

WE THE PEOPLE

**DARE TO CREATE
A MORE PERFECT UNION**

ACLU

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

Kentucky

THE PEOPLE'S
LOBBYING GUIDE

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The American Civil Liberties Union is freedom's watchdog.

Our team works in courts, the state legislature, city councils, and with grassroots activists to defend the civil rights and liberties guaranteed to all people in Kentucky by the United States and Kentucky Constitutions.

At the state house, the ACLU-KY teams work with legislators to propose new bills, make bills better, and defeat harmful legislation. We also connect legislators with people directly affected by certain policies so lawmakers can learn about the real-life impacts of legislation, from mass incarceration, to racial equity in healthcare, to reproductive freedom.

This guide is a toolkit to help you understand how laws are made and how you can get engaged with the legislative process.

THE KENTUCKY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ABOUT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

There are two types of lawmakers in Kentucky: senators and representatives. Representatives work in the House of Representatives (or “House”) and senators work in the Senate. The House and Senate are known as chambers. Together, they make the Kentucky General Assembly.

Representatives and senators are elected by Kentucky voters. Representatives serve two-year terms and senators serve four-year terms.

Some lawmakers have more influence than others. One good indicator for how much power a lawmaker holds is how long they have been in office. Other factors include whether or not their political party is in the majority, and whether or not they serve in a leadership position or chair a committee.

The General Assembly is the legislative branch of Kentucky’s state government, meaning it is responsible for creating and changing laws. The Governor is the head of the executive branch, which is responsible for enforcing laws. If the legislature passes a bill and the Governor signs it, the bill becomes law.

We must dissent
because
**AMERICA CAN
DO BETTER,**
because America
has no choice
but to do better.

- Thurgood Marshall, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States (1967 – 1991)

Before his tenure on the court, Marshall served as the general counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and successfully argued before the Supreme Court in the desegregation case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, decided in 1954.



USEFUL TERMS:

AMENDMENT

A change or addition to a bill. Amendments proposed in committee must be voted on by the committee. Amendments proposed to a full chamber must be voted on by the entire chamber.

BILL

A written proposal to create a new law, modify an existing law, or repeal and existing law.

COMMITTEE SUB

A change or addition to legislation in committee.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The order of bills to be reviewed on a certain day.

COMMITTEE

A group of legislators that focuses on a specific set of issues. A chairperson is in charge of a committee and decides which bills are discussed in their committee. If the chair allows a bill to be heard, the committee can debate the bill and make changes. The committee then votes to decide if they want the bill to move forward in the legislative process or stop there, “dying” in committee.

SINE DIE

The end of the legislative session, or adjournment, without a date set to reconvene. Sine die is Latin for “without day.” It is pronounced “sigh-knee die.”

COMMITTEES IN THE LEGISLATURE:

There are dozens of committees in the House and Senate. Committees focus on a specific set of issues and are the first place a bill is reviewed and changed.

Each committee meets at the same time each week during the legislative session. They meet monthly in the time between sessions. The chairperson of any committee can call special meetings at their discretion. Committee meetings typically last for two hours and are open to the public. The number of members varies from committee to committee, but there are typically between 10 and 25 members.

While there are dozens of committees, only a few handle legislation that directly affects civil rights and liberties:



