

ACLU

Alabama

STILL
FIGHTING
FOR
VOTING
RIGHTS

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RIGHTS

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ANNUAL '23 REPORT

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Cover Image by Jill Friedman

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



JaTaune Bosby Gilchrist

Photo credits

Ashley VictoriaLens

Over the past year, as our state and country faced unprecedented challenges to our civil liberties, the ACLU of Alabama has continued to fight in the courts and on the ground to ensure equal rights for all. W.E.B. DuBois' belief that "As the South goes, so goes the nation" has never rung truer as Alabama stands on the forefront of our nation's struggle for fair voting practices, gender justice and criminal justice reform.

This fall, after a nearly two-year legal battle, we helped to secure a fair congressional voting map in Alabama. In accordance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the state now has two districts in which Black Alabamians can select a representative of their choosing. We continued to fight for gender justice, expanding women's access to healthcare by securing a preliminary injunction that lifts the state's de facto ban on freestanding birthing centers; and through the second year of our Black Trans Futures program. We fought for criminal justice reform and monitored the Board of Pardons and Paroles, releasing our first Parole Watch Report to shine a light on their practices.

The incredible wins we have seen in the courts and in our organizing efforts are due in large part to our growing and dedicated staff. We have expanded to 18 full-time staff members who support our organizational priorities through individual expertise and group collaboration. At the same time, we have expanded our partnerships across the state to increase and fortify our efforts within each issue area. Today, the ACLU of Alabama is stronger than ever and together with you, our supporters, we will continue to fight for our vision of a fair and free Alabama for all.

In community and solidarity,

JaTaune Bosby Gilchrist
Executive Director, ACLU of Alabama

OUR TEAM

Staff

Senior Leadership Team

JaTaune Bosby Gilchrist, *Executive Director*

A.J. Reese, *Director of Finance
and Operations*

Alison Mollman, *Interim Legal Director*

Jose Vazquez, *Communications Director*

Stef Bernal-Martinez, *Organizing Director*

Elizabeth Shannon, *Development Director*

Kiesha Favor, *Operations Administrator*

Dillon Nettles, *Policy and Advocacy Director*

Communications

Kayla Sloan, *Digital Media Strategist*

Adam Muhlenford, *Media Strategist*

Development

Ellen McCartney, *Development Associate*

Finance and Operations

Teresa Galloway, *Accounting Clerk*

Board of Directors

Glory McLaughlin, *Chair*

Kira Fonteneau, *Past President*

Kindred Motes, *Vice Chair*

Anil Mujumdar, *Executive Committee*

Carmen Chambers, *Executive Committee*

Carmarion Anderson-Harvey

Xandi Andersen

Quentin Bell

Michelle Browder

Legal

Nichelle Cunningham, *Paralegal*

Monique DeGivenchy, *Smart Justice
Intake Coordinator*

Laurel Hattix, *Staff Attorney*

Organizing

Kamilah Kenyatta, *Gender Justice Fellow*

Kenya Shavers, *Voting Rights
Organizing Coordinator*

Policy

Sam Duff, *Voting Rights Policy Strategist*

Courtney Andrews, *Reproductive
Rights Policy Strategist*

Operations

Asia Muhammad, *Special Projects
Coordinator & Executive Assistant*

Ana Delia Espino

Heather Fann

Rita Goyal

Kenneth Hudson

Robertta Jackal

Joel Sogol

Mark Lester, *Rolling off*

Hank Sherrod, *Rolling off*

Jim Flowers, *Rolling off*



“In the Deep South, organizing, policy and community-centered work are critical. Our mission is larger than those we represent. It’s a reminder that our work is intersectional and that we’re a part of a catalyst that can shift this nation.”

