

American Civil Liberties Union of Idaho Intake Form

WHAT IS THE ACLU?

The American Civil Liberties Union of Idaho is a non-profit public interest organization devoted to defending the principles of the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights, along with our state and federal laws, protects certain fundamental rights of individuals against the power of the government and will of the majority. We work to preserve and extend freedom of speech and religion, and the rights to equality, privacy, and fair treatment by government and its agents. Other issues we look for include government-sponsored religious activities, illegal discrimination, police misconduct, censorship in schools or libraries, school discipline, workplace privacy, and inhumane jail and prison conditions.

The ACLU provides information to thousands of people each year to assist them in asserting their rights. Sometimes we refer people to other organizations that may be able to help. Sometimes we act as advocates for individuals and take cases to court. However, the ACLU provides direct representation to only a small number of clients each year in cases with potential to set precedents for the preservation or advancement of civil liberties.

The ACLU is not a government agency or a general legal services organization. We regrettably do not provide general legal advice or emergency services, but this does not mean that we are not interested in hearing your issues.

HOW CAN THE ACLU HELP YOU?

Generally, it is better to contact us in writing. Unfortunately, because of our small staff, in-person interviews are not possible, and the legal staff is not available for phone consultations. The ACLU will try to accommodate individuals who cannot write or call because of a disability.

By mail: You can fill out the attached intake questionnaire, or you can write us a letter, which should address all of the questions listed on this form, and mail it to our office. Your letter should give a brief and factual account of your difficulty, in the order in which it happened.

Your patience is appreciated as we receive about 30 complaints a week; every letter requesting assistance is answered, but it may take some time. Depending on how urgent your matter is, we will let you know in two to five weeks whether we can help you. If we cannot assist you, we will try to refer you elsewhere for help.

OTHER RESOURCES IN IDAHO

ADA Task Force, 344-5590
Americans w/ Disabilities Task Force
Comprehensive Advocacy
(for the disabled), 336-5353
Consumer Protection, 334-2424
Fair Housing Council, 383-0695
Human Rights Commission, 334-2873
Idaho Aids Foundation
Idaho Community Action Network, 385-9146

Idaho Migrant Council, 454-1652
Legal Aid Services: Boise 336-8980,
Caldwell 454-2591, Pocatello 233-0079
or check your local directory
NAACP, 344-6341
State Bar Lawyer Referral, 334-4500
State Bar Volunteer Lawyers, 334-4510
State Law Library, 334-3316

HOW THE ACLU OF IDAHO ACCEPTS CASES

HOW DO WE SELECT CASES?

The ACLU of Idaho generally files cases that have the potential to affect the civil liberties of large numbers of people rather than those involving a dispute between two parties. The basic questions we ask when reviewing a potential case are:

- Is this a significant civil liberties issue? Civil liberties include freedom of speech, the press, religion and association; and also civil rights, which includes voting rights, discrimination against protected classes (race, sex, religion, age, etc.), and aspects of police reform.
- What effect will this case have on other people in addition to our client?
- Do we have the resources to take this case?

Once we receive your complaint, our legal staff will review your case and contact you as soon as possible in writing. If we cannot help you, we will try to refer you elsewhere.

Unfortunately, *we cannot take all cases offered us*, even those concerning real injustices and constitutional concerns. If your complaint is not pursued by our office, it does not mean it is without merit. It becomes a difficult process when choosing which issues we can adequately address, because we are a small organization with limited resources. Please keep this page and refer to the legal resources listed here, in the event that we cannot accept your case.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

ACLU cooperating attorneys represent the clients free of charge. Cases are handled by attorneys who are in private practice and volunteer their time.

TYPES OF CASES THE ACLU GENERALLY CANNOT ACCEPT

In general, we do not handle cases that involve such things as:

- Complaints about Child Protective Services, tax problems, consumer complaints, or complaints against lawyers or judges.
- Criminal prosecutions, probation, or parole
- Divorce, child custody, or wills
- Evictions
- General disputes between employees and employers (for example, disputes centering on wages and hours)
- Landlord-tenant disputes

CAN THE ACLU ADVISE ME ABOUT MY CASE?

If we do not accept your case, the ACLU is unable to give you advice about your case or provide other types of assistance (for example, reviewing your papers or conducting legal research to assist you).

Important Note About Deadlines: Many legal issues have time constraints. The ACLU cannot give you advice about the deadlines that apply to your case. To protect your rights, please consult with an attorney promptly to find out what deadlines apply in your case.

PLEASE DESCRIBE ANY ATTEMPTS YOU HAVE MADE TO RESOLVE THIS PROBLEM. INCLUDE NAMES OF INDIVIDUALS/AGENCIES AND DATES, AND GIVE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EACH RESULT.

ARE YOU REPRESENTED BY AN ATTORNEY IN THIS MATTER? _____ IF SO, INDICATE THE ATTORNEY'S NAME AND PHONE NUMBER _____

WHAT KIND OF HELP DO YOU WANT FROM THE ACLU? _____

IF YOU HAVE DOCUMENTS WHICH YOU BELIEVE MAY HELP US EVALUATE YOUR COMPLAINT, PLEASE DESCRIBE BRIEFLY WHAT THESE DOCUMENTS ARE. WE WILL CALL YOU IF WE WANT TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THE DOCUMENTS; DO NOT ENCLOSE THEM AT THIS TIME.

IF WE THINK IT MIGHT BE APPROPRIATE OR HELPFUL, DO WE HAVE YOUR PERMISSION TO CONTACT AUTHORITIES OR OTHER PERSONS REGARDING YOUR COMPLAINT? _____
IF YES, MAY WE USE YOUR NAME? _____ and IS THERE ANYONE YOU WOULD ASK US NOT TO CONTACT? _____

Please sign on the above line
PLEASE DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE
