



Press Release

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ACLU of Montana Hires New Legal Director

Attorney and former Montana legislator Jon Ellingson to spearhead ACLU litigation

MISSOULA, MT – The American Civil Liberties Union of Montana is pleased to announce the hire of a new legal director, Missoula attorney and former Montana Representative and Senator Jon Ellingson.

“As the Montana ACLU begins its 40th year defending the Bill of Rights, the need for our aggressive advocacy has never been greater,” says ACLU of Montana Executive Director Scott Crichton. “Jon Ellingson has a distinguished career as a lawyer and a policy maker, and we believe he is the ideal person to help propel us into the next decade of our fight for individual rights and liberty. We are delighted to have him join our team and look forward to his help in building and expanding our organization here in Montana.”

Ellingson began his private law practice in Missoula in 1975. From 2004-2010 he worked as an assistant attorney general under Attorney General Mike McGrath and then Attorney General Steve Bullock. He has a bachelor’s degree in economics from Harvard University, a master’s degree in political science from the University of Montana and his juris doctor degree from the University of California, Hastings College of Law.

He served two terms in the Montana House of Representatives (1994-1998) and then was elected to the state senate where he concluded his legislative career in 2006 serving as majority leader. Term limits prevented him from running for reelection. During his time in the Montana Legislature, Ellingson was dedicated to protecting the civil liberties of Montanans. He sponsored bills to extend protections in the Montana Human Rights Act to gay and lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender people and worked hard to protect and expand voting rights, including sponsoring successful legislation for same-day voter registration.

“The Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution and the Declaration of Rights of the Montana Constitution articulate not only protections of our individual freedoms but also expressions of our highest ideals and goals for civilized society,” said Ellingson. “During my public career in the Montana legislature I worked to realize these goals and fulfill these ideals. I am delighted to continue this pursuit as Legal Director of the ACLU of Montana.”

Ellingson will now take the helm of the ACLU of Montana’s extensive legal program, including the same-sex domestic partnership case, *Donaldson and Guggenheim v. State of Montana*, the Montana Prison Project’s work to protect the rights of those incarcerated, the voting rights and independent party candidate case *Kelly v. McCulloch* and our work to challenge the state’s lethal injection protocol in the case *Smith v. Ferriter*.

“The Montana ACLU has been at the forefront of the struggle to advance and protect our civil rights and liberties. Today its work is more important than ever as these rights and liberties are assaulted by a combination of advancing technologies; big government and business, and extreme ideologues,” Ellingson said. “It is a privilege for me to now be able to work with the ACLU as it continues this work for the benefit of all of us.”