



# the TORCH

The Newsletter of the American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico

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## The Fight of our Lives

By Peter Simonson, ACLU-NM Executive Director



Imagine that most of us are feeling the need for some comfort and reassurance right now. In the last couple of weeks, we have been reaching out to some of our strongest supporters around the state, trying to take their temperature after the stunning outcome of the elections. Most of them feel like I suspect you do: anxious, fearful, angry.

Most of us have never experienced a time in our lives when the future of our country and our community looked so fraught with peril. Even the days following September 11, when the Bush administration was consolidating its power around the public's fear of terrorism, did not feel so ominous.

Under Donald Trump we will face threats on multiple fronts, not the least of which is national security. If we take Trump at his word, we can expect to see police

and immigration authorities pervade our everyday lives as the government tries to purge the country of millions of immigrants and their families.

We can expect to see our government use religion as a tool to oppress Muslims and divest women of control over their own bodies. And we can expect to see racism and xenophobia defended in the name of free speech while protests against the government are denounced as treason.

In electing Donald J. Trump, we took a step down a path that leads, decidedly, to fascism.

But even if we ourselves have never faced such a treacherous time, the ACLU, during its 100-year his-

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## New Campaign to Fix Our Broken Criminal Justice System

By Micah McCoy

Pete\* never had a chance. Growing up, he was a victim of child abuse and neglect, and all the adults in his life were in and out of jail and prison constantly. His family taught him to steal at a young age, and he began getting in trouble with the law before he even turned ten years old. On top of his toxic home environment, he was cognitively impaired, ADHD, and functionally illiterate.

"He has a criminal record this high," said Claudia Benavides, a director for PB&J Family Services in Southeast Albuquerque, raising her hand several inches above the surface of the table. "He used to introduce himself as a felon, he would say 'My name is Pete, and I'm a felon.' That was the way he thought about himself."

After a decade in and out of the criminal justice system, Pete was connected at age 19 with PBJ Family Services, a non-profit that runs programs to help families impacted by incarceration. They spent several years working with Pete, his girlfriend, and his young son to connect them with the services he and his family needed.

"He wasn't a bad person," said Benavides. "He had a goal: he wanted to make children happy by starting his own popsicle cart business. But he first needed to learn how to write, and read, and count. He didn't understand how money worked. So we helped connect him with services he needed, helped with transpor-

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**New Mexico SAFE**

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tation, and emotional support for him and his family. After several years of working with us, he was able to obtain financial stability, stable housing, and medical care for his baby. These kinds of services are what allowed Pete to remain out of the system, and to live a more productive and successful life.”

Ten years in New Mexico’s correctional system did nothing to help ‘correct’ Pete—in fact, it only made things worse. It wasn’t until he got access to basic services, education, and a reliable support system that he was able to break out of the vicious cycle he was born into.

“We have two choices in the state of New Mexico,” said Benavides. “Continue going the way we have been going with a broken system that doesn’t work, or invest in preventative services.”

Every year New Mexico spends millions of dollars prosecuting and incarcerating thousands of New Mexicans for low-level, non-violent crimes. As a result, our police officers are overtaxed, our courts are clogged, our jails are overcrowded, and our state budget is stretched. Despite the fact that none of this has made us any safer, every year politicians prop up their political campaigns by introducing a slew of new “tough-on-crime” laws that increase criminal penalties without addressing the root causes of crime or provide rehabilitative services.

Our state can do better. We owe it to our communities to stop crime before it happens and protect people from being victimized in the first place. Our state must refocus its correctional efforts on cost-effective, evidence-based alternatives to incarceration that make our communities safer by actually rehabilitating offenders. By channeling low-level, non-violent offenders into alternative community-based programs, we can better provide services that are proven to reduce crime, like mental health services, drug addiction treatment, education, and job training.



**ACLU-NM Executive Director Peter Simonson speaking at the NM SAFE launch.**

In October, the ACLU of New Mexico along with 25 other community organizations from across the political spectrum came together at the PB&J offices in Southeast Albuquerque to launch New Mexico SAFE, an innovative campaign to create a smarter approach to criminal justice. The campaign advocates for lawmakers to apply a simple set of S.A.F.E. standards to determine whether public safety legislation will actu-

ally reduce crime, or merely contribute to the brokenness of our current system.

“New Mexico SAFE has created a simple, four-question litmus test that we will apply to every single crime bill introduced in our state moving forward,” said ACLU-NM Policy Director Steve Allen. “Using this system, we’ll be able to show the public which bills are smart on crime, and which bills are just political grandstanding at the expense of real public safety.”