— JaTaune Bosby Gilchrist, *Executive Director*

OUR TEAM



A.J. Reese



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Kiesha Favor



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Kayla Sloan



Ellen McCartney



Laurel Hattix



Kamilah Kenyatta



Kenya Shavers



Teresa Galloway



Nichelle Cunningham



Sam Duff

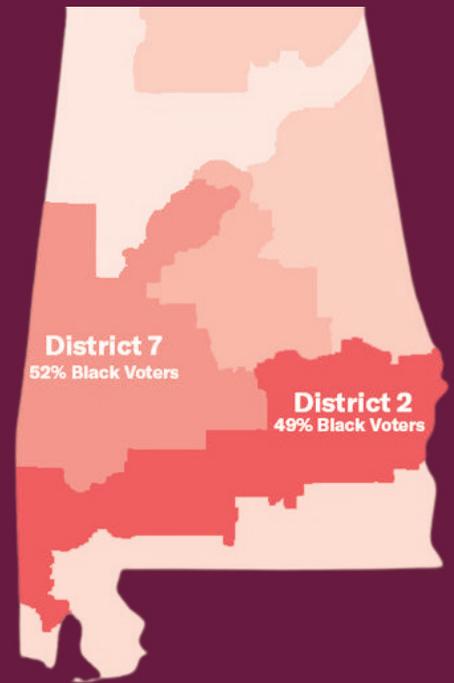


Courtney Andrews



Asia Muhammad

VOTING RIGHTS



Alabama Secures Fair

Congressional Voting Map

On October 5, 2023, a federal court confirmed a new Congressional voting map for Alabama after a nearly two-year legal battle. While the State used every resource at their disposal to dilute Black voting power, the ACLU, Legal Defense Fund, and our partners, fought to secure a fair map as outlined by the U.S. Supreme Court. The case tested the strength of our institutions and democratic process, with the people of Alabama and democracy emerging as the winners.

The battle for fair voting practices is especially poignant in Alabama where Black voters have historically been disenfranchised and where Black activists have created a national roadmap for community organizing. Alabama's new map represents a significant win for Black voters in the state and for voting rights nationally. Already, other states in the South are looking at Alabama as an example of how, through dedicated organizing and legal action, voting rights can be protected for all.



First In-Person Convening

of the AVRC

Photo credits

*Jill Friedman
(top right)*

This spring, along with our partners, we hosted the first in-person convening of the Alabama Voting Rights Coalition (AVRC), with over 30 attendees from different organizations across the state. We developed a strategic plan to broaden voting access across the state, including restoration for people with felony convictions, no-excuse absentee, and early voting. We trained coalition members on the legislative process, legislative advocacy, and voting rights policy issues to fill existing knowledge gaps between different members and organizations.

The ACLU of Alabama has facilitated the development of the AVRC since 2020. The coalition is comprised of statewide and grassroots organizations focused on voter engagement, GOTV, election protection, rights restoration, and advocacy. We are focused on growing our membership and plan to host the 2024 convening, which is projected to have even higher attendance than 2023.

May 2021 Following the 2020 census, the Alabama State Legislature redraws congressional map, creating just one majority Black district despite Black voters making up 27% of the state's population

November 15, 2021 The ACLU of Alabama and plaintiffs file a pair of lawsuits in federal court challenging Alabama's newly drawn political maps for state legislature and congressional districts.

July 17-21, 2021 A special session of the legislature is held to redraw a map that complies with the VRA. Legislators receive feedback from the public and the Alabama ACLU on how to comply with the Voting Rights Act, yet still deliver a map with only one majority Black district, in direct defiance of the SCOTUS ruling.

September 26, 2023 SCOTUS blocks the Alabama legislature's appeal to keep their discriminatory map and orders a map to be drawn with a second district where Black voters have an opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice by the 2024 Election.

June 8, 2022 SCOTUS ruled Alabama's congressional map violated section 2 of the Voting Rights Act by diluting the power of Black voters and had to be redrawn to include at least 2 opportunity districts for Black voters.



GENDER JUSTICE

Oasis Family Birthing Center et. al. v.

Alabama Department of Public Health

On September 30, 2023, a Montgomery Circuit Court ruled in favor of the ACLU of Alabama and our clients, blocking the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) from continuing to prevent the operation of midwife-led birth centers in Alabama. Freestanding birthing centers provide necessary care to women in rural parts of the state, many of which constitute maternal health deserts.

Midwifery has a long and rich history in Alabama, especially in Black, rural communities. In addition to providing care during pregnancy and birth and tending to newborn babies, midwives play a significant role in alerting the public health system to situations of extreme poverty and abuse. As the result of this ruling, three freestanding birth centers will immediately reopen with more to follow.

Photo credits

*Lynsey Weatherspoon
(above)*

Black Trans Futures

The ACLU of Alabama's Black Trans Futures program is a collaboration with The Knights & Orchids Society (TKO), a Black, trans-led healthcare organization in Alabama. It is modeled after our Smart Justice Organizing School and led by staff member, Kamilah Kenyatta, a graduate of the program. The program highlights how Black trans communities support a better future for Alabama and focuses on storytelling, the arts and health care. Now in our second year of partnering with TKO, we have expanded our program from eight weeks to five months including 10 participants.

