## American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia

# General Assembly Crossover Report 2010

February 19, 2010

## Dear Supporter,

We're just past the halfway mark of the 2010 General Assembly, the point at which the House and Senate have acted on their own bills and now must address bills approved by the other chamber. As usual, most bills are dead by now, but that leaves plenty of threats to civil liberties. In this report, we discuss some of the most significant legislative developments -- good and bad -- and provide a listing of bills of interest to the ACLU that are still being acted on.

I hope you will take a moment to contact your Delegate or Senator and let them know your position on the bills listed in this report. The ACLU is at the General Assembly everyday lobbying on bills, but nothing we do there compares to the impact that constituents have when they contact their legislators.

If you want help before contacting a legislator, please call Associate Director Elizabeth Wong at 804-644-8022, send an email to Legislative Counsel Hope Amezquita at lobby@acluva.org, or visit our website at www.acluva.org.

Kent Willis, Executive Director

## Senate Courts Committee Is Key to <u>Limiting Death Penalty Expansion</u>

For the last three years, the House and Senate approved bills expanding the death penalty only to see them fail when vetoed by Governor Kaine. Naturally, death penalty opponents feared the worst when Governor McDonnell, a supporter of capital punishment, took office. With the Governor no longer a death penalty opponent, efforts to stop expansion of capital punishment have shifted to the Senate Courts of Justice Committee, where the votes have always been close.

Earlier this month, the House passed HB 502, the "triggerman" bill, which expands the number of crimes eligible for capital punishment in situations where the defendant did not actually do the killing. The vote was an overwhelming 74-Y, 24-N. But, the Senate version of the same bill, SB 7, failed in the Senate Courts of Justice Committee on a vote of 6-Y, 9-N after a packed-house hearing in which almost no one spoke in favor of the bill. The same bill was approved by the same committee last year. HB 502 now goes to the Senate Courts of Justice Committee, where it will hopefully meet the same fate as SB 7.

Unfortunately, both the House and Senate have passed bills making the killing of auxiliary police a capital crime.

(For details, see Death Penalty, page 4.)

# Pro-Choice License Plate Moves Forward, but Amendments Threaten Implementation

In response to last year's law creating a "Choose Life" specialty license plate, legislators this year introduced a pro-choice plate displaying the phrase, "Trust Women, Respect Choice." HB 1108 and SB 704 not only created the new license plate, but directed revenues from plate sales to go to Planned Parenthood.

Supported by court rulings, the ACLU maintains the state engages in viewpoint discrimination if it creates an anti-choice plate but not a pro-choice plate. Therefore the pro-choice plate must be passed, or the state faces a First Amendment lawsuit.

Although both bills have been approved, the House amended its version to direct revenues to an unfunded state agency rather than Planned Parenthood. The most significant problem this poses is that state law requires 350 prepaid applications in order to pass legislation, but the 350 prepaid applications all state that proceeds go to Planned Parenthood.

The Senate must now deal with the amended House version of the bill and the House with the Senate's bill. Multiple scenarios are possible here, but our focus is on passage of bills in both the House and the Senate that direct revenues to Planned Parenthood.

(For details, see Free Expression, page 3.)

## Bills Authorizing Impermissible State-Sponsored Prayers Die in Committees

For the second year in row, legislators attempted to circumvent recent federal court decisions holding that government entities may not sponsor or endorse sectarian prayers at government events. Using vague and sometimes indecipherable language to obscure their purposes, three bills were introduced that prevent government officials from interfering with prayers offered at government-sponsored events.

HB 9 would have prohibited the Superintendent of State Police from regulating the content of prayers offered at Department-sanctioned events. It was left in committee without a hearing. SB 56 and HB 1282 would have prevented government agencies from regulating the content of prayers offered at a government-sanctioned event, unless the prayer endorses or disparages a particular religion. SB 56 was defeated in committee and HB 1282 failed to be heard.

## Sign up to be a grassroots lobbyist!

Help us protect civil liberties in the Virginia General Assembly by signing up to receive email action alerts during session. We'll provide you with talking points, explain the ACLU's position, and tell you which legislators to contact. To sign up, visit us online at www.acluva.org.

