

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/what-are-ohio-legislators-cooking-now>

Policy Issue Resources

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If you are a member of the ACLU of Ohio, you are no doubt used to hearing from us about our work. Perhaps it is no surprise an organization known for protecting the First Amendment often exercises its own right to free speech. Lately, you might notice you are hearing from us even more than usual. The reason can be summed up in two words lame duck. Ohios legislature operates on two-year cycles. The current session of the Ohio General Assembly will end in December and a new session will begin in January. Traditionally, the period following Novembers general election is called a lame duck session since some members will have been voted out by their constituents. Lots can, and often does, happen during lame duck. With only a handful of weeks left, legislators rush to pass bills that were considered during the previous two years. Lame duck also is a time when controversial legislation gets rammed through while lawmakers, media, lobbyists, and advocates are distracted by the chaotic pace. The ACLU of Ohio feels it is important to notify you of these efforts, so we can all take action to protect civil liberties.

Take action on [HB 663](#) and [HB 248](#).

Unfortunately, bad ideas are not in short supply during this lame duck period. **The Lame Part of Lame Duck** No matter what your position of the death penalty may be one can understand that in a state with multiple botched executions over the past several years, the best solution would be to thoughtfully consider the process of capital punishment. Indeed, Ohios unrivaled incompetence in killing people has been a subject of national and international news many times. Instead, Ohio legislators are rushing to make this process even more secret, with less oversight and accountability than ever, via the recently introduced [House Bill 663](#). Because HB 663 voids business contracts, adds new exceptions (once again) to Ohios public records laws, and makes it even more difficult for attorneys to represent clients, immediate lawsuits challenging HB 663 are a certainty. Speaking of lawsuits, the ACLU of Ohio recently threatened to sue if [House Bill 248](#), the so-called Heartbeat Bill, becomes law. It would outlaw abortions as early as six weeks into a pregnancy, before many women even realize they are pregnant. Misguided proponents want this issue before the U.S. Supreme Court as soon as possible, hoping the court will essentially vote to overturn *Roe vs. Wade*. Instead, we are quite confident courts will strike down this law and similar versions, which is what has happened in the only two courts to release rulings on this issue. How radical is this legislation? Even Ohio Right to Life refuses to endorse it. **More to Come Stay Tuned** Of course, there is more going on at the Statehouse than just executions and reproductive rights. We are following numerous other bills. As a result, you may hear more from us more over this next month as the General Assembly debates important civil liberty issues, such as school discipline, government surveillance, criminal sentencing, and more. When we do contact you on these important matters we appreciate when you take a couple minutes to contact your elected representatives. After all, its your opinion as a constituent that matters. Keep exercising your own right to free speech and we will keep giving you opportunities to [take action](#).

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