New Mexico can’t afford to keep cycling people through our current system. Throwing ever harsher penalties at people like Pete doesn’t make us safer, it just wastes money and lives. Our jails and prisons are filled with people like Pete, and it’s time to leave behind the lazy “tough on crime” approach that has failed them and us so thoroughly. We’ve got to learn that we can’t punish our way out of every problem. Through NM SAFE, the ACLU of New Mexico is working to hold lawmakers accountable to this truth and focus our criminal justice system on improving our society, not just incarcerating it.



**How can we tell if a new crime law is safe for NM?**

New Mexico SAFE has created a litmus test for legislation that can break through the gridlock, move New Mexico into the 21st century, and protect future victims from violent crime. New Mexico SAFE sets the standard for serious legislation to fix our broken system. We should ask whether a bill meets four simple standards in the S.A.F.E. criteria:

1. **Does it make New Mexico SAFER for children and families?** Tougher penalties do not correlate with a decrease in crime. Serious legislation must prevent tragedies before they happen to make New Mexico safer for children and families.
2. **Is it APOLITICAL?** Too many politicians in New Mexico use tough-on-crime proposals to prop up their political campaigns. Serious legislation must address the problem of crime and public safety, not advance a political agenda.
3. **Is it FISCALLY-RESPONSIBLE?** New Mexico has one of the nation’s most devastating budget crises. Any serious legislation must be fiscally responsible. If it doesn’t actually make communities safer, it’s not worth the money.
4. **Is it EVIDENCE-BASED?** Finally, serious legislation must be supported by evidence that it actually works. We cannot afford to waste time on bills that have no proven track record of reducing crime or increasing public safety, nor bills whose implementation has shown bias or inequitable treatment.

*\*For privacy reasons, a pseudonym was used for this story.*



# Victory! ACLU-NM Wins Ten Commandments Case in 10th Circuit Court of Appeals

In November, the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals issued a legal opinion upholding a district court ruling that found that the five foot granite Ten Commandments monument installed on the city hall lawn in Bloomfield, NM violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. The lawsuit was originally filed in 2012 by the ACLU of New Mexico on behalf of two Bloomfield residents who objected to their city government unconstitutionally endorsing one particular religion.

“We are pleased that the 10th Circuit agrees that the Bloomfield Ten Commandments monument is an unconstitutional endorsement of religion,” said ACLU of New Mexico Executive Director Peter Simonson. “Religious belief and practice is an important part of the lives of many New Mexicans, and we fully support the right of individuals and organizations to create religious displays on private property. However, the City of Bloomfield shouldn’t be in the business of deciding which set of beliefs should be favored from among the diverse religious traditions and beliefs held by its citizens.”

The religious monument was first installed on government property in July, 2011 and dedicated on July 4th with a religious themed ceremony. Former city councilor Kevin Mauzy, who originally proposed the 2007 city ordinance that allowed for the Ten Commandments monument to be displayed on the city hall lawn, presided over the dedication ceremony.



*The Ten Commandments monument outside Bloomfield City Hall. Photo credit: James Orndorf / roughshelter.com*

In its opinion this week, the Court ruled that:

*“In light of the context and apparent motivation of the Ten Commandments’ placement on the lawn, we conclude the City’s conduct had the effect of endorsing religion in violation of the Establishment Clause...Particularly in light of the circumstances surrounding the original installation of the Ten Commandments monument, we find Bloomfield impermissibly gave the impression to reasonable observers that the City was endorsing religion.”*

ACLU board member and cooperating attorney Andy Schultz of the Rodey Law Firm served as lead counsel in the litigation.

## Support the ACLU of New Mexico

**Help us defend basic freedoms, every day, for every New Mexican.**

We appreciate your support towards protecting and enhancing America’s legacy of justice and equality here in New Mexico. Your gift is especially important as we face increasingly complex and momentous issues that require strong and sustained efforts.



Take a stand for freedom by making a gift to the ACLU of New Mexico. With you by our side, we will effectively and strategically confront threats to our civil liberties.

You may send your contribution on the remittance envelope included with this newsletter or online at [www.aclu-nm.org](http://www.aclu-nm.org).

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## Ready to fight?