## **Good News for Free Expression**

#### Bill Criminalizing Sexting Fails

Legislators followed a nationwide trend by attempting to criminalize 'sexting' by juveniles (HB 685). 'Sexting' is the sending of sexually explicit messages or photos, typically of oneself, between mobile phones or other electronic devices. We opposed the bill because it would have made criminals of children who simply made poor decisions. We argued that parents and educators, not the police, should be addressing sexting, and that the bill may interfere with protected expression. HB 685 was carried over to the 2011 session.

#### Bill Censoring Speech on Campus Carried Over

HB 1296 responded to the controversy over performances of the Sex Workers Art Show at William & Mary and VCU. The bill requires governing bodies of public colleges to review sexually explicit performances or materials and censor those deemed obscene. The bill would have chilled free speech on college campuses and would have treated public colleges differently from other publicly-supported institutions, such as museums and theaters, that are exempt from obscenity laws. HB 1296 failed to report from a House subcommittee.

#### Spam Statute Made Constitutional

The House of Delegates unanimously passed HB 1, which conforms the state's anti-spam statute to the First Amendment by restricting the law's application solely to commercial emails. The bill is a reaction to the Virginia Supreme Court's decision in *Jaynes v. Commonwealth*, holding that the antispam law, which prohibited the sending of bulk anonymous emails, was unconstitutional as applied to non-commercial communications. We expect the Senate to pass HB 1.

(For details, see Free Expression, page 3.)

## House Attacks Reproductive Rights

#### Two Anti-Choice Bills Pass House

The House has passed two anti-choice bills. HB 1042 requires that pregnant women receive a medically unnecessary ultrasound prior to their abortion. HB 393 requires most abortion clinics to have the same equipment and facilities as ambulatory surgery centers. These bills have passed the House in years past, but failed in the Senate.

#### Informed Consent Bill Improved

HB 334 requires that, as part of informed consent, pregnant women receive information on the effects of an abortion on future pregnancies. The ACLU opposed HB 334 for fear that the information provided would be inaccurate and biased by the political views of doctors. The amended bill, however, requires that information provided to patients be from peer-reviewed medical journals. HB 334 has passed the House and is being closely monitored by the ACLU.

#### Bill to Give Legal Rights to Embryos Fails

Del. Bob Marshall once again introduced a bill (HB 112) granting embryos and fetuses the right to the enjoyment of life as guaranteed under the Virginia Constitution. The bill was killed in a House subcommittee after a long debate.

(For details, see Reproductive Rights, page 3.)

## Voting Rights, Privacy Rights, Due Process & Criminal Justice

## House Approves Defendants Paying for Interpreters

The House has passed a bill requiring non-English speaking defendants to pay for the cost of interpreters if they are convicted. HB 1338 discriminates against individuals on the basis of national origin, raising substantial due process and equal protection concerns in criminal proceedings. The bill is now headed to the Senate where we will work to defeat it.

(For details, see Criminal Justice, page 4.)

#### Arrest Expansion Bill Passes House, Fails in Senate

Legislators are attempting to broadly expand law enforcement powers by granting police officers the authority to arrest -- and therefore search – any individuals stopped for Class 1 or 2 misdemeanors. Under current Virginia law, officers may already arrest individuals for such misdemeanors when they are intoxicated or fail to stop an unlawful act, but must otherwise issue a summons. HB 681 passed 68-Y, 28-N, but SB 643 failed in committee 5-Y, 10-N. This bill not only creates an unnecessary expansion of arrest powers, but it would almost certainly lead to a disproportionate increase in the arrest rates of minorities.

(For details, see Criminal Justice, page 4.)

#### Bill Banning Coerced Use of Tracking Devices Advances

A bill prohibiting the implantation of a tracking device on individuals as a condition of obtaining insurance or employment passed the House (88-Y, 9-N, 1-A) and now goes to the Senate.

(For details, see Privacy, page 3.)

#### Voter ID Bills Fail to Advance

Bills requiring voters to show a government-issued photo ID or to provide proof of citizenship to register to vote failed in both House and Senate committees (HB 341, HB 497, HB 498, SB 134, SB 301). These bills were purportedly intended to combat voter impersonation fraud, a problem that does not exist in Virginia. Moreover, these burdensome requirements disproportionately impact elderly, minority, and low-income individuals, who are less likely to have the documents required by these bills.

