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RHODE ISLAND CIVIL LIBERTIES

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Uncertainty for Civil Liberties as General Assembly Hits Mid-Point

As this newsletter went to press, the General Assembly had reached its mid-point, but the vast majority of bills had not been voted upon. Even for a public body where deadlines mean little, the legislators extended beyond their spring break the usual deadline for committee votes on bills. For that reason, in the following summary of some of the bills on which the Affiliate has thus far lobbied, the status of most legislation remains uncertain. Unless otherwise noted, no vote had yet been taken on the bills summarized below.

"War on Terrorism"

Just hours after February's newsletter went to press, the Affiliate achieved a remarkable and speedy victory when the Governor agreed to withdraw his extremely dangerous "homeland security" bill. His announcement came a day after the Affiliate issued a detailed critique of the legislation that led to a torrent of public condemnation over the bill.

Under the Governor's bill, any political protest that "involves a violent act" could have been considered an act of terrorism with a penalty of life imprisonment. His bill also resurrected two archaic – and blatantly unconstitutional – World War I-era laws barring advocacy of anarchy or revolution. He amended those laws to also bar advocacy of "acts of terrorism." The bill further contained an extremely broad exemption to the open records law, barring access to a wide range of "infrastructure" information and even "school safety audits," which "identify and analyze recurring student safety concerns."

In response to the Governor's quick about-face, the Affiliate again took the offensive and proposed legislation of its own to repeal the "advocacy" statutes and a dozen other antiquated laws on the books that affect free speech. Sponsored by Rep. Fausto Anguilla, the bill seeks to repeal, among other things, a law banning the public display of any flag "opposed to organized government or which may be derogatory to morals," a statute making it a felony to speak or write anything intended to "incite, provoke or encourage" a "defiance or

disregard" of the law, and laws authorizing the use of lethal force to break up "tumultuous" assemblies and the use of military force to break up any meeting at which anarchy is "advocated, taught or discussed." By contemporary standards, all of these statutes are patently unconstitutional in infringing upon fundamental First Amendment freedoms.

A copy of the ACLU's analysis of the laws can be found on the Affiliate's website, www.riaclu.org.

First Amendment Rights

Tuition Tax Credits: Senate Finance Committee held a lengthy hearing on a bill that would provide tax breaks to people who made donations to a scholarship organization for students attending private and parochial schools. Joined by teacher union representatives, ACLU member Daniel Weisman called the bill a back-door method of providing tuition tax credits to religious schools. In light of its enormous cost to the state, the bill was not expected to pass, although a majority of Committee members had signed on as co-sponsors of the legislation.

Newspaper Tax: The ACLU testified against a bill, most likely aimed at the *Providence Journal*, that would amend the current sales tax exemption for newspapers, by imposing a tax on newspapers that publish more than 48 issues a year. The ACLU pointed to a string of U.S. Supreme Court cases that have ruled unconstitutional discriminatory

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Highlights:

- Court Rejects Racial Profiling Appeal 2
- Political Canvassing Restrictions in Johnston Halted 3
- ACLU Defends RWU College Republicans over Scholarship Controversy 3
- Free Speech Issues Resolved 7

COURT REJECTS RACIAL PROFILING APPEAL

The full U.S. Court of Appeals in Boston has denied an ACLU request that it review a panel decision in the Affiliate's racial profiling lawsuit brought on behalf of a 53-year-old African-American resident of Hopkinton, Bernard Flowers. Flowers was stopped in his car and detained at gunpoint by Westerly police in 2000. By a 2-1 vote, the court panel called it "a close case," but said that Westerly police had "reasonable suspicion" when they pulled Flowers over.

ACLU volunteer attorney Thomas G. Briody expressed "deep disappointment" at the decision, and R.I. ACLU executive director Steven Brown said the ruling demonstrated the need for the passage of strong legislation in the General Assembly to address the problem of racial profiling.

The incident leading to the lawsuit started with a report to Westerly police from a town resident, who claimed that someone had told him that a third person was going to send "two black males to his house with a gun." The resident reported having seen a "small gray or black colored vehicle" occupied by "two black males" drive slowly by his home. He provided no other description of the men or the vehicle. Some thirty minutes later, Mr.