Here's three things you can do TODAY to help the ACLU fight to protect our civil liberties under a Trump administration:

①

### Sign up to volunteer.

In the coming months, the ACLU of New Mexico will work to expand the ways in which members and supporters can become directly involved in protecting civil liberties in New Mexico. If you are interested in donating your time and talents to the fight, fill out our volunteer form on our new website at [www.aclu-nm.org](http://www.aclu-nm.org).

②

### Talk to five friends about the ACLU and ask them to become members.

Now more than ever, we need a strong base of civil libertarians committed to the protection of the principles and values we hold so dear. Many of your friends are probably wondering what they can do to contribute. Becoming a card carrying member of the ACLU is a great first step.

③

### Support our work with a recurring donation.

By becoming a sustaining supporter of the ACLU of New Mexico, you can be a driving force behind the litigation, policy work, and public advocacy that will play a critical role in defeating Trump's un-American agenda. You can use the envelope inside this newsletter or visit [www.aclu-nm.org](http://www.aclu-nm.org) to become a monthly supporter.

## The Fight of Our Lives

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tory, certainly has. Indeed, the mission of the ACLU was forged in the crucible of the Red Scare when the Department of Justice was rounding up and deporting people because of their political beliefs.

During the McCarthy era, the ACLU protested the indictment of dozens of Communist leaders and even became a target of the witch hunts itself during one of McCarthy's most infamous hearings.

During World War II, the ACLU was one of the only national organizations that challenged the government's internment of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans, filing two cases that ultimately went before the US Supreme Court.

Yes, the threats under Trump are more ominous than they were after 9/11. But the organization that confronts those threats is also a far more potent one than the ACLU that confronted George Bush. Since 9/11, the ACLU has doubled the size of its membership. In just the few weeks since Trump's election, our membership nationwide increased fifty percent. More than a million people are now card-carrying members or supporters.

Staff in most state ACLU offices has also doubled in size and now every ACLU affiliate has its own legal staff—something we couldn't say 15 years ago.

We've also become a more sophisticated organization than the ACLU of 2001. We don't just fight in the courts. We add communications, field organizing and legislative lobbying strategies to maximize our impact. Here in New Mexico, that combination of strategies enabled us to win the freedom to marry for same-sex couples in 2014 and, in 2013, to defeat an imminently threatening ballot measure that would have banned abortions later in pregnancy in Albuquerque.

When I look around the ACLU of New Mexico offices, I see a team of smart, dynamic, strategic professionals who are dedicated to doing everything possible to prevent this new administration from robbing our civil liberties and destroying the lives of vulnerable families. In a series of newspaper ads that we recently ran in the state's major newspapers—which we've reprinted in full on the opposite page—we issued an open letter to president-elect Trump. The letter warned that if he

did not reverse course on the many campaign promises he has made, Trump would have to "contend with the full firepower of the ACLU at his every step." I assure you, that promise is as true here in New Mexico as it is across the nation.

Make no mistake; we are in for the fight of our lives. The next few years are going to call upon each of us individually to stretch beyond our comfort zone and take action to protect what's noble and virtuous about America, our values of fairness, justice and individual liberty.

In the words of ACLU founder Roger Nash Baldwin, "So long as we have enough people in this country willing to fight for their rights, we'll be called a democracy."

Those words are as true today as they were 100 years ago, and now is our moment to stand in the gap and be counted as defenders of democracy.

We are going to need you to stand out, to speak up and to champion truth when you read and hear it. We are going to need you to help defend our courts and the free press. And we are going to need you to help us and our allies gather the financial resources to meet the coming winter of Trump. Together we can meet these challenges.

This is what I and the ACLU—from coast to coast—promise you:

We will join the front lines to defend immigrants, Muslims, and people of color from the racist policies that are sure to storm our communities in the coming years.

We will stand with women who fight for control of their own bodies.

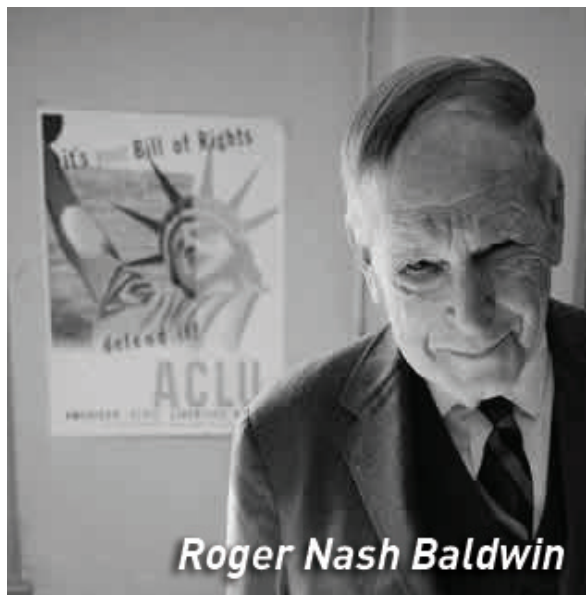
We will challenge any attempt to restrict voting rights and undermine our democracy.

