

ACLU-WI

DIY Fundraising Toolkit

ACLU
WI

ACLU Wisconsin

Dear Friend of the ACLU of Wisconsin,

Thank you for your interest in hosting a fundraiser to support the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin (ACLU-WI). We are so grateful for your support and appreciate you thinking of us.

In response to the many requests we receive from supporters interested in raising funds on our behalf, we've created this toolkit to make it as easy as possible for you to become a fundraising ambassador for the ACLU-WI.

No fundraiser is too small (or too large), and we do our best to support fundraisers on behalf of the ACLU-WI in any way we can. Whether it's a lemonade stand that raises \$100, a house party that raises \$1,000, or a dinner event that raises \$10,000, we're excited to hear your ideas and support your efforts.

Fundraising Tip: You don't need to be an expert on our work to host a successful event. We're happy to provide talking points, but the most powerful way to inspire others is by sharing your own story—what brought you to this work and why it matters to you.

Thank you for being a partner in the ongoing movement to protect and defend civil liberties across Wisconsin.

In solidarity,


Melinda Brennan
Executive Director, ACLU of Wisconsin

ACLU Wisconsin

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What is a Community Fundraiser?

A community fundraiser is an event you organize on your own to benefit the ACLU of Wisconsin. These events can be casual or formal, small or large, and are a meaningful way to engage in your community while supporting civil rights and liberties for all who call Wisconsin home.

While it isn't required for you to fill out this form or register your event in order to hold a fundraiser for the ACLU-WI, we would like to use this information to help keep us informed of these events and give us an opportunity to support your efforts.

Community Fundraiser Toolkit Registration

Please complete [this form](#) to register your community fundraising event with the ACLU of Wisconsin. If you have any questions, contact us at development@aclu-wi.org. Feel free to use and adapt any portion of this toolkit to meet the needs of your event.

STEPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISER

1. Choose an Event Type

You can turn almost any gathering into a fundraiser. Whether you host in your home, partner with a local business, or organize something in your community, the possibilities are endless.

Some examples include:

- Film screening
- Theatrical production
- Concert
- Lemonade stand
- Bake sale
- Art show
- Dinner or happy hour
- Dance party
- Neighborhood or house party
- Craft sale (jewelry, quilting, woodworking, pottery, etc.)
- Backyard BBQ
- Rummage/yard/garage sale
- Block party
- Murder mystery party

2. Name Your Event

Choose a name that is memorable and descriptive. For example, instead of “Fundraiser for ACLU of Wisconsin,” try something more engaging like “*Constitutional Cookout*”, “*Jam for Justice*”, or “*Voices for Freedom*.”

3. Select the Date and Time

Choose a date that does not conflict with major holidays or other local events in your community. Please note: The ACLU of Wisconsin requires at least four weeks advance notice to provide support, so be sure to complete your registration as soon as possible.

4. Set a Fundraising Goal

Establish a realistic goal based on your event type and audience. Sharing your goal with your guests is a great way for them to align with your mission and help you get there!

5. Find a Location

Your event can take place in your home, a community space, or a donated venue.

- Check if permits are required for public spaces
- Consider accessibility and ensure the location is ADA-compliant
- Ask your network about connections to local businesses willing to donate space. Many businesses are willing to donate their space for a good cause! Some of our fundraisers have even found a corporate underwriter.
- When selecting a location, consider accessibility and inclusion.
For example:
 - Is the space ADA-accessible?
 - Are restrooms inclusive and accessible?
 - Can attendees easily access the venue by car, public transit, or foot?

6. Promote Your Event

Start promotion early—ideally 4–6 weeks in advance. Invitations should be sent at least a few weeks in advance.

- Send invitations (templates included at the end of this toolkit)
- Use platforms like Partiful or Evite to manage RSVPs
- Share on social media and community calendars
- Create flyers or posters if appropriate

Important: Please clearly state that your event benefits the ACLU of Wisconsin, but is not an official ACLU-WI event.

Post-Event: Share Your Success

- Share photos and highlights on social media and via email
- Tag [@acluofWI](#) so we can celebrate your impact
- Always ask permission before sharing photos of attendees
- Send a follow-up thank-you message to participants (template included at the end of the toolkit)

HOW TO GIVE/DONATE

You can direct people to our online community fundraiser giving form here: <https://action.aclu.org/give/aclu-wisconsin-foundation-community-fundraisers> or by scanning the QR code below. A template for the QR code and the name of your community fundraiser is included later in this toolkit. Make sure that your attendees indicate which fundraiser they attended when making a gift online so we can track the total dollars raised.