Education



Health & Family
Services



Judiciary



State Gov't
& Local Gov't



Veterans, Military
Affairs, & Public
Protection

HOUSE

SENATE

Education

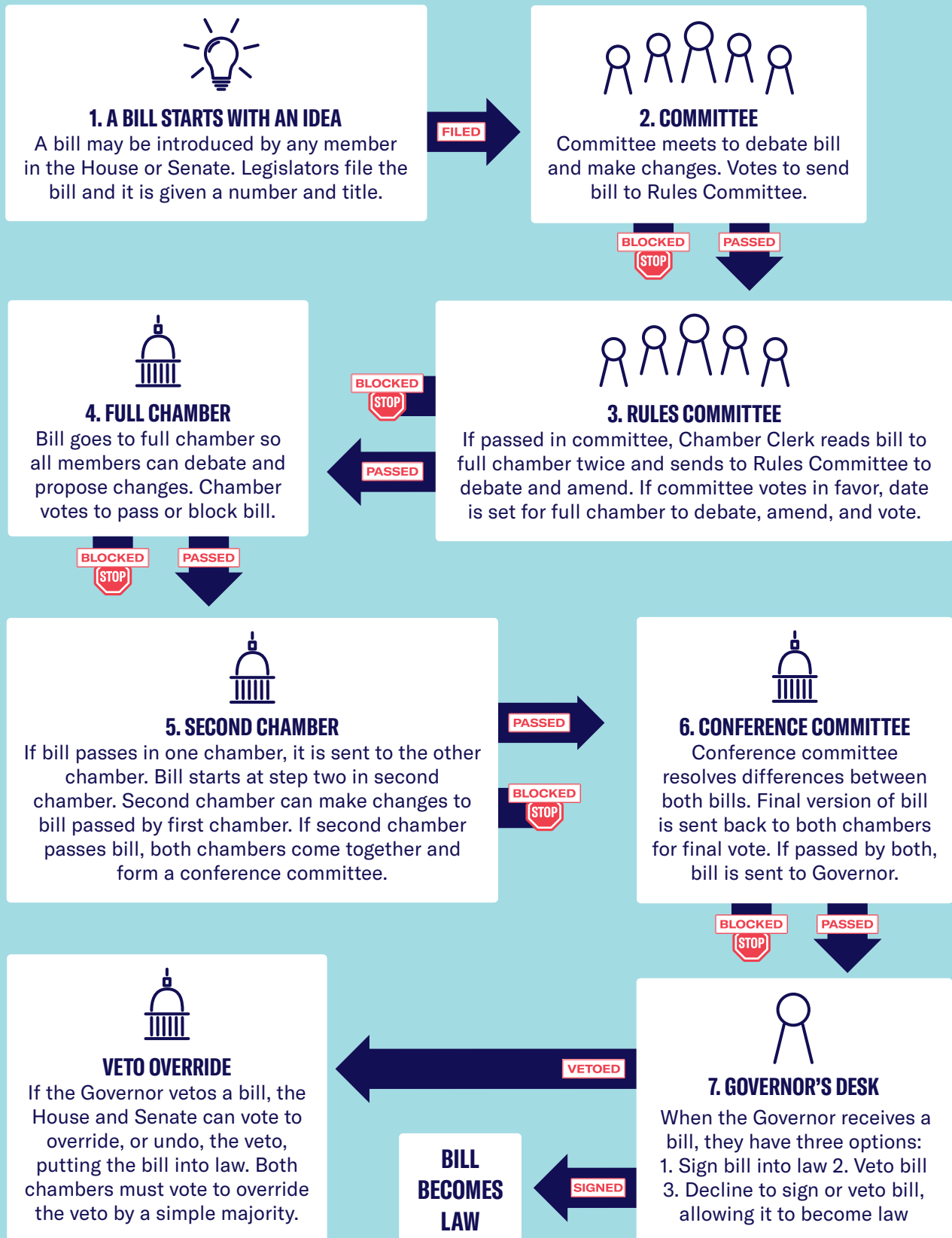
Health & Welfare

Judiciary

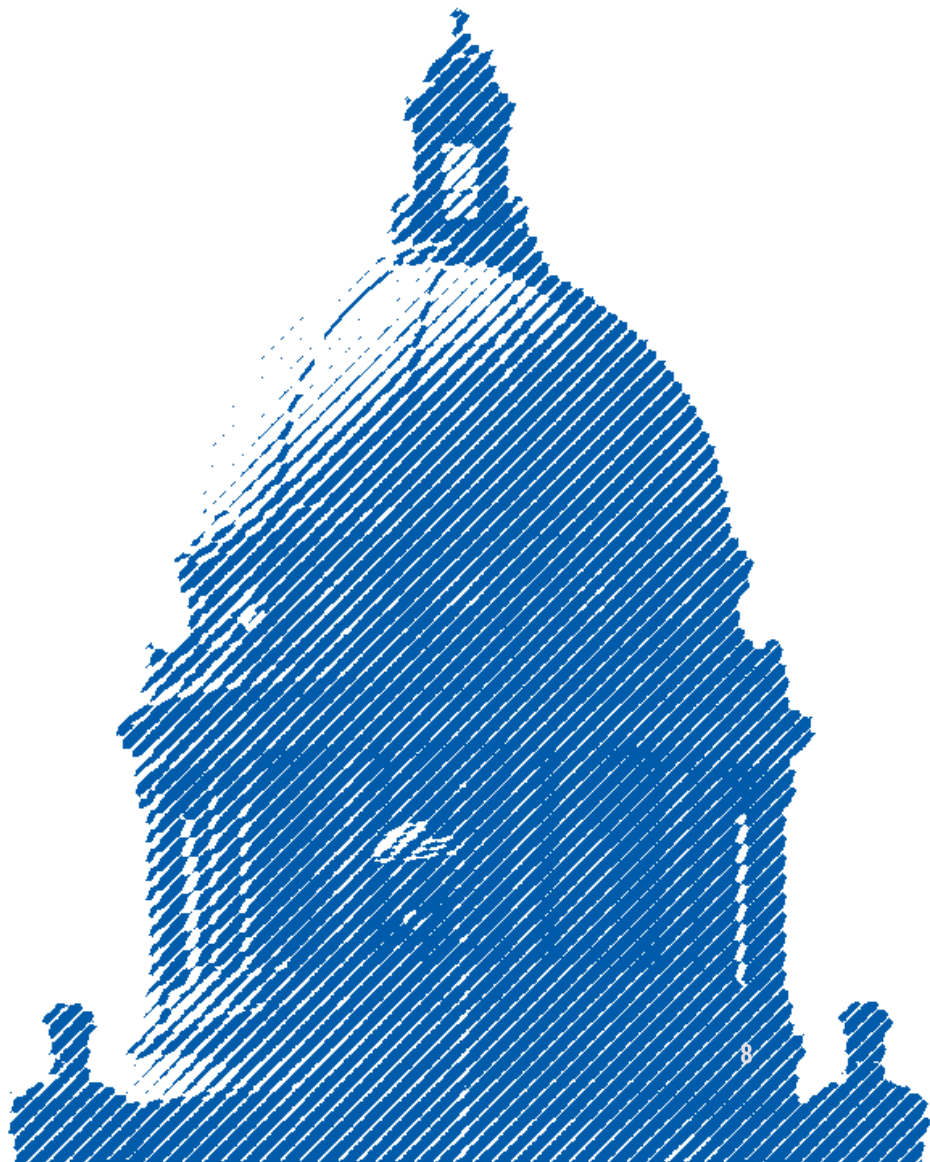
State & Local
Government

Veterans, Military
Affairs, & Public
Protection

HOW IDEAS BECOME LAWS IN KY



CONNECTING WITH LEGISLATORS AND SHARING YOUR STORY



MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS

1. SCHEDULING A MEETING

Call your legislator's office to make an appointment. Be prepared to provide your name, address, desired time to meet, and what you would like to talk about.

Call (502) 564-8100 to schedule an appointment. You do not need to know your legislator's name.

2. PLANNING A MEETING

Establish goals for the meeting and what role folks see themselves playing in the meeting. Talk about what folks are comfortable sharing, especially if it involves personal stories. Consider time restraints.

If you met with a lawmaker about a civil rights issue, we'd love to hear how it went!

Share your story with us by emailing Info@ACLU-KY.org or writing to 325 W. Main St., Suite 2210, Louisville, KY 40202.

3. AT THE MEETING

Prepare

Practice what you will say, look over relevant materials, and know what you are comfortable sharing. Consider the amount of time you have. Make plans for what you will do if the lawmaker becomes unfriendly or if you run out of time.

Be courteous

Arrive about 15 minutes early. Stay positive throughout the meeting. A lawmaker may disagree with you, but it is important not to become angry or rude.

