

# Sample Page

## 1 of 3

### I.

## Introduction and Overview

This Handbook contains all the facts and figures about each of the 1,193 decided cases where the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU or Union) participated in a Supreme Court case during the Union's first 100 years and three examples of the 1,193 cases summarized in the companion three-volume compendium.

The ACLU grew from the seeds of social activism in 1917 and was born in January 1920. During its existence, the ACLU has been a lightning rod for controversy, not least because the cases it has championed involve American's most cherished civil rights.

Legitimate disagreements result from a discussion of American civil rights: from freedom of the press (is press freedom unfettered or subject to restraints?), to free speech (who has it? when can they use it? are there any limitations on it?), to equal protection (who gets to expect equal treatment? what is equal treatment across economic, gender, age or racial lines?). The ACLU was established to, and has, inserted itself squarely in the midst of these and other constitutional controversies.

I first became involved with the ACLU when I joined the Board of the ACLU Foundation of Southern California in 1979. I often asked two questions about the ACLU: (1) what did they do; and (2) how did they do it? Their 62-word bylaws provided some general insight:

*"The objects of the American Civil Liberties Union shall be to maintain and advance civil liberties, including the freedoms of association, press, religion, and speech, and rights to the franchised, to due process of law, and to equal protection of the laws to all people throughout the United States and its possessions. The Union's objects shall be sought wholly without political partisanship."*