Flowers was driving his gray car through town some two miles away from the scene of the report. Relying solely on that vague report, and despite the fact that Mr. Flowers was the only occupant in the car, police pulled him over and then executed what is known as a "felony car stop," in which several officers pointed loaded weapons at him, handcuffed him and ordered him to his knees while his car was searched. Finding nothing, the police released him. Not only did the police offer no apologies, they would not even assist Mr. Flowers in trying to telephone his wife. Police then abandoned the search for the two mysterious "black males."

The ACLU expressed concern that, in upholding the reasonableness of the stop, the court majority stated that the "car and driver substantially match[ed] the given description." The ACLU's Brown said: "To call a description of two black men in a black or gray car a 'substantial match' to Mr. Flowers shows how vulnerable racial minorities are to being stopped and searched. We would never tolerate the use of such a vague and meaningless description to pull over white drivers. We are hopeful that this decision will serve as a call to the General Assembly to pass strong legislation to try to begin to deal with the serious problem of racial

AFFILIATE INTERVENES IN SCHOOL MATTERS

Student Orange-Peeler Defended

The ACLU has defended a sixth-grader in Woonsocket who was arrested and suspended from school under a "zero tolerance" policy for bringing a kitchen knife to school to peel an orange for lunch. Ironically, he realized at the cafeteria table that he had the knife in his lunch bag, but an assistant principal denied the student's request for a plastic knife. Unable to peel the orange with his fingers, he then asked if he could use the knife he had brought from home. Upon seeing the knife, the administrator confiscated it and called the police. The student was taken to the police station and charged and also given an automatic 10-day suspension for bringing a "weapon" to school.

The student appealed the suspension, and ACLU volunteer attorney Thomas Mirza appeared before the School Committee to plead the student's case. The Committee voted to commute his suspension and also to reexamine the district's "zero tolerance" policy. In the meantime, Mirza is representing the boy before the city's Juvenile Hearing Board on the weapons charge filed against him by the police. This is but the latest in a string of troubling "zero

School Board Appointment Challenged

The Affiliate, citing serious discrimination concerns, has called on the state Department of Education to halt the process for filling a vacancy on the Central Falls School District Board of Trustees. A notice sent home to parents to advise them of the vacancy was not translated into Spanish, unlike virtually all other school documents distributed in the district. According to a memo from the Superintendent, this was done deliberately "because all Board meetings are in English and they are looking for somebody, if an immigrant, who is bilingual." At least one Central Falls school principal interpreted the decision not to translate the document as meaning that "They are looking for a non-hispanic to fill this position," as she wrote in a memo to her school's faculty members.

In a letter to Commissioner of Education Peter McWalters, the ACLU noted that the decision not to translate the notice would clearly limit awareness of the vacancy among the Latino community. It called the principal's memo "blatantly discriminatory and a clear violation of the Fourteenth Amendment rights of all potential Hispanic applicants." The ACLU asked the Commissioner to advise the local school board to reopen the application process, and to distribute to students a second, translated notice of the vacancy clarifying that all applicants will be treated equally, without regard to their race or national origin. As this newsletter went to press, a Department of Education

ACLU DEFENDS RWU COLLEGE REPUBLICANS OVER SCHOLARSHIP CONTROVERSY

The ACLU of Rhode Island and its recently-formed law school chapter intervened in the free speech controversy surrounding the Roger Williams University College Republican club's award of a \$250 "whites only" scholarship as a Club statement about affirmative action. The Affiliate called on members of the Student Senate to halt continuing efforts to punish the club for its free speech activities.

The ACLU had been contacted by the club in response to introduction of a Senate resolution to revoke the club's charter for its scholarship award. The resolution was narrowly defeated, but the club fears the issue may be brought up again. In its letter to Student Senate President Erin Bedell, the ACLU called the Senate's "efforts at censorship" both "counter-productive and inimical to the critical goal of any university in promoting wide-ranging, robust and uninhibited speech."

Only a week earlier, the Senate had voted not to censure the Club, concluding that its scholarship offer

constituted free speech. A revised resolution, however, claimed that once the scholarship was actually awarded, the activity ceased to be speech, and became illegal "political action" deserving of punishment. Calling the notion of "discriminatory" political action troubling, the ACLU letter noted that "political action forms the essence of freedom of speech."

The resolution also claimed that the club's actions violated the Senate's "Commitment to Student Equality Act," which states that clubs "will operate fairly and objectively without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, political ideology, national origin, handicap or age." The problem, said the ACLU, is that a number of clubs on campus would, of necessity, fail this test. The letter cited student clubs like Hillel, which describes itself as "serv[ing] the needs of the Jewish community"; the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, which "is a mix of Christians from all denominations ... that share a common faith"; the Multicultural

Student Union, which "provides leadership development for cultural minorities on campus"; and the "Society of Women Engineers."

