

American Civil Liberties Union  
Dayton Chapter

MS – 268

Wright State University  
Department of Special Collections and Archives

## Introduction

The records of the Dayton Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union were accessioned into the Wright State University Archives and Special Collections Department in the Spring of 1996 with no restrictions on their use.

The collection fills four Hollinger boxes and forty-six file folders. The material is arranged into four series or records groups as follows:

- Series I: Administrative
  - Sub-series A: Dayton Chapter
  - Sub-series B: State Chapter
- Series II: Correspondence
  - Sub-series A: Court Cases
  - Sub-series B: General Correspondence
- Series III: Publications
- Series IV: Issues/Positions
  - Sub-series A: Freedom of Choice
  - Sub-series B: Miscellaneous Issues

Span dates for the entire collection range from 1953 to 1983.

## Brief Agency History

The American Civil Liberties Union is a non-partisan organization committed to defending and protecting the individual liberties of U.S. citizens. Individual liberties are provided to citizens by the Bill of Rights, but the document does not implicitly provide the means to defend them. The only mechanism for individuals to defend themselves against breaches to their individual liberties is through court actions, but this is a very expensive and complicated task for one individual to accomplish on their own. The ACLU was created to provide a mechanism outside of the government by which individuals can join together to invoke the power of the courts in defense of civil liberties. To be effective, such a mechanism must be politically and financially independent of the government. Without such a mechanism, the U.S. Constitution cannot function properly, and individual liberties cannot be adequately protected.

In 1920, an independent mechanism for protecting individual rights was established under the name of the American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU was created to provide a permanent vanguard against civil liberties abuses, based on the premise that if the government can violate one person's rights, it can violate anyone's rights, leading to a continued erosion of the civil liberties of all U.S. citizens. The ACLU seeks to limit governmental power over individuals by holding them accountable to their governing documents. The organization works mainly by providing legal advice and lawyers for individuals in local, state, and federal courts and by conducting educational programs. Also, ACLU officials testify before state and federal legislative committees and lobby influential politicians. The ACLU defends civil liberties regardless of the political views of the persons whose rights have been violated.

The Dayton Chapter of the ACLU emerged in the early 1950's and has operated on a strictly volunteer basis throughout its existence. Based on the records of this collection, covering the years from 1953-1983, the local chapter was most active during the mid to late 1950's, and again in the late 1970's and forward, with the period in between being very lightly documented.

\*\*\*Portions of the agency history were excerpted from "It Takes More than a Constitution to Make Constitutional Rights," a product of the ACLU review committee meetings in 1980.\*\*\*

## Scope and Content

The records within the Dayton ACLU collection are divided into four different series, with three of the series also containing sub-series. Series I, Administrative records, is broken down into two sub-series. Sub-series A concerns the administrative records of the Dayton Chapter of the ACLU, while sub-series B concerns the administrative records of the State chapter of the ACLU. The records kept within this series contain the minute records of chapter meetings, agendas, budget information, membership information, literature lists, and articles of organization and by-laws. The records are arranged chronologically, and their span dates are between 1953 and 1983.

Series II contains the correspondence of the organization, and this records group is also broken into sub-series. Sub-series A contains correspondence concerning specific court cases, while sub-series B contains issue-oriented, general correspondence. This series is arranged in chronological order and spans dates from 1937-1983.

Series III contains publications and periodicals maintained in the records of the Dayton ACLU. Some of these publications were generated by the ACLU, while others came from independent, related organizations. The series is arranged chronologically and in order of the largest periodical grouping to the smallest. Span dates are 1957-1980.

Series IV contains documents related to issues of interest to the ACLU and the positions maintained by the ACLU regarding these issues. The series is broken down into two sub-series. Sub-series A deals specifically with the issue of freedom of choice and the efforts of local and regional organizations to inform the public and fight for the right of choice. Sub-series B contains documents related to a variety of issues, including topics such as freedom of speech, censorship, civil disobedience, and discrimination, just to list a few. The series is arranged chronologically, where possible, and in order of the largest topic grouping to the smallest. Span dates are 1953-1983.

Container Listing

**Series I: Administrative Records**

**Sub-series A: Dayton Chapter, ACLU**

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	A1	Chapter Meeting Minutes	1954-1978
	A2	Chapter Meeting Minutes	1979-1980
	A3	Chapter Meeting Agendas (sparse)	1955-1977
	A4	Chapter Expenses (sparse)	1956-1980
	A5	Local Membership and Board of Directors Listings	1954-1979
	A6	Initial Membership Numbers, and Membership Building Efforts	1953-1977
	A7	Membership Information Processes and Election Memos	1969-1979

**Sub-series B: Ohio Chapter, ACLU**

1	B1	Chapter Meeting Minutes	1956-1968
	B2	Chapter Meeting Minutes	1969-1981
	B3	Chapter Meeting Agendas (sparse)	1957-1982
	B4	Legal Reports (sparse)	1978-1982
	B5	Chapter Literature Lists (sparse)	1979-1980
	B6	Chapter Articles of Organization and By-Laws	1954-1981
	B7	Chapter Membership Information	1969-1980
	B8	Chapter Membership Information	1971-1980
	B9	Chapter Budget Information	1956-1981
	B10	Miscellaneous	

**Series II: Correspondence**

**Sub-series A: Court Cases**

2	A1	Cases Regarding Religion and Public Education	1955-1965
	A2	Contains the Melvin Hupman Case, George Wallace case, the Lee Lorch case, and the Arthur Eaton case	1953-1958
	A3	Miami Valley Unitarian Fellowship v. the City of Oakwood	1978
	A4	Miscellaneous Cases	1957-1978

**Sub-series B: General Correspondence**

2	B1	Correspondence regarding Censorship and the Putka Movie Bill	1955-1960
	B2	Correspondence regarding the Dayton Housing Ordinance	1957
	B3	Miscellaneous Correspondence	1939-1968
	B4	Miscellaneous Correspondence	1969-1980

### **Series III: Publications and Periodicals**

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
3	1	ACLU Weekly Bulletins	1957-1961
	2	"Inside the ACLU"	1960-1961
	3	"Ohio Civil Liberties" and "Civil Liberties News"	1967-1980, 1959-1961
	4	"Civil Liberties"	1960-1978
	5	"Civil Liberties"	1979-1980
	6	"Poverty Law Report"	1975-1979
	7	Miscellaneous Periodicals	
	8	Miscellaneous Periodicals	

### **Series IV: Issues/Positions**

#### **Sub-series A: Freedom of Choice**

4	A1	Newsletters Regarding Freedom of Choice	1977-1981
	A2	Newsletters Regarding Freedom of Choice	1978-1981
	A3	General Information Regarding Freedom of Choice	1978-1981
	A4	General Information Regarding Freedom of Choice	1978-1981
	A5	Correspondence Regarding Freedom of Choice	1978-1981
	A6	News clippings Regarding Freedom of Choice	

#### **Sub-series B: Miscellaneous Issues**

4	B1	Draft Legislation and the Proposed F.B.I. Charter	1978-1981
	B2	Committee to Free Mao-Tse Tung Defendants and Civil Liberties Issues arising from the Iranian Crisis	1977-1981
	B3	Issues of Free Speech, Censorship, and Bill of Rights Day	1978-1981
	B4	Juvenile Advocacy Project, Rights of the Institutionalized and Sex Discrimination in Employment	1978-1981
	B5	Civil Disobedience and the Issue of the Use of Deadly Force	1978-1981
	B6	ACLU Position Statements	1978-1981
	B7	Miscellaneous News clippings	