Photo credits

Devin Tanksley



West Alabama Women's Center,

et al. v. Marshall, et al.

On July 31, 2023, the ACLU of Alabama filed a lawsuit in federal court against Attorney General Steve Marshall and the state's district attorneys in response to Marshall's threat of felony charges against people sharing information about legal, out-of-state abortions. Our clients are healthcare providers who have not been able to fully and adequately advise their patients for fear of prosecution. Marshall's threats constitute a deeply troubling threat to our broader healthcare landscape as doctors may feel unsafe practicing in a state where they might be legally prosecuted for doing their job.



IN THE COMMUNITY

**We at the ACLU of Alabama believe that
gender equality is a basic human right.**

It is essential to the vitality of our state morally, economically, and culturally; and without gender equality, Alabama will not move forward with the rest of our country.

In September the ACLU of Alabama hosted two events for LGBTQ+ youth in Birmingham at the Magic City Acceptance Academy and The Magic City Acceptance Center. Because of Alabama's recent legislation attacking our LGBTQIA+ community, particularly children, our concept was to provide an uplifting program for LGBTQIA+ youth and an opportunity to explore their potential for creating change in Alabama. Our program focused on providing a foundational understanding of government and organizing.

Photo credits

*Charles Williams
(top of next page)*



Werk The Lege

Werk The Lege is a legislative advocacy training program open to any and all Alabamians who want to learn about and engage in Alabama’s legislative process. In a series of virtual Zoom sessions, our team highlighted and present on topics that matter to Alabamians.

We had four virtual sessions that each covered an important topic connected to our work:

1. Lege Session 101

3. Censorship + Classroom

2. Alabama Prisons + the Death Penalty

4. Reproductive Freedom + Bodily Autonomy



Virtual sessions registrants

175
total



In-person convening attendees

100+
total

STATEHOUSE TO PRISON PIPELINE REPORT

In December 2023, we released our third annual Statehouse to Prison Pipeline Report. We monitored 876 bills introduced during the 2023 legislative sessions. Here are three things we learned:

- 1. Legislators want harsher sentencing bills that continue overcrowding our prisons.
- 2. Legislators more often pass bills that criminalize behavior rather than addressing the root cause.
- 3. We're spending more on incarcerating people year-over-year rather than releasing them.