If you or your guests would like to make a **tribute gift in honor or memory of someone**, you can make a tribute gift at: <https://action.aclu.org/give/aclu-wisconsin-tribute-gift-form>

You can also collect checks or cash at the event and send them to us in the mail (however we would advise against mailing cash, as it isn't as secure). For tax-deductible gifts, checks should be made out to the **ACLU of Wisconsin Foundation**. Please mail all checks and cash collected to:



The ACLU of Wisconsin
207 E. Buffalo St, Ste 325
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Please have all donors include the name of the event in the memo line of the check so it can be properly allocated to your event. If donors give cash, please include a slip with each amount of cash given, with their name, address, and a note indicating the event.

If donors do not give individually and you instead give us one lump sum from the event, we will not be able to provide tax receipts to individual donors and only the organizer will receive the acknowledgement.

IMPORTANT GUIDELINES AND DISCLAIMERS

Community fundraising events are independently organized and are not sponsored, endorsed, or produced by the ACLU or the ACLU of Wisconsin unless expressly stated. These events are conducted for the benefit of the ACLU and the ACLU of Wisconsin.

The ACLU of Wisconsin is not responsible for:

- Covering or reimbursing event expenses
- Providing staff to plan or run your event
- Allowing use of our tax ID for external purposes
- Sharing donor/member lists or contact information
- Managing ticketing platforms
- Promoting events through official ACLU-WI channels (unless pre-approved)
- On-site collection of donations
- Guaranteeing a speaker at your event
- Issuing individual tax receipts for donations submitted as a lump sum

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Can the ACLU of Wisconsin partner with, co-sponsor, or promote my event?

While we cannot guarantee promotion of third-party events, we may do so in select cases. Decisions are based on staff capacity, alignment with our mission and values, and the scope of the event.

If you are interested in co-sponsorship, please share details of your event with us. We will review your request and follow up. If we are able to co-sponsor, we may also assist with promotion.

2. Do I need permission from the ACLU of Wisconsin to hold a fundraiser?

If you are an established organization or business, we ask that you provide a written description of how funds will be raised and used to ensure alignment with best practices via email at development@aclu-wi.org.

If you are fundraising as an individual, formal permission is not required. However, we encourage you to share your plans so we can offer guidance where possible. If you plan to promote your event as a benefit for us, you can say that the event benefits the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin (ACLU-WI). However, you may not use our logo in any promotional content unless approved. Logo use is reserved for events produced and/or formally endorsed by the ACLU of Wisconsin.

3. Can someone from the ACLU of Wisconsin attend or speak at my event?

We do our best to accommodate requests, but participation depends on staff availability and alignment with our work. Requests should be made as soon as possible, preferably four weeks or more in advance of your event. We will confirm availability as early as possible.

4. Can you provide materials for my event?

We may be able to provide a limited number of informational and branded materials, such as Know Your Rights resources. Please contact us in advance to discuss availability.

5. What is the relationship between the ACLU of Wisconsin and the national ACLU?

The ACLU of Wisconsin (ACLU-WI) is the Wisconsin state affiliate of the national American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Together, we work to protect civil liberties at the local, state, and national levels. Donations made by residents of the state of Wisconsin to our state affiliate are shared between the ACLU-WI and the ACLU, and vice versa.

6. Can individual donors receive tax receipts for contributions made at my event?

We can issue receipts only for donations made directly to us. If attendees write checks payable to the ACLU of Wisconsin Foundation and those checks are submitted individually, they will receive acknowledgments. If funds are collected and submitted as a lump sum, a single acknowledgment will be sent to the event organizer.

7. Can event donations be tracked?

Yes. Donors may include the name of your event or host when making a contribution. This allows us to properly track and acknowledge the impact of your fundraiser.

8. Can I use the ACLU of Wisconsin's tax-exempt status for event expenses?

No. Expenses related to third-party fundraising events are not tax-exempt.

9. Can I designate my event proceeds to a specific issue or program?

We encourage unrestricted gifts so we can respond quickly to emerging needs. However, donors may request that their contributions support a specific issue area, and we will make every effort to honor those preferences when possible.

