



Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 3, 2011

CONTACT:

Amy Cannata, ACLU of Montana Communications Director

(406) 459-1114

amyc@aclumontana.org

ACLU Exhibit In Capitol Rotunda Celebrates 90 Years Of Fighting For Freedom

HELENA, MT — In celebration of the American Civil Liberties Union's 90th anniversary, the ACLU of Montana is hosting an exhibit highlighting the crucial work of the organization over the last nine decades and illustrating the ACLU's major contributions to defending the freedoms promised to all of us in the Constitution.

The exhibit will be on view in the Montana Capitol Rotunda from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. on Monday, March 7. A brief presentation by ACLU Washington D.C. Legislative Office Director Laura W. Murphy will take place a noon, followed by a free lunch.

"Civil liberties have grown tremendously over the past 90 years. Americans today would have a hard time recognizing the America of 1920," said Scott Crichton, Executive Director of the ACLU of Montana. "The ACLU's anniversary exhibit shows how the ACLU has worked to make the Constitution a document that serves all the people in the United States. We hope that people will leave the 90th Anniversary Exhibit with a better understanding of the ACLU's role in advancing civil liberties over the years."

The traveling exhibit provides an historical overview of the ACLU's many monumental achievements since its founding in 1920. The organization was established in response to the notorious Palmer Raids in which the Department of Justice, led by U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, began rounding up and deporting so-called radicals because of their political views without warrants and without regard to constitutional protections against unlawful search and seizure.

The exhibit includes the stories of some of the courageous people the ACLU has represented, including John Scopes, a teacher accused of violating a Tennessee state law against the teaching of evolution in the 1920s; Ozzie Powell, one of the "Scottsboro Boys" sentenced to death in Alabama in the 1930s for allegedly raping a white woman, a crime he did not commit; Mildred and Richard Loving, an interracial couple charged in the 1960s with violating the state's "Racial Integrity Act"; and Diane Schroer, an Army veteran whose job offer by the Library of Congress was rescinded when it learned that Schroer was in the process of changing gender.

The exhibit also highlights the ACLU's key role in the passage of major pieces of legislation, including the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, guaranteeing eligible employees with up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for family responsibilities; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, prohibiting discrimination based on disability in employment, public services, accommodations, transportation and technology; and the periodic reauthorizations of several provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, protecting every American's constitutionally guaranteed right to vote.

"There will always be civil liberties challenges, and the ACLU will continue building an America that upholds our values of liberty, fairness and justice," said Anthony D. Romero, Executive Director of the ACLU. "Our organization,

along with the ACLU of Montana, will remain on the front lines fighting for our fundamental freedoms for generations to come.”

Other civil liberties milestones showcased in the exhibit include the ACLU’s work defending women’s reproductive freedom, upholding free speech and privacy on the Internet and its post-9/11 work battling government secrecy, abuses of power and human rights violations.

The ACLU has evolved over the past nine decades from a small group of idealists committed to protecting Americans’ civil liberties into an organization with more than 500,000 members, hundreds of attorneys – both staff and volunteer – and a presence in all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The exhibit showcases how the ACLU has used its unparalleled infrastructure to litigate, educate and advocate at federal, state and local levels.

###