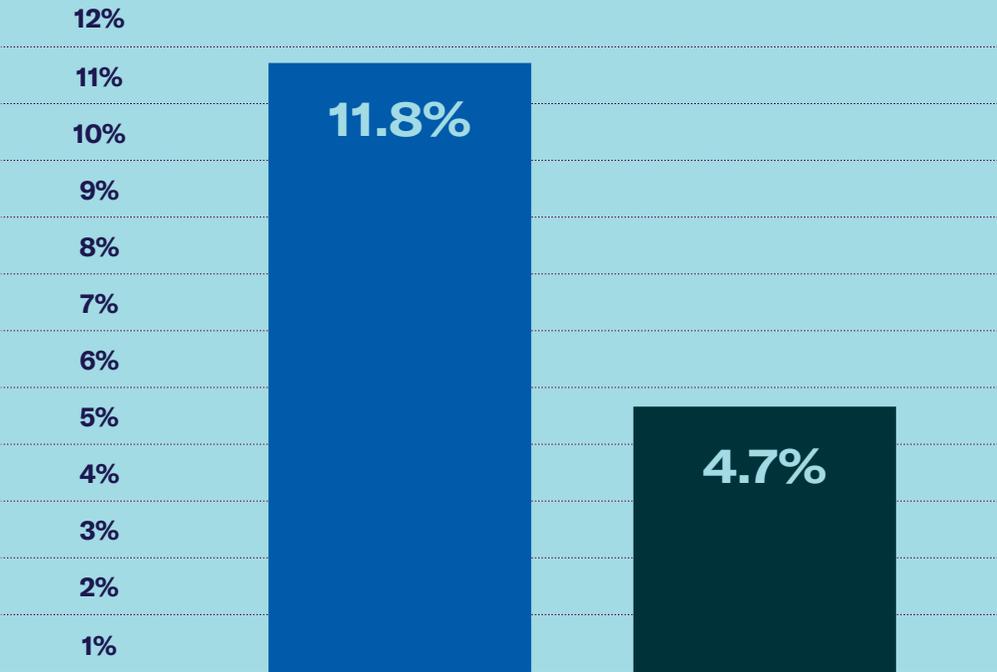
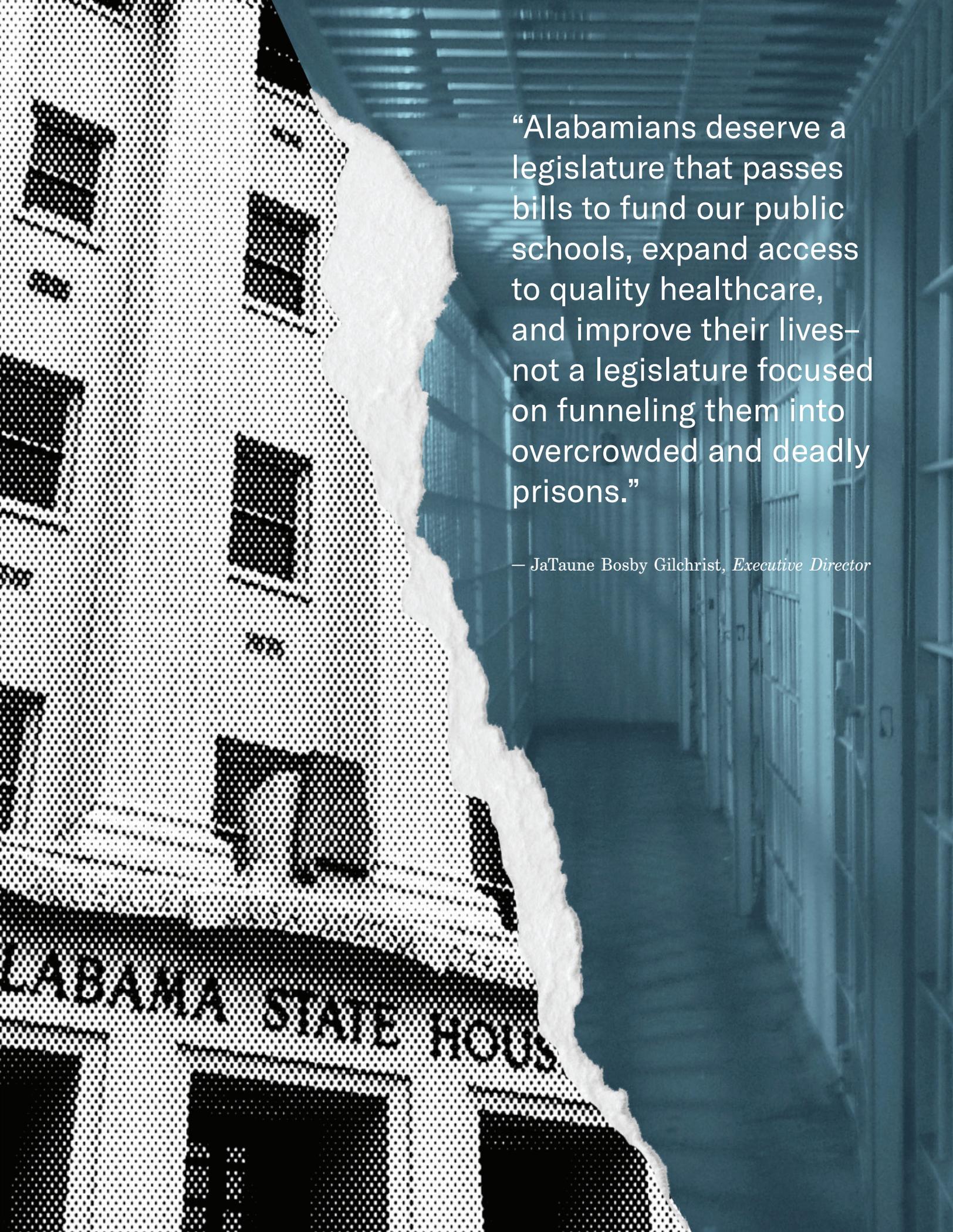


Photo credits

Photographer name (top right)



“Alabamians deserve a legislature that passes bills to fund our public schools, expand access to quality healthcare, and improve their lives—not a legislature focused on funneling them into overcrowded and deadly prisons.”