The ACLU letter said: "One cannot sincerely argue that these clubs operate 'objectively without regard to' race, gender, religion, etc. Nor should one expect them to. Perhaps the College Republican club and its counterpart, the College Democrats, are the perfect examples of the flaws in this well-intentioned act. How can overtly political clubs like those be expected to operate 'without regard to political ideology'?"

The ACLU concluded its letter by stating: "It is a truism, but one worth repeating, that the cure for 'bad' speech is not its censorship, but instead the exercise of 'good' speech by others. So it is with this controversy." Since the letter was sent, the Student Senate has taken no further action. The letter was co-signed by Bridget Longridge, who founded an ACLU chapter at the law

POLITICAL CANVASSING RESTRICTIONS IN JOHNSTON HALTED

The ACLU of Rhode Island obtained a temporary restraining order on behalf of the environmental group Clean Water Action, barring enforcement of a Johnston Town Council directive that prohibited the group from engaging in political door-to-door canvassing between 7 and 9 PM. The order, issued by U.S. District Judge William Smith, came in a lawsuit filed by ACLU volunteer attorney Carolyn Mannis, who argued that the restriction violates the group's First Amendment rights.

The lawsuit notes that door-to-door canvassing is a "vital part" of the organization's program, and is an effective way for Clean Water Action to disseminate information about its activities, obtain signatures on petitions and solicit donations to fund its work. The hours of 4 to 9 PM are the organization's standard canvassing hours in every community, and the canvassers find that they achieve the best response between 6 and 9 PM. The suit argues that the Town's restriction "is not narrowly tailored to meet a substantial or compelling governmental interest," and that less restrictive means are available to regulate canvassing activities in the town. In papers filed with the suit, the ACLU pointed to numerous court cases that have struck down similar restrictions.

The restriction was imposed after a Town Councilor said that people in his district complained about canvassers "knocking on the door" late at night. However, the ACLU's Mannis noted that the night-time canvassing ban harms not only the organization, but also those residents who welcome the information the canvassers provide. In addition to a court order against continued enforcement of the restriction, the suit seeks compensatory damages for the group's lost income.

A hearing on the ACLU's request for a permanent injunction against the directive is expected sometime in the next few

GENERAL ASSEMBLY *(continued from front page)*

First Amendment Rights *(continued)*

Tax Breaks for Voters: Should you have to register to vote to obtain a property tax exemption? A bill introduced for the Town of Exeter requires it as proof of the owner's residency. Pointing to the free speech issues involved in requiring a person to be a registered voter, the Affiliate noted there were many alternative methods of documenting residency. At a hearing on the bill, House Corporations Committee members appeared to recognize the concerns raised by the ACLU.

Racial Profiling

The fate of a comprehensive bill designed to address the problem of racial profiling in the state, documented last year by release of a two-year study of traffic stops data, remains uncertain. Generally positive negotiations on the bill between the civil rights community and the R.I. Police Chiefs Association broke down when the police representatives, at the urging of the Attorney General, backed out of an agreement on key provisions of the bill. Among other things, the chiefs withdrew their support for

a provision that would have allowed victims of racial profiling to sue for injunctive relief and damages. In other words, they were willing to write into law a ban on racial profiling, but not provide any remedy for violations of it. The bill is sponsored by Sen. Rhoda Perry and Rep. Joseph Almeida, who were the original proponents of the legislation requiring a two year study of police traffic stops data. As this newsletter went to press, negotiations on the bill were resuming.

Primary Seat Belt Law: Civil rights representatives were present in force to once again oppose attempts to pass a "primary seat belt law" without protections against racial profiling. Recognizing that such a law would greatly expand police authority to profile and search racial minorities, the ACLU and civil rights groups have demanded adoption of an amendment that would bar pretext stops and "consent" searches of drivers pulled over for such violations. Law enforcement agencies, though claiming that the seat belt law is only about safety, have refused to accept the amendment. Presently, a driver can be charged with a seat belt

Civil Rights

Gay Marriage: Lengthy hearings have been held on bills to both authorize and ban same-sex marriage in the state. Marriage supporters well outnumbered opponents, and one hearing was capped with the public announcement by House Majority Leader Gordon Fox that he is gay. Although the General Assembly is unlikely to take any action on the bills, supporters of gay marriage have generated a significant amount of positive reaction.

