

I.

The ACLU—An Overview

The ACLU

The ACLU grew from the seeds of social activism in 1917 and was born in January 1920. Since its beginning, the ACLU has been a lightning rod for controversy, not least because the cases it has championed involve America's cherished civil rights.

Those rights have caused disagreements, fights, and litigation from the beginning of our country, and will most probably continue to do so. Those rights include freedom of the press (Is press freedom unfettered or subject to restraints?) to free speech (Who has it? When can they use it? Are there any limitations on it?) to equal protection (Who should expect equal treatment? Who should not? What is equal treatment across economic, gender, age, or racial lines?).

The ACLU was established to and has inserted itself squarely amid these and other constitutional and societal controversies.

Here is a sample of the many pros and cons about the Union¹:

1. ACLU & DEFENSE OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

PRO

"Over the years, the ACLU's fortunes have waxed and waned because it tends to attract or lose members following specific actions it undertakes. That waxing and waning demonstrates the organization's success at its sole endeavor, defending and preserving the individual freedoms granted through the Bill of Rights.

The ACLU has challenged literary censorship, segregation, cruel and unusual punishments, gender inequality, and violations of the right to privacy and freedom of religion. The ACLU is one of the informal checks and balances protecting individuals against tyranny."

—Judy Kutulas, PhD, professor of history at St. Olaf College,
Email to ProCon.org, October 12, 2017

CON

"The ACLU is trying to deprive other organizations of freedoms that it would insist upon for itself. Their work is not a defense of equality—it is an effort to impose a certain view of morality on the country by law . . .

This organization, despite its name and origins, is now committed to a version of civil rights that cannot help but erode traditional American civil liberties.

The motto of the ACLU is, 'Because Freedom Can't Defend Itself.' The irony today is that freedom needs to be defended from the ACLU."

—Carson Holloway, PhD, associate professor of political science, University of Nebraska, "The ACLU's Betrayal of Civil Liberties," *Public Discourse*, March 26, 2015

¹ "Top 10 Pro & Con Arguments: ACLU: ProCon.org." ProCon/Encyclopædia Britannica, February 18, 2020. <https://aclu.procon.org/top-10-pro-con-arguments/#1> (with permission).

2. ACLU & RELIGION

PRO

"Over the years, the ACLU has earned a reputation as the nation's foremost protector of the rights of individuals to practice their religion, as well as the chief opponent of both state aid to religion and enforcement of any religious belief by law. We support the separation of church and state for the same reason the founders of our country did: to promote and protect religious freedom by keeping the government out . . .

We believe that the place for religious displays, as with religious events and practices, is in the private sector—the home, the religious day school, or each person's place of worship.

Moreover, spirituality is undermined and religious symbols are trivialized when they are secularized in order to permit government endorsement."

—American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU),
"ACLU Briefing Paper Number 3—Church and State,"
lectlaw.com, (Accessed November 22, 2017)

CON

"From its inception . . . the ACLU can be characterized as hostile to the Christian faith. In 1925, it was the ACLU that challenged the Tennessee law banning the teaching of the theory of evolution as a fact in the taxpayer-funded public schools. . . . Since the 1960s, the ACLU has been involved in the [U.S.] Supreme Court decisions which outlawed mandated school prayer, observation of religious holidays, and Bible reading in the public schools . . .

Current positions of the ACLU reflect this strongly secular agenda that bristles with hostility toward biblical Christianity. The organization supports same-sex marriage and the right of 'gays' to adopt children; the support of abortion rights; and the elimination of 'discrimination' against LGBTQ people."

—Steven Byas, med instructor, history & social studies education at Randall University, "ACLU Survey/Fundraising Letter Confirms Its Anti-Christian Bias," *thenewamerican.com*, April 19, 2016

3. ACLU & RIGHTS OF THE MINORITY

PRO

"I want to recognize the ACLU for its commitment to protecting our civil liberties.

You have a long and proud history of standing up to defend the freedoms guaranteed to us by the Bill of Rights and the Constitution . . .