



## ACLU of WI Legal Observers Protect Right to Assemble and Speak

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday February 18, 2011

**CONTACT:** Stacy Harbaugh, ACLU of Wisconsin Foundation, ph/txt (608) 469-5540, [sharbaugh@aclu-wi.org](mailto:sharbaugh@aclu-wi.org)

MADISON, WI – As protests have sprung up around Wisconsin this week, the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin Foundation has organized specially trained, neutral observers to be witnesses to interactions between police and demonstrators. With more protesters on both sides of the public debate over the budget repair bill expected this weekend, the ACLU will continue to have observers monitor the demonstrations and the law enforcement response. The ACLU has also widely distributed information about protesters' rights and responsibilities by handing out its popular "[bust cards](#)" at protests and by posting on internet and social media sites all week.

The ACLU observers, often wearing yellow "ACLU Legal Observer" t-shirts, have received formal training from ACLU staff and volunteer lawyers about protest rights, working with police and documenting observations of police activity. The observers are trained to remain neutral, rather than to participate in protest activity. The presence of legal observers may help defuse confrontations between protestors and police, deter police misconduct and provide evidence for subsequent legal actions.

Stacy Harbaugh, the ACLU of Wisconsin's Community Advocate, said, "Our legal observers have been present throughout the protests in Madison and elsewhere in the state this week. We are working with volunteer lawyers to deal with any trouble spots that may arise. Thus far, the protests have been largely peaceful and the various law enforcement agencies have handled the demonstrations well. We hope that trend continues, both here and around the state." Harbaugh also encouraged people who witness arrests or other police action to help in the monitoring effort by contacting the ACLU or the Hawks-Quindel law firm at (608) 257-0040.

For live tweets from the Capitol on the rights of protesters, please follow [@ACLUMadison](#).

The ACLU of Wisconsin Foundation is a non-profit civil liberties and civil rights organization working to protect the rights of Wisconsinites. For more on the work of the American Civil Liberties Union and Foundation of Wisconsin, visit our [webpage](#). You can also get news and opinion on civil liberties in Wisconsin on our [Cap City Liberty blog](#). Find us on [Facebook and Twitter at ACLUMadison and ACLUofWisconsin](#).

###