#### Constitutional Amendments Will Still Be in Newspapers

Under current Virginia law, the State Board of Elections is required to place in newspapers the full text of constitutional amendments that are on the ballot for consideration by voters. HB 1386, which would have removed this requirement, was introduced at the last minute and quickly moved through committee. Fortunately, as advocates became aware of the bill, legislators backed off. The House failed to pass HB 1386.

#### Marijuana Bills Defeated

Despite support from a wide variety of medical, criminal justice and privacy organizations, bills decriminalizing possession of marijuana (HB 1134) and potentially expanding access to medical marijuana (HB 1136) were defeated in subcommittee.

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## **Crossover List**

#### Free Expression

HB 1 (Loupassi) Anti-Spam Law Restricted to Commercial Speech. Narrows the scope of Virginia's antispam statute to cover only anonymous, unsolicited commercial email. Current law also bans anonymous, unsolicited non-commercial email. ACLU supports. Status: Passed the House by a vote of 99-Y, 0-N; now in Senate Courts of Justice Committee.

HB 1108 (Brink); SB 704 now SB 18 (Howell) Pro-Choice Specialty License Plate. Provides for the enactment of a prochoice specialty license plate displaying the phrase, "Trust Women, Respect Choice." As introduced, the proceeds from the sale of license plates go to Planned Parenthood to provide women with family planning and prevention services, but not abortions. As amended in the House, the proceeds will go to the Virginia Pregnant Women Support Fund, instead of Planned Parenthood. ACLU supports. Status: HB 1108 passed the House with amendment by a vote of 77-Y, 22-N; now in Senate Transportation. SB 704 was incorporated into an omnibus specialty license plate bill, SB 18, which passed the Senate 26-Y, 8-N; now in House Transportation Committee.

#### **Privacy**

#### HB 53 (Cole) Unlawful Use of Human Tracking Devices.

Makes it a class 1 misdemeanor to implant or incorporate into someone's body without his informed consent an identification or tracking device, or to track someone using an implanted device without his consent. ACLU supports. Status: Passed by the House by a vote of 88-Y, 9-N, 1-A; now in Senate Commerce and Labor Committee.

HB 1039 (Byron); SB 224 (Barker) Notification of Breach of Medical Information. Requires data-collecting entities to notify Virginia residents of breaches in security in which their medical records may have been compromised. ACLU supports. Status: HB 1039 passed the House by a vote of 97-Y, 0-N; now in Senate Education and Health Committee. SB 224 passed the Senate by a vote of 40-Y, 0-N; now in House Health, Welfare, and Institutions.

HB 1292 (Tata) Photo-Monitoring at Traffic Lights—Information Sharing. Allows <u>private</u> companies that monitor cameras at traffic lights to obtain vehicle owner registration information on drivers who violate traffic laws. ACLU opposes. Status: Passed the House by a vote of 55-Y, 42-N; now in Senate Transportation Committee.

#### Religious Rights

**SB 361 (Barker) Excused Absence from School for Religious Holidays.** Adds observance of a religious holiday to the list of reasons students shall be excused from attendance at school. Students who have a written note from a parent or legal guardian will have their absence excused and will not be penalized. ACLU supports. *Status: Passed the Senate by a vote of 37-Y, 3-N; now in House Education Committee.* 

#### Equal/Civil Rights

HB 735 (Albo) Organizations Prevented from Receiving Money in Fair Housing Lawsuits. As introduced, imposed a cap on the amount of damages and fees that could be imposed on a defendant in fair housing discrimination lawsuits. As substituted, prevents fair housing and civil rights organizations from receiving any damages or fees in certain kinds of housing discrimination lawsuits. ACLU opposes. Status: Passed the House by a vote of 63-Y, 36-N; now in Senate General Laws and Technology Committee.

**HB 737 (Albo) State and Localities Required to Use E-Verify Program.** Requires state and local agencies to use the E-Verify program to verify employees' work status. ACLU opposes. *Status: Passed the House by a vote of 82-Y, 13-N; now in Senate Commerce and Labor Committee.* 

**SB 66** (McEachin) **Prohibition on Sexual Orientation Discrimination in Public Employment.** SB 66 prohibits in state government employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, which is defined as a person's actual or perceived heterosexuality, bisexuality, homosexuality, or gender identity or expression. ACLU supports. Status: Passed the Senate by a vote of 23-Y, 17-N; now in House General Laws Committee.