We will continue to fight for a criminal justice system that is fair, impartial and offers a true chance of redemption.

We will redouble our efforts in Congress, the legislature, the courts, the media and in our communities.

We will fight to protect all of the hard won gains we have achieved. We are not turning back.

This is our America, not just Trump's. And we will fight for it every step of the way.



Roger Nash Baldwin

“  
*So long as we have enough people in this country willing to fight for their rights, we'll be called a democracy.*  
”



# Dear President-elect Trump,

For nearly 100 years, the ACLU has stood as this nation's premier defender of freedom and justice for all.

As you assume the nation's highest office, we must ask you now as president-elect to reconsider and change course on certain campaign promises you have made.

Specifically, you promised to:

- amass a deportation force to remove 11 million undocumented immigrants
- ban the entry of Muslims and institute aggressive surveillance programs targeting them
- restrict a woman's right to abortion services
- reauthorize waterboarding and other forms of torture
- change our nation's libel laws and restrict freedom of expression

These proposals are not simply un-American and wrong-headed. They are unlawful and unconstitutional, and would violate the First, Fourth, Fifth, Eighth, and Fourteenth Amendments of the Constitution, as well as other statutes and international treaties.

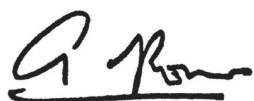
Many of our country's most cherished rights are the result of ACLU litigation

and advocacy. They include the Scopes trial (the right to teach evolution in public science classrooms) and the following Supreme Court cases: Korematsu (challenging Japanese American internment); Miranda (the right to remain silent); Griswold (the right to contraception); Loving (the right of interracial couples to marry); Gideon (the right to a court-appointed attorney if you can't afford one); Windsor (striking down the federal Defense of Marriage Act); and Obergefell (the right of same-sex couples to marry) and others. We have worked with and battled American presidents of both parties to ensure that our country makes good on its founding premise as the land of the free.

If you do not reverse course and endeavor to make these campaign promises a reality, you will have to contend with the full firepower of the ACLU at your every step. The staff of the ACLU of New Mexico, as well as the hundreds of ACLU litigators and activists and the millions of card-carrying members and supporters across the country, stand ready to fight against any encroachment on our hard-won freedoms and rights.

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One thing is certain: We will be vigilant every day of your tenure as president. And when you ultimately vacate the Oval Office, we will do likewise with your successor.



Anthony D. Romero  
Executive Director  
American Civil Liberties Union



Peter G. Simonson  
Executive Director  
American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico



[www.aclu-nm.org](http://www.aclu-nm.org)

## 2016 ACLU-NM Guardian of Liberty Awardees



### Matthew Coyte

After beginning his legal career as a public defender, Matt has spent many years conducting high-profile litigation to address inhumane conditions in New Mexico's prisons and jails. In one of his most renowned cases, he represented a man named Stephen Slevin, who spent 22 months in an isolated cell in a county jail in southern New Mexico after being arrested for drunk driving. He was never convicted. During his time in solitary confinement, his toenails grew so long they curled under his feet. He was forced to remove one of his own teeth because he had such limited

access to medical care. For this horrendous treatment, a jury awarded Slevin \$22 million dollars. (He eventually settled for \$15.5 million on appeal.)

Such successes in the courtroom, as well as Matt's strategic advocacy efforts, have made him an internationally-recognized expert on the civil rights of incarcerated people. He has used his expertise to help initiate reforms in prisons and jails around New Mexico. As president of the New Mexico Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, Matt routinely partners with the ACLU of New Mexico on advocacy efforts aimed at restricting the use of solitary confinement in our state. In 2013, Matt was recognized nationally as Public Justice's Trial Lawyer of the Year. In 2014, the United Nations invited him to be part of an expert panel in Vienna, Austria on tackling corruption in prisons and jails throughout the world.