Civil Rights Advocate: The ACLU and the R.I. Civil Rights Roundtable have raised concerns about a proposed Attorney General bill that would establish a "civil rights advocate" in his office. The problem, according to civil rights groups, is that the advocate would be one in name only. None of his/her responsibilities are spelled out in the legislation, and the AG has rejected requests to amend the bill to give the advocate similar duties and responsibilities to those that other statutorily-created advocates in his office have. Many in the civil rights community thus see the bill more as a public relations effort than a sincere desire for civil rights advocacy in the AG's office.

Privacy

Internet Subpoenas: State police were back for the third year in a row pushing a bill, based in part on a USA Patriot Act provision, that would give local law enforcement authorities broad authority to obtain from Internet service providers information, including bank and credit card information, of subscribers. In opposing the bill, the ACLU noted that the legislation allowed police to issue administrative subpoenas to ISP's for this personal information without providing subscribers any chance to contest the request, and that the subscriber did not even have to be suspected of a crime in order for police to obtain the data. Nonetheless, Senate Judiciary Committee has approved the bill.

Video Voyeurism: The ACLU has expressed qualified support for a bill that would ban "video voyeurism." The bill was prompted by a case where a man was accused of using a cell phone camera to take pictures up an unsuspecting woman's skirt, and police appeared to lack any strong laws to prosecute the suspect. The ACLU said the situation demonstrated how new technology has outpaced legislative efforts to protect privacy rights. At the same time, the Affiliate raised concerns about this particular bill's breadth, as it would make it a crime to take *any* picture of a person without consent if it was for "arousing," "degrading" or other purposes. In a similar vein, the bill's scope is not limited to situations and/or places where the person being photographed has a reasonable expectation of privacy. Thus, the bill would make it a crime for a person to take a photo of a Hollywood movie star in public if it were done for the purpose of "arousing" the person's "passion or lust." Despite these concerns, House Judiciary Committee approved the bill without amendment. The Affiliate will oppose the legislation unless its scope is more appropriately narrowed.

Privacy (continued)

Narragansett Rentals: The Affiliate has voiced opposition to a proposal to overturn a ten-year-old Superior Court decision in an ACLU case, by allowing the Town of Narragansett to bar three or more unrelated people from residing in a single-family dwelling. In its testimony, the ACLU raised constitutional concerns with the proposal, and further noted that over the last few decades, “times have changed, especially when it comes to the definition of a family. Focusing on whether renters are related instead of other less personal factors is both an intrusion on privacy and oddly old-fashioned. As a matter of public policy, the Town’s continued focus on this criterion is ill-conceived, discriminatory, impractical and extremely unlikely to help resolve any of the legitimate concerns prompting calls for action in the first place.” The bill was prompted by long-standing neighborhood complaints of disorderly conduct by local URI students.

Students’ Rights

Confidentiality of Education Records: House HEW Committee has approved an ACLU bill, sponsored by Rep. Edith Ajello, that would protect the confidentiality of student school records to the same extent they are protected by federal law. The legislation was prompted by an incident brought to the Affiliate’s attention where a school inappropriately released a student’s records to local police and to the parents of another student. Passage of a state version of the federal law is important because the federal statute provides no remedies to aggrieved victims.

Drivers’ Licenses: As the result of objections from the ACLU and others, the Attorney General has significantly revised a bill that would have denied drivers’ licenses to students who miss a specified number of days at school. While the bill was designed as an incentive for students to stay in school, the ACLU argued that it was inappropriate to use drivers’ licenses as social punishment for matters totally unrelated to driving. To address some of the concerns raised by the ACLU and others, the revised bill would merely give the Family Court the authority to suspend the licenses of minors brought

Criminal Justice

Protection from Self-Incrimination: Senate Judiciary Committee has approved legislation allowing for the forced administration of blood tests on persons involved in vehicular accidents involving death or serious injury. The ACLU has objected that the forced taking of blood from a person for the purpose of using it as evidence against him or her is a gross violation of the privilege against self-incrimination. Proponents of the legislation have been unable to point to any cases where the police’s current lack of authority to take blood has hindered drunk driving convictions. In past years, similar legislation has died in the House. The Attorney General’s office is also pushing an even broader bill opposed by the Affiliate that would allow police to obtain *any* type of “bodily fluid, tissue or substance” with a warrant.