Be clear

Plainly state how you feel about an issue and what actions you want the lawmaker to take.

Be quick

Meetings with lawmakers typically take 15 to 30 minutes. It is important to stay on topic. If you are sharing a personal story, keep it between 2 and 5 minutes.

Followup

Send a thank you letter to the lawmaker and staff members with whom you met. Be sure to mention the topic you discussed, your position on the issue, and what actions you would like them to take.

MINI-LOBBY DAYS

Mini-lobby days are weekly, ACLU-sponsored events. During a mini-lobby day, several engaged Kentuckians meet our team at the Capitol. We help them connect with legislators so they can share their stories and tell lawmakers about policy issues that directly affect them.

Some lobby days are dedicated to specific issue areas, including justice reform, reproductive freedom, immigrants' rights, and abolition of the death penalty. Learn more about our mini-lobby days and find out when they are at ACLU-KY.org.

WRITING TO LEGISLATORS

Writing to legislators is one of the most effective ways to share your story, what you think about a certain policy, and what actions you would like lawmakers to take.

TIPS TO REMEMBER

Be courteous

Address legislators by their title and full name.

Be clear

State the purpose of the letter. Include what you think about a certain policy and what specific actions you would like the legislator to take. If you have a personal story related to the policy you are writing about, sharing it can add credibility to your letter and help legislators understand how their actions affect people.