**SB 462 (Howell, J.D.) Protection for Immigrant Victims.** Prohibits law enforcement from inquiring about the immigration status of any victim of a crime or witness. ACLU supports. *Status: Passed the Senate by a vote of 40-Y, 0-N; now in House Courts of Justice Committee.* 

#### Reproductive Rights

**HB 334 (Marshall, R.G.) Informed Consent for Abortion Amended.** Adds to Virginia's informed consent law that before performing an abortion, a doctor must inform the patient about the effects of the abortion on future pregnancies. Opposed by ACLU as introduced but not opposed --although not supported, either—after being amended to require that information provided to patients is clinically-based and from peer-reviewed journals. ACLU is monitoring this bill to watch for additional amendments. *Status: passed the House by a vote of 95-Y, 2-N; now in Senate Education and Health committee.* 

HB 393 (Lohr) Targeted Regulations of Abortion Providers. Requires abortion clinics that conduct 25 or more abortions per year to be licensed by the Board of Health and meet the requirements of ambulatory surgery centers. ACLU opposes on grounds that that there is no evidence of need for these costly requirements. Status: Passed the House by a vote of 72-Y, 25-N; now in Senate Education and Health Committee.

**HB 1042 (Byron) Mandatory Ultrasound.** Amends the informed consent law to require that every pregnant woman be given an ultrasound to determine the gestation age of the fetus, and the opportunity to view the ultrasound prior to abortion. ACLU opposes. *Status: Passed the House by a vote of 65-Y, 33-N; now in Senate Education and Health committee.* 

#### Criminal Justice and Due Process

- HB 203 (Alexander) Writs of Actual Innocence to Those Not Incarcerated. Under current law only incarcerated persons may apply for a writ of innocence. HB 203 allows anyone, including persons on parole or probation, or who have completed their sentences to apply. ACLU supports. Status: Passed House 98-Y, 0-N; in Senate Courts Committee.
- **HB 314** (McClellan) Challenge to Inclusion in DNA Data bank. Allows a person to determine if his DNA profile is in the criminal DNA data bank and to challenge his inclusion. If the court finds the person's profile was not legally included, then all samples and identifying information related to that person shall be destroyed. ACLU supports. *Status: Passed House 99-Y, 0-N; now in Senate Courts of Justice.*
- HB 500 (Gilbert) Certificates of Analysis at Preliminary Hearing without Expert Testimony. In preliminary hearings, allows certificates of analysis and reports to be admitted as evidence without the testimony of the analyst who produced the reports. ACLU opposes. Status: Passed the House by a vote of 99-Y, 0-N; now in Senate Courts of Justice Committee.
- **HB 681 (Miller, J.H.)** Arrest & Search Powers for Class 1 & 2 Misdemeanors. Allows law enforcement officers to arrest and thus search any person stopped for committing a Class 1 or 2 misdemeanor. Under current law, such persons must be issued a summons in most circumstances. ACLU opposes. Status: Passed the House by a vote of 68-Y, 28-N; now in Senate Courts of Justice.
- HB 911 (Bell, Robert B.) Charging Juveniles as Adults. When a juvenile is tried as an adult for a crime that would be a felony if committed by an adult, the juvenile will also be tried as an adult for any other related charges. ACLU opposes. Status: Passed the House by a vote of 73-Y, 25-N; now in Senate Courts of Justice.
- HB 1121 (Gilbert): Allows Law Enforcement to Access Juvenile Records Related to Gangs. Requires the Department of Juvenile Justice to send otherwise confidential juvenile records to law enforcement whenever there is an indication of gang activity. ACLU opposes. Status: Passed House 96-Y, 0-N; now in Senate Courts of Justice.
- **HB 1338 (Janis) Cost of English Interpreters.** Requires non-English speaking defendants to pay for interpreters if they are convicted in criminal trials. ACLU opposes. *Status: Passed the House by a vote of 63-Y, 34-N; now in Senate Courts of Justice Committee.*
- **SB 46 (Stuart) Recovery of Attorneys Fees & Special Education for Children with Disabilities.** Allows a state court to award attorney's fees and costs to a parent of a child with a disability in a civil action in which the parent is resolving a dispute related to the child's special education needs. ACLU supports. *Status: Passed the Senate by a vote of 40-Y, 0-N; now in House Courts of Justice Committee.*
- **SB 259 (Lucas) Detention of Juveniles Being Tried as Adults.** Juveniles whose criminal cases are transferred to circuit court must be detained in juvenile detention centers rather than adult correctional facilities. ACLU supports. *Status: Passed the Senate 40-Y, 0-N; in House Courts of Justice.*