Drug Penalties: House Judiciary Committee has approved a bill that would double the criminal penalties for various drug crimes if committed within 300 yards of a public library, community center or place of worship. Since most of the penalties for the designated crimes already carry prison sentences of 30 years or more, the Affiliate unsuccessfully criticized the legislation as

Rights of Immigrants

Legislative committees have heard a trio of immigrants’ rights bills supported by the Affiliate. One would restrict local police from enforcing federal immigration law. The ACLU believes that involving state and local law enforcement in immigration status issues will increase racial profiling of legal residents and United States citizens who “look foreign,” and will also deter undocumented residents from reporting crime in their communities. A second bill would authorize the issuance of drivers’ licenses to undocumented immigrants who provide appropriate identification documents. The ACLU and immigrant rights groups have argued that it is inappropriate for the DMV to act as INS agents or to establish license criteria that are unrelated to driving. A third bill would allow undocumented immigrants to sue employers for violations of critical labor laws; some unscrupulous businesses knowingly use immigrant laborers in the

Workplace Rights

Lie Detectors: The ACLU has testified against a bill that would allow police agencies to give lie detector tests to job applicants. Rhode Island’s ban on the use of polygraph tests in employment has been in effect for over 30 years, and evidence of its scientific validity has not improved since then. Instead, the tests remain quite inaccurate and can subject innocent people to intrusive and unnecessary investigations. The Affiliate argued that there was no reason to subject law enforcement applicants to a test whose validity is subject to so much question.

Victims’ Rights: The ACLU testified in support of legislation that would require large employers to provide accommodations to crime victims to attend their criminal proceedings. As introduced, the bill contained no remedies for violations of the law, and the Affiliate has suggested amendments to the proposal to address that oversight.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY *(continued from page 5)*

Due Process

Administrative Proceedings: House and Senate Committees have approved an ACLU bill that would require administrative agencies, in issuing decisions in contested cases under the Administrative Procedures Act, to notify parties of the appeal period and the procedure for filing an appeal of the agency decision. If the agency did not provide such notice, a party would have an additional thirty days to file an appeal. Because the time periods for filing administrative appeals are extremely short and parties in these proceedings often do not have legal representation, individuals can easily lose their appeal rights by waiting too long to consult with an attorney. This bill simply makes parties aware of the time limit for appealing so that they can act accordingly.

Public Integrity Commission: The Governor has twice postponed a scheduled legislative hearing on a bill of his to create a “select commission on public integrity.” The ACLU believes the commission would have the serious potential to infringe on civil liberties due to the broad scope of its duties, its partisan make-up and its sweeping powers. The proposed Commission’s wide-ranging responsibilities include investigating “practices, systems and procedures” that may “encourage” or “permit” public officials or private organizations to have “indirect” conflicts with public bodies, and investigating “any other issues, causes, acts or omissions related to integrity in government.” In furtherance of this mission, the Commission – which would consist solely of appointees of the Governor – is given full subpoena power. Thus, if it chose to subpoena records and testimony from the ACLU, the Right to Life Committee or any other non-profit organization to determine possible influential ties between legislators and others – on the grounds that the organizations

Medical Privacy

Abortion: As in recent years, over a dozen anti-choice bills have been introduced this session. No action has been taken on such bills since 2001, when the Senate passed a so-called “informed consent” and waiting period bill. This year, House Judiciary Committee held lengthy hearings on that bill and another piece of anti-choice legislation that would make it an independent criminal offense to harm a pregnant woman’s fetus. That bill is a clear attempt to undermine *Roe v. Wade* by giving the fetus independent status as a person. Although the Affiliate is hopeful that no action will be taken on either bill, the hearings themselves went contrary to an agreement that had supposedly been made by legislative leaders to hold no hearings on *any* abortion-related legislation this session.

Medical Marijuana: Senate Judiciary Committee was the site of a well-received hearing on medical marijuana legislation this month. The bill, a version of which was first introduced by the ACLU three years ago, would allow patients with specific serious and terminal illnesses to possess small amounts of marijuana for medical purposes, if authorized by a physician, without running afoul of the criminal drug laws. Two years ago, the bill was defeated by a close vote in House committee. Physicians, patients, the

Access to the Courts

Sharing of Attorneys Fees: Two years ago, in a devastating ruling for the ACLU, the R.I. Supreme Court held that it was a violation of both ethical rules and state law for volunteer attorneys to share court-awarded fees with the ACLU (or similar non-profit organizations) to fund its legal work. No other state faces this prohibition, and the Court’s opinion rejected the views of its own Ethics Advisory Panel. The Senate has passed a bill to make clear that such fee-sharing does not constitute the “unauthorized practice of law.” The bill, with support from Save the Bay, the R.I. Bar Association and others, also passed the Senate last year but died in the House.

