that the Legislature granted to trans adults in correctional facilities last year. Without this safeguard, trans youth will be placed in unsafe and inappropriate housing assignments, exposing them to heightened risks of physical and sexual violence. This bill does not improve safety—it subjects vulnerable children to unnecessary suffering and danger. Moreover, transgender youth are caught in the juvenile legal system due to facing hardship, like being housed and targeted enforcement. Young people especially need safety and security in their living space. This bill will expose trans youth to avoidable risks of harm and sexual violence that run afoul of the state's duty to protect Utahns from harm while in state custody.

For both trans youth and adults, HB252 contravenes the constitutional protections afforded to incarcerated individuals to have medically necessary care provided in state facilities. The United States Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed that the U.S. Constitution imposes a paramount duty of care on the state to provide necessary medical, mental health, and dental care to incarcerated persons. The Utah Supreme Court has likewise recognized that the Utah Constitution independently imposes obligations to provide care to people in state custody and not to expose them to unnecessary rigor. HB252 violates these fundamental legal principles by denying medically necessary care to transgender individuals, including treatments recognized as life-saving by the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Psychiatric Association. Safe and appropriate housing is also a medical necessity—forcing transgender individuals into housing that does not align with their gender identity increases risks to both their physical and mental health, compounding the harm caused by denying them essential care.

HB252 is a direct attack on the rights of incarcerated people and a clear violation of established legal protections. You have a constitutional duty to veto this bill, not just a political choice. Your veto would reaffirm the rule of law and send a message that Utah will not abandon its duty to protect the rights of all individuals in its care. Prisons and other state facilities house some of the most medically vulnerable people in our communities, and access to necessary medical care—including gender-affirming care—is a constitutional obligation.

Beginning in 2023, you have signed every bill restricting or eroding the rights of trans Utahns the Legislature has sent to your desk—bills that have stripped transgender Utahns of opportunity, dignity, autonomy, essential medical care, and safety. HB252 is an injustice to the trans community that removes decision-making from professionals and fails to uphold Utah's obligations under the U.S. and Utah Constitutions.

Sincerely,


Brittny Nystrom
Executive Director
ACLU of Utah

CC:
Lt. Governor Deidre Henderson
Jon Pierpont
Neil Abercrombie
Jennifer Napier-Pearce

ACLU
Utah

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF UTAH
3115 S. STATE ST., SUITE #310 SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84111
(801) 521-9862 PHONE • ACLU@ACLUUTAH.ORG
WWW.ACLUUTAH.ORG

Monday, March 10, 2025
Dear Governor Spencer Cox:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Utah (ACLU of Utah) urges you to veto HB300, Amendments to Election Law, which imposes unnecessary and costly changes to Utah's secure and trusted vote-by-mail system. Utah has long been a leader in safe, reliable elections—free from fraud and unnecessary barriers. HB300 threatens that reality by adding burdensome voting requirements. Lawmakers are using baseless fraud claims as a pretext to limit access to voting, once again proving their goal is to erect barriers, not protect elections. HB300 will take us backward, making it harder for Utahns to participate in our democracy.

The Legislature passed HB300 despite overwhelming public opposition, making it yet another undemocratic attempt to consolidate power by suppressing the people's voice. For over two decades, Utah's vote-by-mail system has been secure, reliable, and widely used by over 95% of Utah voters. Yet HB300 undermines this system by forcing voters to opt in to receive a mail ballot instead of receiving one automatically and requiring them to provide the last four digits of a government-issued ID to return their ballot—a hurdle that will disproportionately impact seniors, people with disabilities, indigenous voters, and others who face systemic barriers to obtaining an ID. The bill also mandates that ballots be received by Election Day rather than postmarked the day before, stripping voters of certainty that their ballots will be counted if mailed on time.

HB300 is not responsive to any problem. Utah's election audits have found no credible evidence of widespread fraud, yet lawmakers continue to push policy based on unproven conspiracy theories from a vocal minority. Rather than dispelling these false claims, the Legislature has amplified a baseless narrative undermining confidence in Utah's elections.