- SB 260 (Lucas) Background Checks in Hiring of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Providers. Allows mental health and substance abuse providers to hire employees who have been convicted of misdemeanor violations relating to assault and battery so long as the offense was related to substance abuse or mental illness and has since been treated. ACLU supports. Status: Passed the Senate by a vote of 40-Y, 0-N; now in House Health. Welfare and Institutions Committee.
- SB 387 (Obenshain) Video-Conferencing to Confront Lab Analysts. The U.S. Supreme Court in *Melendez-Diaz v*. *Massachusetts* ruled that a defendant has the constitutional right to confront the lab analysts and breath test operators who perform the tests on evidence used against the defendant at trial. SB 387 allows the state to use two-way video conferencing, unless the defendant specifically objects. ACLU opposes. *Status: Passed the Senate by a vote of 40-Y, 0-N; now in House Courts of Justice Committee.*

## Death Penalty

- HB 166 (Pogge); HB 934 (Bell, Robert): Eligible for Death Penalty for Killing of Auxiliary Law Enforcement and Others. Expands the death penalty by allowing the death sentence to be imposed for the murder of auxiliary law-enforcement officers, fire marshals and EMS personnel. ACLU Opposes. Status: HB 166 passed House 75-Y, 23-N. HB 934 passed the House by a vote of 78-Y, 20-N. Both are now in Senate Courts of Justice committee.
- HB 502 (Gilbert) Elimination of the "Triggerman Rule." Expands the death penalty by eliminating the 'triggerman rule,' which provides, with few exceptions, that only the actual perpetrator of a capital murder is eligible for the death penalty. This bill would permit accessories before the fact and others to be charged with capital murder and therefore eligible for the death penalty. ACLU Opposes. *Status: Passed the House by a vote of 74-Y, 24-N; now in Senate Courts of Justice committee.*
- HB 568 (Iaquinto) Capital murder; notice to State of expert testimony 60 days before trial. Changes the requirement that a defendant must notify the State that he or she will have an expert testify on his or her behalf from 21 days to 60 days before trial. ACLU opposes. Status: Passed the House by a vote of 97-Y, 0-N; now in Senate Courts of Justice Committee.
- **SB 162** (Edwards) Life Sentences in Capital Cases. Allows juries in capital cases to give life sentences, rather than death, even when they find that the defendant is likely to commit acts of violence that are a threat to society or that the defendant's offenses were outrageously vile or horrible. Under current law, these findings require the death sentence. ACLU supports. Status: Passed the Senate by a vote of 40-Y, 0-N; now in House Courts of Justice Committee.
- **SB 248 (Watkins) Ex-parte Experts in Capital Cases.** Provides a mechanism for the lawyer for an indigent defendant to seek the appointment of certain experts without divulging the expert to the prosecutor. A judge must approve the appointment and determine that the confidential assistance of an expert is necessary for a fair trial. ACLU supports. Status: Passed the Senate by a vote of 39-Y, 1-N; now in House Courts of Justice Committee.

#### **Voting Rights**

**HB 63 (Toscano) Expansion of Eligibility for In-Person Absentee Voting.** Under current law, a person is allowed to vote in-person absentee when unable to vote on election day due to the hospitalization or death of an "immediate family" member. This bill expands the definition of "immediate family" member to include children by marriage or adoption, legal guardians, and any other person residing in the same household. ACLU supports. *Status: Passed the House by a vote of 89-Y, 9-N; now in Senate Privileges & Elections Committee.* 

**HB 1235** (Anderson) Deadline for Making Absentee Ballots Available. Requires the electoral board to make absentee ballots available 50 days (instead of 45 days) prior to any November general election, and 35 days (instead of 30 days) prior to any other general, special, or primary election. ACLU supports. Status: Passed the House by a vote of 99-Y, 0-N; now in Senate Privileges and Elections Committee.