### Dr. Sandra Penn, MD

Dr. Penn, a retired family physician who has devoted her entire career to the pursuit of health justice, received the ACLU of New Mexico Guardian of Liberty award for her incredible volunteer work to advance reproductive rights and access to reproductive healthcare for the women and families of NM.

Dr. Penn has been an effective and bold public voice in support of reproductive rights and justice. She never shies from a media interview about the potential harms of policy proposals that threaten access to abortion, and she appeared in commercials during the campaign to defeat a harmful ballot measure that would have banned abortion later in pregnancy. Dr. Penn has also delivered powerful testimony at countless legislative hearings, submitted letters to the editor, and published blog posts pushing back against harmful and inaccurate medical information.

Dr. Penn continues to give her time and energy to help the ACLU of New Mexico effectively connect with and organize the broader medical community in support of reproductive health access. Dr. Penn helped the ACLU of New Mexico to organize over 50 providers from around the state to sign a statement in support of abortion access that we published as a full-page ad in three key newspapers around the state during the 2016 legislative session at a time when we needed the broader medical community to stand up and speak out. She answered the call again more recently when she helped organize healthcare providers in support of a policy that will meaningfully expand access to contraception in our rural communities.



### Laura Schauer Ives

Laura is a former legal director for the ACLU of New Mexico, a member of the affiliate's legal panel and reproductive rights panel, and an ACLU-NM cooperating attorney.

The ACLU of New Mexico recognized Laura with the Guardian of Liberty award for her long service to the organization and her tireless commitment to defending the right of terminally ill patients to seek aid in dying. Laura litigated the ACLU-NM's trailblazing aid in dying case both as legal director and as a cooperating attorney, securing a favorable ruling at the district level. She continued to serve as lead counsel on the case as it worked its way all the way to the New Mexico Supreme Court.

Despite the Supreme Court's ultimate decision that terminally people cannot under current law seek aid in dying, Laura remains committed to expanding end of life choices. She is currently involved in efforts to establish aid in dying through the New Mexico State Legislature, and serves on the advisory committee to the Disability Rights Legal Center end of life Liberty Project.

In addition to her volunteer legal and advocacy work, Laura is a partner in the law firm Kennedy, Kennedy, and Ives, where she represents clients whose civil rights have been violated. Some of recent her work includes representing estates of people wrongfully killed by law enforcement; a \$750,000 settlement on behalf of a special education student who was inappropriately touched by her teacher; and a \$680,000 settlement on behalf of a woman sexually assaulted in jail.



## Celebrating Community Support for Abortion Access



In September, the All Access coalition, comprised of the top reproductive rights organizations and advocates in the country, hosted a series of free events to celebrate support for abortion access. More than 30 cities hosted All Access events, including concerts, storytelling events, hackathons, comedy nights, poetry contests to unite communities around a shared commitment to reproductive justice and protecting access to abortion.

As part of our ongoing efforts to destigmatize abortion and protect access to reproductive healthcare in New Mexico, the ACLU of New Mexico partnered with Planned Parenthood to sponsor an All Access event. We hosted a reproductive justice poetry contest, gathering submissions from many of the top area poets. The winning poets performed their pieces live to a packed crowd at the Albuquerque All Access event in downtown Albuquerque.

After the Albuquerque event, the ACLU of New Mexico collected the poem submissions and published them as a volume of poetry: [title]. Copies will soon be available for purchase online at Amazon.com

## New Staff

### ACLU-NM Welcomes New Legal Director



In September, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of New Mexico welcomed its new legal director, Eliza Bechtold, JD, LL.M. Eliza comes to the ACLU of New Mexico from Oregon, where she worked as a litigation attorney and as a prominent pro bono advocate serving domestic violence victims and Legal Aid clients.

"We are thrilled to bring Eliza Bechtold on board to lead the ACLU of New Mexico's legal efforts," said ACLU of New Mexico Executive Director Peter Simonson. "Eliza's extensive litigation experience and passion for public interest legal work make her an exciting new addition to our team. We look forward to working with her to continue the ACLU of New Mexico's proud 54 year tradition of fighting for justice and liberty in New Mexico's courts."

Eliza, who received her JD from Hastings College of Law in San Francisco, CA, recently received her Masters of Laws from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), where she focused her studies on national and international human rights and wrote

her dissertation on the American and European approaches to regulating hate speech. She began her career as a litigation associate at the internationally known firm DLA Piper LLP in East Palo Alto, California, and went on to manage large-scale litigation at firms in San Francisco and Portland, Oregon.

