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*\*Welcome to our new board members!*



18 LOW AVENUE  
CONCORD, NH 03301

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The national office of the ACLU sometimes exchanges our membership list with like-minded organizations. If you want your name withheld from any sharing, please notify the NHCLU office and we will remove your name from the ACLU exchange list.

The NHCLU does not share members' names with any organization.

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If you have already asked us to remove your name, you will continue to be excluded from exchange lists.

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WINTER, 2009

## Efforts to Abolish the Death Penalty

*by Barbara Kreshen, Staff Attorney*

This has been a pivotal year for opponents of the death penalty in NH. For the first time in more than 50 years New Hampshire had a capital case that was actually argued in front of a jury. In fact New Hampshire had not one but two capital cases.

The first case was **State v. John Brooks**. Brooks, a white millionaire, was charged with the murder of a handyman whom he suspected of stealing his property. The jury found Brooks guilty of capital murder, but returned a verdict of life in prison.

The second case was **State v. Michael Addison**. Addison, a young black man from Boston, was charged with the shooting death of Manchester police officer, Michael Briggs as the officer attempted to arrest him. Addison was found guilty of capital murder and sentenced to death.

These two cases have provided great impetus for the abolition movement, and the NHCLU, as a charter member of the NH Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (NHCADP), has played a major role.

The NHCLU Foundation received a grant from the ACLU to support the education and outreach work of the Coalition. Along with several members of the Coalition steering committee, I am working to reconfigure the Coalition's website and to update and expand the Coalition's membership list. Members of the NHCLU are urged to visit the Coalition's

website at: [www.nodeathpenaltynh.org](http://www.nodeathpenaltynh.org)

To further its educational mission, members of the Coalition have written opinion pieces and letters to editors that have been printed in newspapers around the state. We have organized showings of a very powerful anti-death penalty film, **At the Death House Door**. The film is a documentary about Rev. Carroll Pickett, who served for years as a chaplain at the Texas Department of Corrections. Rev. Pickett spent the last day of each condemned person's life with them as they prepared for their execution. It is a powerful film about forgiveness and personal transformation. The film will be shown around the state, including Red River Theatre in Concord. You can learn about times and locations for showing the film if you join the NHCADP list serve.

The Coalition sponsors a vigil against the death penalty on the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month from noon to 1:00 pm in front of the State House in Concord. The vigil is an opportunity for individuals who are saddened by the events of this year to express their grief and their hope for a more enlightened future. Please think about joining us at the vigil. If you can't come for the full hour, come for as long as you can. Dress for the weather!

The legislative priority for the Coalition is the passage of a death penalty study commis-

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## Efforts to Abolish the Death Penalty *continued from page 1*

sion bill. The bill was sponsored by Representatives Jim Splaine, Laura Panelakos and David Welch. A similar bill passed the house last session, but was tabled in the senate because of opposition from the Attorney General. The argument was that this was not a good time to engage in a study of the death penalty with two active cases going forward.

The Coalition prepared testimony, and will enlist the support of its member base to lobby legislators to support passage of the bill. There is every reason to be optimistic that the bill will pass this year. The Commission will take a critical look at the continued use of the death penalty. The NHCLU and the NHCADP will make certain the commission hears compelling evidence for abolition.

If you have questions about the abolition movement in New Hampshire or wish to become further involved and you do not have access to a computer, please call Barbara Keshen at her office: 225-3080.

## NH Student Activist Honored



Alex Freid is a busy and remarkable young man. As a junior enrolled in a Peace Studies class and a history class that discussed Students for a Democratic Society, he was inspired to

research the SDS and Vietnam era peace movement. He became active in SDS and Seacoast Peace Response, and organized an SDS chapter in Durham that now has more than 80 members.

This year, Alex organized a panel discussion at his high school to encourage an exchange of ideas about the Iraq and Afghanistan wars with UNH professors and veterans of both wars. Alex also facilitated a workshop on "Truth in Military Recruiting" at an AFSC conference at Tufts University.

An activist for peace and social justice, Alex was awarded an ACLU youth scholarship. Alex thinks that his passion for social justice may lead to law school and a career as a civil or human rights lawyer. New Hampshire should be very proud of this extraordinary young civil libertarian!

## The 2008 Bill of Rights Dinner

In mid-November, a capacity crowd of NHCLU members, friends and supporters gathered to honor the extraordinary men and women of the New Hampshire Public Defenders Program with the 2008 Bill of Rights Award.

Public Defenders provide exceptional legal representation to those New Hampshire residents who cannot afford an attorney in a criminal case.

Without the public defenders, constitutional protections that are taken for granted by most in society would not exist for the poor.

The speaker at this incredible event was David Kaczynski, Executive Director of New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty. In an eloquent and moving narrative, David related the events that brought him to surrender his brother, Ted to the FBI, on the promise that the death penalty would not be invoked. When the government reneged on its promise, David Kaczynski used the press and public pressure to force authorities to abandon their death penalty efforts.

Mr. Kaczynski wove into his personal story the description of another death penalty individual, a black man who almost certainly did not commit the murder for which he was convicted, sentenced and executed.

It was an emotional evening.

## Board Retreat

The Boards of the New Hampshire Civil Liberties Union and the NHCLU Foundation held their biennial retreat in February. The two day meeting focused on the efforts of the NHCLU and the Foundation in education, litigation and lobbying.

The Boards discussed their continued commitment to defending the rights of young people, their traditional commitment to the abolition of capital punishment, the expansion of litigation efforts and the Union's continued presence in the New Hampshire legislature.

The Union and the Foundation are committed to the expansion of individual rights for every citizen of the state. We continue to defend a woman's right to reproductive autonomy, the rights of gays and lesbians to marry, the rights of all to personal privacy, the rights of bisexual and transgender people to be free from discrimination, the rights of prisoners to adequate medical care, the rights of offenders to rebuild their lives once their sentences are completed and the rights of those with unpopular views to express their opinions without fear.

The discussions were lively, the debates were stimulating and the occasional disagreements were civil. The members of the Boards left the retreat energized and recommitted to the important work we do every day.

*The NHCLU Foundation is indebted to our corporate dinner sponsors:*



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## Email Alerts

The NHCLU has an email alert system to notify members who wish to contact their state or federal elected representatives about pending legislation. If you want to take part in these legislative alerts, please send us your name and email address to NHCLU, 18 Low Avenue, Concord, NH 03301.

***We DO NOT share email information with any other organization,  
including the national ACLU.***