ADDITIONAL WAYS TO SUPPORT THE ACLU OF WISCONSIN

- [Volunteer](#) with the ACLU-WI
- Follow the @acluofWI on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [BlueSky](#), [Threads](#) and [LinkedIn](#)
- [Become a member](#) of the ACLU-WI and ACLU (Membership gifts are not tax-deductible per the IRS)
- [Make a tax-deductible donation](#) to the ACLU-WI and ACLU

USEFUL RESOURCES TO SHARE/PRINT

- [ACLU of Wisconsin Timeline of Successes](#)
- [ACLU of Wisconsin: Know Your Rights](#)
- [ACLU of Wisconsin: Voting Rights Guide*](#)
- [ACLU of Wisconsin: Annual Report*](#)
- [ACLU of Wisconsin: Jail to Deportation Pipeline](#)
- [ACLU of Wisconsin: Schoolboard Toolkit*](#)
- [ACLU-WI: Deputized for Disaster](#)
- [ACLU-WI: Defend, Defeat, Delay - ACLU VS. Trump](#)

* Hard copies of these materials may be available for your event on a case by case basis by request, please reach out four weeks prior to the event with your registration to determine availability

If there are specific types of resources you are looking for, or interested in, please let us know and we would be happy to direct you to them. “

EVENT WELCOME SIGN

The following sign could be used at the sign-in table of your event, or placed sporadically around your venue, to welcome guests and facilitate giving.

WELCOME TO

**AN ACLU OF WISCONSIN
COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER**



Scan to donate

EVENT INVITATION TEMPLATE

You can use the sample email below to invite your friends, family and acquaintances to your fundraiser. Feel free to use the template in part or in its entirety. We recommend creating a Facebook events page, similar events page to collect RSVPs and further engage your guests via social media so that they can share and help you reach your goal.

Dear Friend [or Name],

I'm excited to invite you to [event name] on [event date], which will benefit the work of the ACLU of Wisconsin.

This is something that I am passionate about, and I hope that you will share my enthusiasm and provide support in reaching my goal of **[fundraising goal]**.

Today, now more than ever, people are ready and energized to do the work to **defend justice, promote democracy, and fight hate!** By supporting the ACLU-WI, we are helping to defend the rights of all who call Wisconsin home.

[Event details: time, location, RSVP information]

I hope to see you there.

In Solidarity,

[Name]

P.S. In the meantime, here are some ways you can stay informed and get involved in the work.

- [Volunteer](#) with the ACLU-WI
- Follow the @acluofWI on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [BlueSky](#), [Threads](#) and [LinkedIn](#)
- [Become a member](#) of the ACLU-WI and ACLU
- [Make a tax-deductible donation](#) to the ACLU-WI and ACLU

EVENT HOST WELCOME SCRIPT/FUNDRAISING ASK

Below you will find some sample language that you can use to welcome your guests. This is a good way to gather your attendees together, share your passion for civil rights and liberties, share your fundraising goal and thank attendees for their time. Feel free to use the template in part or in its entirety.

If you are uncomfortable with public speaking it may be helpful to practice a few times before the event, or reach out to another attendee beforehand who similarly shares your passion, to MC the event and speak in your stead.

Sample Script:

Welcome everyone and thank you for joining us this [morning/evening/afternoon]. My name is [name] and I am so excited to welcome you here today!

[Here you can explain a little bit about what the event is].

Tonight, we will be raising funds for the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin. For those of you who are not familiar with the organization, the ACLU is a civil rights and civil liberties organization that fights in the courts, in the legislature, and on the ground to expand and defend individual rights and freedoms for all.

For over 100 years, the ACLU and the ACLU of Wisconsin have been at the center of nearly every major civil liberties battle in the United States – and they are not slowing down.

Our gifts to support the ACLU tonight will go towards combating the current administration's flurry of attacks on individual rights and ensure that our ACLU here in Wisconsin has the support they need to continue to defend and advance the civil rights and liberties of all Wisconsinites.

The ACLU has the playbook to fight back – and we, the people, are ready to defend our fundamental freedoms.

POST-EVENT THANK YOU MESSAGE

You can use the sample email below to send to your event attendees action items and ways to be further involved with the ACLU of Wisconsin. Feel free to use the template in part or in its entirety. This is a good way to keep supporters engaged and informed in the work and an opportunity for the ACLU-WI to meet new advocates and supporters.

Dear Supporter [or Attendee Name],

Thank you for joining me at **[event name]** on **[event date]**, which benefited the work of the ACLU of Wisconsin. During these times, there is no better way to feel inspired than by gathering in community! We appreciate you for showing up in support of civil liberties and helping build community around this important work.

Because of your support, we raised **[\$[dollar amount]** to help advance this important work.

[Consider including some event highlights and moments. Pics are great too!]

Today, now more than ever, the ACLU relies on the greater community to help get this important work done – moving civil rights and liberties in Wisconsin ever FORWARD! Thank you again for showing your enthusiastic and generous support.

In solidarity,

[Your Name]

P.S. Here are some ways to continue to stay informed and involved in the work:

- [Volunteer](#) with the ACLU-WI
- Follow the @acluofWI on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [BlueSky](#), [Threads](#) and [LinkedIn](#)
- [Become a member](#) of the ACLU-WI and ACLU
- [Make a tax-deductible donation](#) to the ACLU-WI and ACLU

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