Eliza also brings extensive public interest law experience via her pro bono work, which includes serving as a volunteer attorney for Legal Aid Services of Oregon and partnering with Bay Area Legal Aid and other public interest organizations in advising socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals on a range of legal issues. During her time in Oregon, Eliza also served as a board member for NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon, a non-profit organization dedicated protecting the full range of women's reproductive and privacy rights.

While at the LSE, Eliza co-founded a postgraduate pro bono group focusing on national and international human rights issues, based at the LSE Law Department. As part of her work with the group, Eliza co-authored a submission to the United Nations regarding women, peace, and security and partnered with the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute to update its Annual Human Rights Report.

**More New Staff on page 8.**

## THE TORCH

The Torch is a publication sent to members and supporters of the American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico. Please send any comments, questions or article submissions to Micah McCoy, Editor and Communications Director at: [mmccoy@aclu-nm.org](mailto:mmccoy@aclu-nm.org)

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## New Staff



### **Erica McDowell, Project Coordinator**

Erica McDowell joined the ACLU of NM Regional Center for Border Rights in August 2016, serving as Project Coordinator through the Border Servant Corps program. Erica graduated from Stanford University with a degree in Physics and interests in gender, race and religious studies. While in college she was also introduced to the beauty and power of community building and organizing. In her time at Stanford she organized young people with wealth for racial and economic justice with Resource Generation, coordinated programming at Casa Zapata, the Chicax/Latinx Theme Dorm on campus, advocated for equity within the Physics department and built community for LGBTQ religious students with Queerituality. Erica grew up in the Nob Hill neighborhood in Albuquerque, NM and has a deep love for the state – its mountains, food, skies, energy and people. She learned from her family and community the value of investing in public services and infrastructure and doing what we can to help our communities become stronger and healthier for all. Erica is honored to serve her home state in this capacity and grateful for the warm welcome she has received into the Las Cruces community.



### **Paul Haidle, Criminal Justice Advocate**

Paul Haidle is an attorney and the Criminal Justice Advocate with the ACLU of New Mexico. Paul advocates for smarter laws and better policies that impact the criminal justice system in New Mexico and works closely with a broad coalition of allied organizations and community members to achieve those goals. Prior to joining the ACLU, Paul served as the director of the criminal records program at Cabrini Green Legal Aid in Chicago, a holistic model of legal services designed to remove barriers to employment, housing, licensing and other collateral consequences that stem from interactions with the criminal justice system. Paul has extensive courtroom experience in the busiest felony courthouse in America, has secured executive clemency for many of his clients, and has successfully challenged unfair hiring practices related to criminal histories. Paul helped lead the city-wide Association of Pro Bono Counsel's Second Chance initiative that trained and partnered attorneys from some of the largest law firms with clients seeking relief from a criminal record. Most recently, Paul served on the staff of US Senator Martin Heinrich where he focused his efforts on improving access to health care and other benefits for Veterans in New Mexico. Paul has a BS in environmental sciences and received his JD from Chicago-Kent College of Law.



### **Candace Lopez, Field Organizer**

Candace joined the ACLU in December and is excited to be serving as Field Organizer. For the past 5 years she has been working in nonprofits specifically focused on strengthening local communities. She grew up in Golden, Colorado and has been in Albuquerque for the past 15 years enjoying the diverse culture, weather, and food. She volunteers at a local animal shelter as well as Big Brothers Big Sisters as a youth mentor. Both personally and professionally she is dedicated to promoting stable, thriving, and empowered communities.

## ACLU Board of Directors Notice of Elections, 2016

If you desire to run for one of the seven open positions on the ACLU-NM Board of Directors, please send to the ACLU-NM Governance Committee:

A 250 word statement of interest to the ACLU-NM Board Governance Committee to be considered as a Board nominee; or a petition signed by 1% of the ACLU-NM membership (currently 4,861 members total), supporting your nomination, along with a 250 word statement of interest. NOTE: Statements of interest must include a statement of willingness to serve, if elected.

The ACLU-NM office must receive statements of interest/signed petitions by January 31, 2017. Nominees'

names will be placed on the election ballot and their statements will be published in the next issue of the ACLU-NM's newsletter, *The Torch*.

Please mail petitions and statements to:

Governance Committee  
c/o ACLU of New Mexico,  
PO Box 566, Albuquerque, NM 87103

Statements may also be faxed to: (505) 266-5916

Ballots and statements of interest will be sent to members at least two weeks prior to the election. The election will be held on March 31, 2017.