

October 20, 2020

Stephen M. Levinson
President
ACLU of Virginia, Board of Directors
7289 Hillary Street, Alexandria, VA 22315

Dear Steve:

It is with profound gratitude for the eight plus years that I have been honored to be allowed to serve as the Executive Director of the ACLU of Virginia that I submit my resignation effective March 31, 2021 or as soon as my successor is in place.

I wanted to provide this extended notice so that the transition can be a smooth one and the Board will have adequate time to search for the new Executive Director. I also wanted to time the transition so that it would fall at the end of the 2021 legislative session and at the beginning of our fiscal year. If it would be helpful, I am open to serving as a senior advisor to the new ED for a couple of months after they are onboarded.

I wanted to make the announcement of my “retirement” from this position before the election because I didn’t want anyone to think that my choosing to move on was a response to the outcome of the election, whatever it may be.

I have been thinking a lot about “retiring” as Executive Director since last June when Alexis Ohanian announced his resignation from the board of the company he founded, Reddit, as an answer to the question his daughter might ask following George Floyd’s murder, “what did you do?” Ohanian said he was resigning from the board to make room for a Black director. He said he believed “resignation can actually be an act of leadership from people in power right now.” That made me think about whether I should step aside from this leadership position in order to make room for the next generation of leadership at the ACLU. Justice Ginsburg’s death at age 86 accelerated my thinking in significant part because I am only 15 years younger than she was at her death. Fifteen years is not a lot of time in absolute terms and, in relative terms, it is almost no time at all.



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I am ready to make room for new leadership to step in and step up now because the ACLU of Virginia is very well positioned to meet any challenges ahead, whatever they are. Since 2012 when I came on board, we've grown from 6 employees to more than 20. The people we have added to our team are exceptional in every respect. We have substantial resources in the bank to weather any downturn and invest in making and sustaining important and lasting change. We have an infrastructure in place to sustain and build on the foundation we've laid. We have a committed group of lay leaders on our Board of Directors. Our supporters and members now number over 100,000, up from 8,500 just four years ago this fall.

For me, personally, I have begun to long for the time when I was just "me" and not so closely tied to an organizational brand. I want the freedom to set my own schedule and priorities, to be active politically and to help elect the next generation of Virginia's statewide leaders in 2021. I want to spend my "retirement" and the time I have left helping to make sure that Virginia is a place where all of my extended family (most of whom now live here) will be safe and welcome and where all of my friends feel valued and loved for who they are. I want to be free to look for opportunities to continue to make a difference so that, whatever happens in Washington, Virginia will

- continue to move away from its racially unjust history,
- continue the work to assure racial justice at the ballot box and in our criminal legal system,
- realize the promise of our "first in the south" protection of LGBTQ people from discrimination, and
- erase remaining barriers to people's access to abortion and basic reproductive health care.

In a very real respect, I will not be leaving the work, just the workplace and the position of power I am holding. The ACLU of Virginia and all of the staff and Board members will retain their hold on my heart.

Best.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Claire".

Claire



AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION
FOUNDATION

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