Stay focused

Focus on your main message. You should be able to tie anything you discuss in your letter to your main message.

Restate and thank

At the end of your letter, restate your main message and the specific steps you would like the legislator to take. Close the letter by thanking them for taking the time to read your letter and letting them know how they can reach you if they would like to talk more.

Followup

If you receive a response, followup with them.

SAMPLE LETTER

Your Name
Your Address
Your Phone Number
Your Email

Legislator's Name
Legislator's Address

Dear Honorable (Full Name),

State the reason for your letter in the first sentence and the bill number you would like them to support or oppose. Follow with a brief description of the bill. Mention you are a voter in their district. Let them know this issue is important to you.

State reasons they should support your position. Use facts and references when appropriate to strengthen your argument. Use citations when necessary to enhance the letter's credibility. You can also share a personal story if you have been affected by an issue related to the bill you are writing about.

Be brief, specific, and concise. It is best to write about only one bill at a time and limit your letter to one page. Keep the letter positive and never threaten political or other consequences.

Thank them for their consideration of your request. Lastly tell them you look forward to their response to this issue and how they can reach you.

Sincerely,

Sign your name

Type your name

Optional: Type your job title or organization if related to why you are writing to them

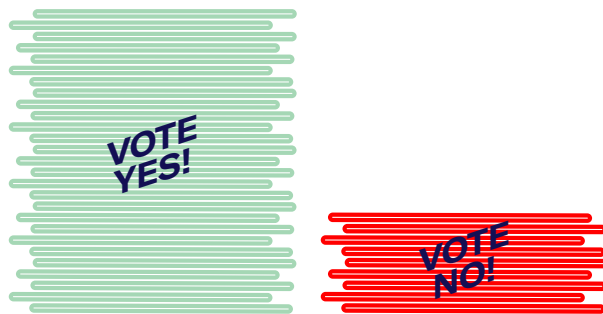
PHONE CALLS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

PHONE CALLS

Phone calls are an extremely effective way to share your views with legislators. This is a great option if lawmakers are about to vote on a bill or if you do not have the time to write a letter or meet in person.

If you call to tell them you think they should vote yes or no on a certain bill, your legislator will receive a physical piece of green or red paper representing your view.

These are called “green slips” and “red slips.” When several people call about a bill, a legislator will have stacks of each color paper. Many lawmakers say they are influenced by how many green or red slips they receive. These slips are what make phone calls so effective.



LEGISLATIVE MESSAGE LINE

Call 1-800-372-7181 to send a message to your legislators. It is helpful to know the specific bill number you are calling about.

Be prepared to share your address so the operator can send your message to the right office. It only takes 2 to 3 minutes and you do not have to know your legislator's name.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is an effective way to generate attention for a particular cause.

Be visual

People are more likely to share posts that have photos, videos, or graphics.

Be positive

Positive posts are more relatable and encourage people to engage. If every post says a certain bill is the end of the world, people will feel helpless and won't believe it when there really is a truly horrible bill.

“Thank you @atticascott4ky for filing legislation to improve healthcare outcomes for pregnant people of color! Call your legislator at 1-800-372-7181 and tell them to support the Maternal CARE Act. #KYGA22”

Engage with others

Engaging with others exposes more people to the conversation and shows lawmakers that people really care about a certain issue. Here are some easy ways to engage:

- Share other peoples' posts tweets.
- Like their posts and tweets.
- Tag people and groups that are directly tied to what you are discussing.
- Give positive shoutouts to lawmakers, volunteers, and organizations.
- Comment on a post or reply to a tweet if you have something relevant, informative, and important to contribute to the discussion.
- Use hashtags so more people can see your posts. If you're tweeting about something related to the General Assembly during the 2022 legislative session, use #KYGA22.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Newspapers are always looking for new voices. Anyone can submit a letter, and many get published.

Letters to the Editor are an effective way to call attention to an issue and reach a broad audience. Most newspapers post letters online in addition to printing them. Sharing the online version of a letter on social media is a great way to spread your message even further.

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear Editor,

The onslaught of laws focusing on denying reproductive health care rights is a concerted campaign against women. These laws are not grounded in science or evidence-based medicine.

The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists believes that access to family-planning counseling and to the full array of contraceptives is a basic and essential component of preventive health care for women.