Governor Cox, vetoing HB300 would send a clear message: Utah will lift the people vote. This bill makes it harder to participate in elections and undermines participatory democracy. Utah's elections should ensure that every ballot is counted and remains free from unnecessary barriers that disproportionately affect certain voters. By restricting whose voices count in choosing their elected officials, lawmakers are limiting the people's ability to decide who represents them.

For these reasons, we urge you to veto HB300. Utah's democracy is strongest when every eligible voter can freely and fairly participate in our elections. You must preserve the proven, secure, and accessible vote-by-mail system that Utahns trust.

Sincerely,


Brittny Nystrom
Executive Director
ACLU of Utah

CC:
Lt. Governor Deidre Henderson
Jon Pierpont
Neil Abercrombie
Jennifer Napier-Pearce

ACLU
Utah

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF UTAH
3115 S. STATE ST., SUITE #310 SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84111
(801) 521-9862 PHONE • ACLU@ACLUUTAH.ORG
WWW.ACLUUTAH.ORG

Thursday, March 6, 2025
Dear Governor Spencer Cox:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Utah (ACLU of Utah) urges you to veto HB77, Flag Display Amendments, another bill that would wield the government's power to restrict and undermine free expression and dignity in our schools and public spaces.

HB77 would ban the display of Pride flags in public schools and on government property, restricting free expression and sending a clear message that some students and community members are not welcome or protected. The government should not be in the business of banning symbols that help people feel seen and welcomed. Beyond stoking fear among LGBTQ+ Utahns, this bill sets a dangerous precedent that threatens free speech for everyone.

From the start, we have said HB77 is not about protecting personal freedoms—it's about control. The bill sponsor's comments at the Capitol and public events make the intent clear: this isn't about flags but about othering and erasing LGBTQ+ people from public life. This bill also takes decision-making away from local communities—the people who know their schools, towns, and neighbors best—and hands it to politicians at the Capitol. Teachers, school boards, and local governments should be free to decide what conduct reflects their values, not be forced to follow a top-down mandate that tells them what they can and can't display.

It's clear the bills being sent to your desk are part of a larger agenda. Since 2022, you have enabled the Legislature to curtail the rights of the LGBTQ+ community and attempt to push these Utahns out of public life. Today, it's Pride flags. Tomorrow, it very well could be broader restrictions on speech, education, or expression for even more Utahns.

For these reasons, we urge you to veto HB77.

Sincerely,


Brittny Nystrom
Executive Director
ACLU of Utah

CC:
Lt. Governor Deidre Henderson
Jon Pierpont
Neil Abercrombie
Jennifer Napier-Pearce

ACLU
Utah

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF UTAH
3115 S. STATE ST., SUITE #310 SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84111
(801) 521-9862 PHONE • ACLU@ACLUUTAH.ORG
WWW.ACLUUTAH.ORG

Tuesday, March 18, 2025
Dear Governor Spencer Cox:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Utah (ACLU of Utah) strongly urges you to veto SB199, Guardianship Amendments, a sweeping and damaging bill that threatens to strip critical rights from Utahns with disabilities.

While most caretakers pursue guardianship with good intentions, it is a drastic measure that permanently removes an individual's autonomy, civil liberties, and legal independence. As the Honorable George Hammond, Utah Seventh Judicial District, wrote in 2009, guardianship "removes from a person a large part of what it means to be an adult: the ability to make decisions for oneself." (Ad hoc Comm. on Probate Law and Procedure, Final Rep. to the Judiciary, p. 3)

Since Judge Hammond concluded that "while terminate this fundamental and basic right with all the procedural rigor of processing a traffic ticket" in 2009, Utah has made vital changes in ensuring critical due process protections. (Id.) These protections include the right to counsel in guardianship proceedings, the right to a tailored, limited guardianship wherever possible, and the consideration of the individual's own preferences and rights.

SB199 dangerously reverses these advances. It singles out an ill-defined subset of people for a fast-tracked "ultra-guardianship" based solely on the diagnosis of a "severe intellectual disability" by just one physician or psychologist who is not even required to have met or treated the person. One labeled with a "severe intellectual disability," the person immediately loses their right to counsel, with no meaningful opportunity to challenge that determination or obtain a second opinion.

