

## My View

By Jane Henegar, Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana

The first president's 1789 Thanksgiving Proclamation still speaks to America:

*"We are thankful... for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national one now lately instituted; for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge..."*

—George Washington, 1789

The same year George Washington wrote these words, the Bill of Rights was introduced. Those first amendments to our Constitution are the bedrock for the individual liberties we all enjoy as Americans: your rights to religious liberty, free speech and assembly, a free press and privacy. These and other freedoms are essential to a functioning democracy.

The American Civil Liberties Union, using the Constitution as a shield and a sword, has been protecting Americans' rights for close to 100 years. We have worked with and battled public officials of all parties to ensure that our country makes good on its founding premise as the land of the free, regardless of who you are, who you love or where you or your ancestors came from.

We hope all our new public servants will reexamine their campaign rhetoric in light of the power and responsibilities of the offices to which they have been elected. The ACLU's analysis of some of President-elect Donald Trump's campaign promises can be found at <https://medium.com/acluelection2016>. Should he try to enact or carry out any unconstitutional actions, we will be ready to challenge those actions in court.

At the Thanksgiving table, I will give thanks for living in a great country that, by its nature, aspires to be better. We are blessed with a Constitution that gives us the mechanisms with which to govern ourselves and the values to guide us through that difficult process: fairness, equality, and freedom. It has held America together for more than 200 years.

With your help, the ACLU will be vigilant, challenging our leaders at every level of government, to keep the awesome promises and potential of the Constitution. Happy Thanksgiving.

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