**SB 51** (Martin) Absentee Voting for Poll Watchers. Allows poll watchers designated by a political party or candidate to vote absentee. ACLU supports. *Status: Passed the Senate by a vote of 40-Y, 0-N; now in House Privileges and Elections Committee.* 

SB 55 (Martin) Use of Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot in State and Local Elections. Allows voters who are entitled to vote absentee because of active duty in the military or temporary residence outside of the country to use the federal write-in absentee ballots for state and local elections, as well as federal elections. The federal write-in absentee ballot can also serve as an absentee ballot application and voter registration application for state and local elections. ACLU supports. Status: Passed the Senate by a vote of 39-Y, 1-N; now in House Privileges and Elections Committee.

**SB 83 (Howell, J.D.) Expansion of Absentee Voting.** Allows all voters to vote by absentee ballot in-person without providing an excuse or reason for not being able to vote in person on election day, but in order to vote absentee by mail-in ballot a person must provide a reason that is included on the current list of accepted excuses to vote absentee. ACLU supports. *Status: Passed by the Senate by a vote of 29-Y, 10-N; now in House Privileges and Elections Committee.* 

SB 137 (Obenshain) Lists of Registered Voters to Commissioners of Revenue and Treasurers. Allows the State to provide lists of voters to commissioners of revenue and city/county treasurers for tax assessment, collection and enforcement purposes. ACLU opposes. Comment: Individuals may choose not to register to vote for fear that it will expose them to a tax liability. Voting and tax collection should be separate. Status: Passed the Senate by a vote of 35-Y, 5-N; now in House Privileges and Elections Committee.

**SB 139 (Miller, J.C.) Absentee Voting for Individuals 65 and Older.** Allows individuals 65 years of age and older to vote absentee. ACLU supports. *Status: Passed the Senate by a vote of 34-Y, 6-N; now in House Privileges and Elections Committee.* 

**SB 144 (Miller, J.C.) Electronic Submission of Absentee Ballots.** Requires the State Board of Elections to implement a system to accept absentee ballots electronically. ACLU supports. *Status: Passed the Senate by a vote of 31-Y, 9-N; now in House Privileges and Elections Committee.* 

#### **Open Government**

HB 431 (Griffith) Fees for Expert Witnesses in FOIA Cases. Allows a court to award a petitioner compensation for the costs of expert witnesses in a FOIA action. ACLU supports. Status: Passed the House by a vote of 97-Y, 0-N; now in Senate General Laws and Technology Committee.

**HB 432** (**Griffith**) **FOIA Exempts House and Senate Working Documents.** Adds the House and Senate Clerk's offices to the list of government bodies whose working papers are excluded from the Freedom of Information Act. ACLU opposes. *Status: Passed the House by a vote of 97-Y, 0-N; now in Senate General Laws and Technology Committee.* 

HB 434 (Griffith) FOIA Exemption for Financial Data. Exempts from Freedom of Information Act disclosure the portions of financial records that contain account numbers or routing information for credit cards, debit cards or other accounts with financial institutions. ACLU supports. Status: Passed the House by a vote of 97-Y, 0-N; now in Senate General Laws and Technology Committee.

HB 518 (Rust) FOIA Exemptions for Criminal Investigative Files. Exempts from the Freedom of Information Act any documents and information, including complaints, court orders and evidence, related to a criminal investigation. ACLU opposes. Status: Passed the House by a vote of 96-Y, 0-N; now in Senate General Laws and Technology committee.

HB 857 (Carrico) Access to Records under Line of Duty Act. Provides that any evidence or documents obtained in the course of an investigation of a death in the line of duty is confidential and exempt from the Freedom of Information Act. ACLU opposes. Status: Passed the House by a vote of 99-Y, 0-N; now in Senate General Laws and Technology Committee.

## **HB 1028 (Pollard) Right to Record Public Meetings.**Prohibits any public body conducting a meeting that is required

to be open from holding that meeting in any building or facility that prohibits the use of recording devices. ACLU supports. Status: Passed the House by a vote of 97-Y, 0-N; Senate General Laws and Technology Committee.

Contact the ACLU: 804-644-8080 or lobby@acluva.org

ACLU Bill listing on our website (updated daily): www.acluva.org

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