Further, the broad, unchecked guardianships created by SB199 favor automatic full guardianship rather than the tailored restrictions required by current law. Guardians would gain expansive power to isolate individuals with disabilities from family, friends, and community without court oversight. The bill also authorizes guardians to prohibit any "legal substance or activity" deemed harmful—a dangerously vague standard that could slow down internet use, television, dietary choices, or travel by car without accountability or review by the courts.

Rather than protecting Utahns with disabilities, SB199 places them at heightened risk by increasing their vulnerability and isolation. Research consistently demonstrates that supporting autonomy and self-determination helps prevent abuse and neglect by removing critical choice and balance. SB199 jeopardizes the safety and dignity of those it purports to protect—especially individuals whose guardians may not act in their best interests.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to veto SB199. Utah must continue to strengthen—not dismantle—critical protections for individuals with disabilities.

Sincerely,


Brittny Nystrom
Executive Director
ACLU of Utah

CC:
Lt. Governor Deidre Henderson
Jon Pierpont
Neil Abercrombie
Jennifer Napier-Pearce

ACLU
Utah

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF UTAH
3115 S. STATE ST., SUITE #310 SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84111
(801) 521-9862 PHONE • ACLU@ACLUUTAH.ORG
WWW.ACLUUTAH.ORG

Thursday, March 20, 2025
Dear Governor Spencer Cox:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Utah (ACLU of Utah) strongly urges you to veto HB226, Criminal Amendments, which subjects immigrants and refugees—including green card holders—to severe immigration consequences, including almost certain immigration detention and deportation for minor offenses.

This bill isn't about public safety—it's about building a harsh deportation pipeline that targets immigrants and refugees for low-level infractions. HB226 reverses the progress made by a unanimously passed law in 2023 that removed the threat of automatic deportation and restored judicial discretion in immigration proceedings for immigrants and refugees by reducing the maximum penalty for all Class A misdemeanors to 364 days. Under HB226, immigrants—even minor offenders with lawful status—who have lived or been convicted of one of the Class A misdemeanors specified in the bill will be forced into deportation proceedings in which the immigration judge lacks any discretion to consider the underlying circumstances of the offense or background of the individual. This could lead to devastating consequences; for example, an immigration judge could do nothing to stop a domestic violence victim from being deported if they were convicted of assaulting their abuser.

Forcing local law enforcement to notify Immigration and Customs Enforcement before releasing undocumented individuals from prisons and jails at the end of their sentence creates a dangerous entanglement between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities. Requiring local law enforcement to play a role in immigration enforcement is an unnecessary burden on them that also undermines community trust in law enforcement. Ascertaining which individuals in criminal custody are undocumented is a complex and murky task that, if not undertaken with safeguards and care, can lead to erroneous assumptions and reliance on profiling and dangerous stereotypes.

HB226 inextricably links the civil immigration system and the criminal legal system, making automatic deportation an additional penalty for minor criminal convictions. Immigrants and refugees are vital members of our communities, and if HB226 becomes law, it will deliver lasting, disproportionate harm to people we know and care about.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to veto HB226.

Sincerely,


Brittny Nystrom
Executive Director
ACLU of Utah

CC:
Lt. Governor Deidre Henderson
Jon Pierpont
Neil Abercrombie
Jennifer Napier-Pearce

UTAHNS MOBILIZED FOR YOUR RIGHTS

9900+ SMS Action Alerts sent to Utahns

3.93K+ Messages Sent to Lawmakers

2.14k+ Total New Action Takers

350+ People showed up to testify

CONCLUSION

The ACLU of Utah would like to give a special thanks to our incredible Hinckley Institute Legislative Intern for the 2025 Legislative Session, Veronica Liedtke.

Thank you to those who fiercely advocated for your rights and those you care about during this legislative session. This year, Utah Legislators heard loud and clear that attacks on any rights or liberties threaten everyone's freedom

While the 2025 session has ended, the fight to protect our rights continues. You must remain vigilant and active during legislative sessions and year-round to protect your rights. Lawmakers pay attention to their constituents first, so connecting regularly through meetings, conversations, and direct outreach is essential. Keep engaging your friends, family, and community because protecting freedom is a collective effort.

Protecting your rights means protecting everyone's—today, tomorrow, and always.

ACLU

Utah



**OUR STAFF
IN ACTION**