Obesity Lawsuits: The ACLU has voiced opposition to a bill that would prohibit lawsuits against food manufacturers and businesses for health-related claims relating to consumption of their food. The Affiliate argued that the bill, prompted by highly-publicized national litigation against McDonald’s, was an unnecessary and unconstitutional restriction on the public’s access to the courts. Under the broadly worded bill, suit could be filed only upon proof of a “knowing and willful material violation” of important consumer protection laws, and even then only if the plaintiff can prove that any injury “was actual and proximately caused by such location.” Placing such high hurdles on litigants belies any suggestion that

It’s not too late to make your voice heard. The ACLU urges you to contact your legislators on any of these bills that are of interest or concern to you. To locate your representative and senator, go to www.sec.state.ri.us. You may also use that website or the legislative website at www.rilin.state.ri.us for tracking the status of bills, hearings and voting. If you have expertise in a particular area and are willing to testify for or against any of these bills, call

FREE SPEECH ISSUES RESOLVED

Although the Affiliate remains well-known for rushing into court to vindicate constitutional rights, many issues get resolved with just a phone call or letter, and with no public attention whatsoever. In the past few months alone, three important free speech complaints were resolved by the Affiliate without the need for litigation, examples of the ACLU's impact and reputation in the community.

Just days before Christmas, the organizer of an annual group of carolers that sang each Christmas Eve outside the women's prison was told by prison officials that, for security reasons, they would be barred from the sidewalk outside the facility. After being advised that the ACLU was prepared to sue over the restriction, the officials backed down and allowed the caroling to take place.

Word of ACLU intervention also prompted Jamestown public library officials to reverse their decision to bar the showing of a film that they deemed "political." The head of the library initially approved the request by a Jamestown peace group to show the film, about the war in Iraq. After some publicity about the film's showing appeared in the local paper, she rescinded permission, citing a library policy against use of the library for "partisan" activities. After some members of the group contacted the ACLU, the librarian reversed course once again and allowed the film to be shown.

Finally, ACLU volunteer attorney John Dineen persuaded the Exeter-West Greenwich school district to allow a high school student to wear a sweatshirt with the words: "Register to Vote, Change the Laws, Smoke the Vote," and the web site address for the pro-marijuana organization NORML. The shirt also displayed a large check mark, symbolizing voting. The student had been told he would be suspended if he wore the shirt again, but school officials backed down.

APPEALS COURT RULES IN CIVIL RIGHTS CASES

The federal appeals court in Boston issued two important and favorable civil rights decisions this past month in cases in which the Affiliate had participated.

Voting Rights: By a 5-2 vote, the full U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit held that the Urban League of R.I., the NAACP and other plaintiffs have the right to pursue a claim that black voting power on the South Side of Providence was improperly diluted by reapportioned Senate district lines. Last October, a panel of the appeals court, reversing a district judge's ruling, held that a racial group which claims the ability to "influence the election" of candidates but whose members constitute less than a majority of the population in a proposed voting district can maintain an action under the federal Voting Rights Act.

The full court affirmed that ruling, recognizing arguments made by the plaintiffs and the ACLU in a "friend of the court" brief that the historic Act was designed to address not only redistricting plans where racial minorities are deprived of the ability to constitute a voting majority in a district, but also plans that deny smaller groups of minorities the possibility of electing the candidate of their choice with the assistance of cross-over votes.

Sex Discrimination: In a case in which the Affiliate was co-counsel, the appeals court also overturned a lower court ruling concerning the time period for bringing legal action under the Rhode Island Civil Rights Act (RICRA), a major state law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex, national origin, etc. in employment and other settings. The appeal was on

ACLU WELCOMES NEW ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR

The RI ACLU is pleased to welcome Jessica Spiegel as the new assistant to the director. Jessica is a recent graduate of Brown University, where she studied international relations. While at Brown she served as an advocate for the Network to End Domestic Violence and as a board member for the Brown Association for Cooperative Housing. Among her numerous duties as assistant to the director, Jessica will manage the Affiliate's growing

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