— JaTaune Bosby Gilchrist, *Executive Director*



FIRST EVER PAROLE WATCH

The Parole Watch Report was released in September 2023. It was created to provide transparency around what is happening at parole hearings in Alabama and to capture data that is not publicly available or easily accessible through public records requests.

Over the last five years, the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles has become increasingly punitive and opaque. Even as thousands of incarcerated people are denied parole each year, Alabamians know very little about what happens every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at parole hearings in Montgomery.

The Parole Watch Team observed 267 public parole hearings over a ten-week period in June, July, and August. These were the 5 main takeaways:

1. A majority of parole applicants assigned to work release facilities were denied parole even though they have been vetted by the Alabama Department of Corrections as people who can safely work in our communities.

4. In Alabama, white applicants are more than twice as likely to be granted parole than Black applicants, even when Black and white parole applicants are similarly situated.

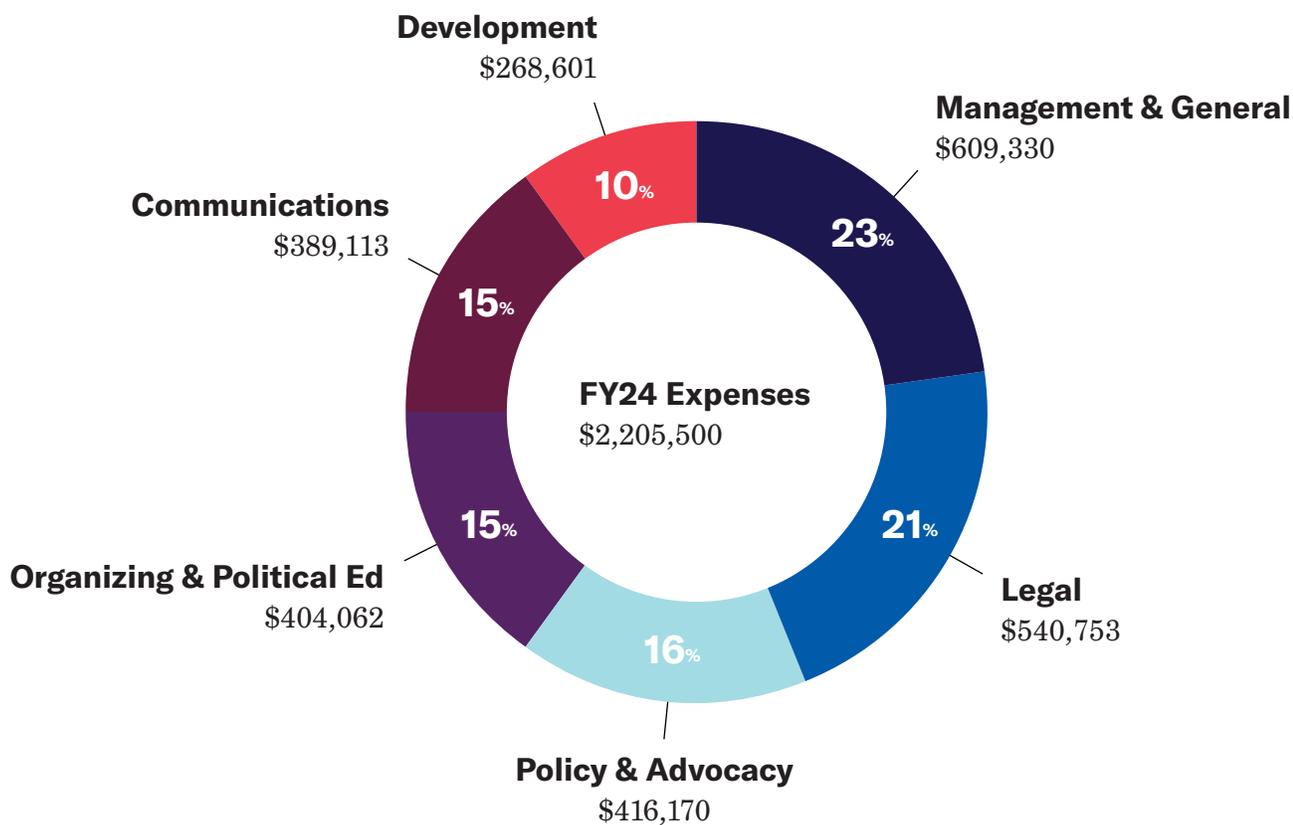
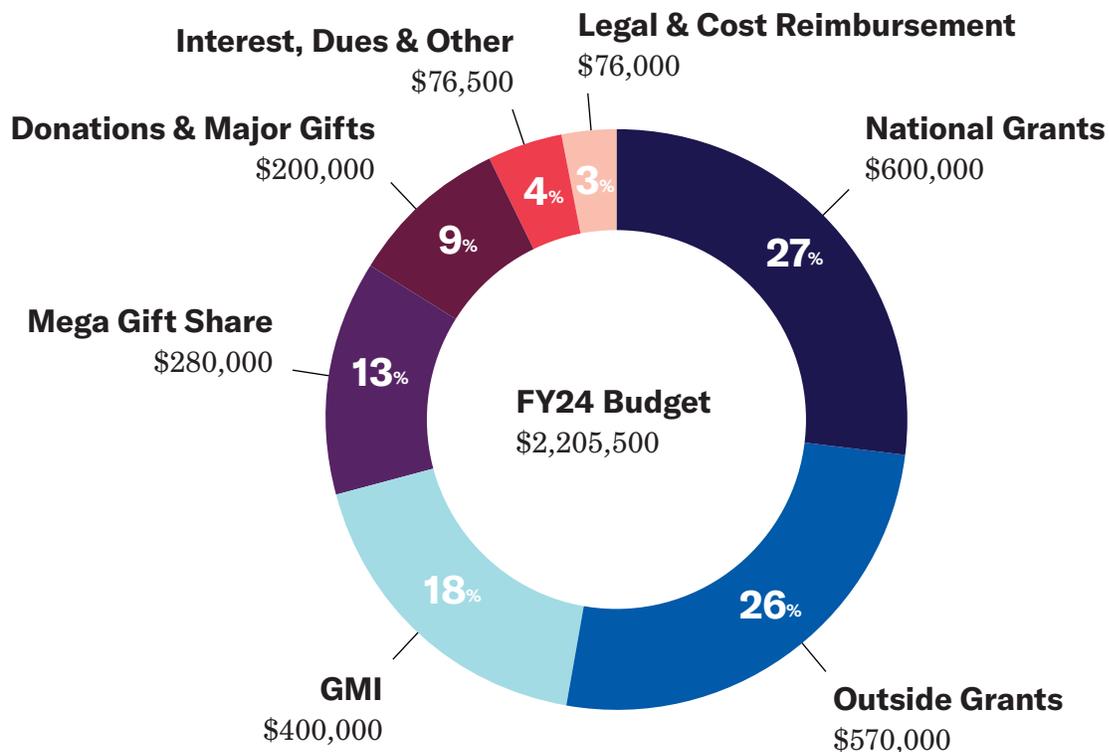
2. Leigh Gwathney denied parole more than any other Board member, voting to deny parole in 245 out of 251 parole hearings in June and July, and in every case the Attorney General's Office voiced opposition.

