



Baumwell named ACLU-WV interim executive director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Dec. 20, 2022

CONTACT: Billy Wolfe bwolfe@acluwv.org

CHARLESTON, W.Va. –**Eli Baumwell**, Advocacy Director for the **American Civil Liberties Union of West Virginia (ACLU-WV)**, has been named Interim Executive Director. He will serve in the position until the affiliate’s board of directors hires a permanent replacement.

Baumwell was tapped for the position because of his experience as a leader, Board President **Anne Farmer** said.

“Eli understands all aspects of this organization and has represented the affiliate at the Legislature and across the state for more than seven years now. He will help us ensure that a steady and smooth transition takes place,” Farmer said. “We are more than confident in his ability to lead the organization at this time.”

Baumwell, a graduate of Cornell University who holds a juris doctorate and a master’s degree in public and international affairs from the University of Pittsburgh, joined the ACLU-WV staff in October 2015. He is not pursuing the permanent executive director position.

"I know that transitions can be a time of uncertainty and upheaval and I'm happy to help facilitate a smooth transition from one permanent executive director to the next for my friends, colleagues and the organization that I care so much about," Baumwell said.

Joseph Cohen, who served as executive director since 2016, has stepped into a new role with ACLU National as Senior Advisor for Affiliate Partnerships. In this role, Cohen will help deepen the culture of cooperation between ACLU's National Political Advocacy Department and affiliates all over the country.

As a parting gesture and to recognize Cohen’s many contributions to the organization during his tenure, Farmer said the board of directors has named the affiliate’s paid internship program for members of disenfranchised communities “The Joseph Cohen Equity and Justice Fellowship.”

Under Cohen’s leadership, ACLU-WV quadrupled its staff, racked up numerous legal victories including an injunction against the state’s discriminatory transgender athlete ban, helped pass reforms to the state’s cash bail system, and more.

“Serving as the Executive Director of the ACLU of West Virginia was the most incredible honor. I’m leaving the position knowing that the organization couldn’t have a better team in place to lead the fightback against the looming attacks on civil liberties,” Cohen said.

“We are going to miss Joseph deeply, but we are glad to know he will continue to make the world a fairer, more just place through his work with the ACLU,” Farmer said.