Efforts to defund Planned Parenthood, which provides cervical cancer and mammography screening, contraception and other preventive care to millions of women, are egregious and disproportionately hurt poor women.

As physicians for women's health care, ob-gyns see firsthand the havoc that punitive ideology-based laws have on the health of women and their families. These ill-conceived laws are based on the pretext of protecting health, but they do anything but that.

Mandating that women be legally forced to undergo transvaginal ultrasound or any other medical procedure against their will and against their physician's judgment is an outrageous violation of patient autonomy and the confidential doctor-patient relationship. Decreasing access to family planning and contraception will only increase unintended pregnancies and negatively affect family and societal health.

Politicians were not elected to, nor should they, legislate the practice of medicine or dictate the parameters of the doctor-patient relationship. Our message to politicians is unequivocal: Get out of our exam rooms.

James T. Breeden
President, American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Washington, May 22, 2012

TIPS TO REMEMBER

- Respond to recent news or recently published letters to the editor (reply within 2 days for daily papers or before the next issue for weekly papers and magazines).
- Keep it short and focused.
- You may send the letter to multiple papers.
- Use verified facts.
- Balance criticisms with positives.
- Cite sources when appropriate.
- Do not over-exaggerate.
- Visit the paper's website to find out how to submit the letter, how long it can be, and more.

RESOURCES

There are more ways than ever to vote: by mail, early in-person, and in-person on Election Day. Make a plan, know what you need, and spread the word.

2023 is a big election year in Kentucky. All statewide officials will be on your ballot (including candidates for governor, secretary of state, attorney general, commissioner of agriculture, auditor of public accounts, and treasurer), along with a variety of local races.

PRIMARY ELECTION:

Election Day: Tuesday, May 16, 2023

Registration deadline: Wednesday, April 19, 2023

Vote by mail:

- Last day to request mail-in absentee ballot: Tuesday, May 2, 2023
- Mail-in absentee ballots must be received by elections officials by 6PM on Election Day.

Vote early in person:

- May 3 – May 10, excuse required
- May 11 – May 13, no excuse required

Vote on Election Day: Tuesday, May 16, 2023, 6AM – 6PM local time. Anyone in line by 6PM can vote.

VISIT [ACLU-KY.org/Vote2023](https://aclu-ky.org/Vote2023) to:

- Find out where to vote early in-person
- Find out where to vote on Election Day
- Request a mail-in absentee ballot online
- Find a ballot drop box
- Make sure you have the proper I.D.
- Register to vote, double check your registration, or update your registration information (i.e. change of name or address)

Questions, concerns, or issues while voting?

Call the Election Protection Hotline at 1-800-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683) to speak with a local representative. You can also DM @866OURVOTE on Twitter or Facebook.

GENERAL ELECTION:

Election Day: Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Registration deadline: Tuesday, October 10, 2023

Vote by mail:

- Last day to request mail-in absentee ballot: Tuesday, October 24, 2023
- Mail-in absentee ballots must be received by elections officials by 6PM on Election Day.

Vote early in person:

- October 26 – November 2, excuse required
- November 2 – 4, no excuse required

Vote on Election Day: Tuesday, November 7, 2023, 6AM – 6PM local time. Anyone in line by 6PM can vote.

VOTING RIGHTS RESTORATION:

Do you have a felony conviction in your past? Roughly 175,000 Kentuckians with a past felony conviction are eligible to vote! Reclaim your right to vote and make your voice heard. Visit [ACLU-KY.org/ROVR](https://aclu-ky.org/ROVR) to see what you need to do to vote in the next election.

All voters can cast a ballot on Election Day. You can vote in person even if you requested a mail-in absentee ballot that never arrived, if you forgot to return your mail-in absentee ballot, or received the wrong ballot.

GET ENGAGED

TAKE ACTION:

Visit [ACLU-KY.org](https://aclu-ky.org) to sign up for email action alerts, send a message to your legislators, and view the calendar of events.

ACCESSING THE CAPITOL:

All visitors must go through security. Be prepared to present a photo I.D.

700 Capitol Avenue
Frankfort, KY 40601

FOLLOW US:

Stay up to date with the latest news from the General Assembly and see how you can get involved.

@ACLUofKY   

SEE WHO REPRESENTS YOU:

- **Local Officials:**
Visit [Kentucky.gov/Government/Pages/Local](https://kentucky.gov/Government/Pages/Local)
- **State Officials:** Visit [LRC.KY.gov](https://lrc.ky.gov)

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*Last updated
January 5, 2023*

ACLU Kentucky