5. Alabama is one of two states that does not allow incarcerated people to be present at their own parole hearings. In short, incarcerated people cannot advocate for themselves at parole hearings in Alabama.

3. In the 267 parole hearings observed over the summer, the Attorney General's Office and/or VOCAL opposed parole in at least three of every four (78.3%) parole hearings, and even in cases where victims supported granting parole.

	2021	2022	2023
Total bills introduced during Alabama legislative session	1,073	873	876
Total bills identified that fuel the prison pipeline	117	148	141
Percentage	11%	17%	16%

BUDGET & EXPENSES





ORIGINAL

WE THE PEOPLE DEFEND & PROTECT OUR CIVIL LIBERTIES IN ALABAMA

Become a member

Members provide flexible financial support allowing us to defend freedom at every turn. For as little as \$20 per year, you will be a card-carrying member of the ACLU, proudly joining our state and national work. From Montgomery to D.C., you will be a part of our movement.

Take action

Lend us your time, your talent, and your voice. Sign up for our email action network so you can find out first about urgent actions, petitions, protests, and other volunteer opportunities. We need an activist core to help us protect civil rights and civil liberties in Alabama.

Make a donation

The ACLU of Alabama Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. Your tax-deductible gift will support a wide range of our work, including litigation, advocacy, and public education. We rely on our donors to support all of our strategic initiatives.

Learn more about our recent work and support us at www.aclualabama.org