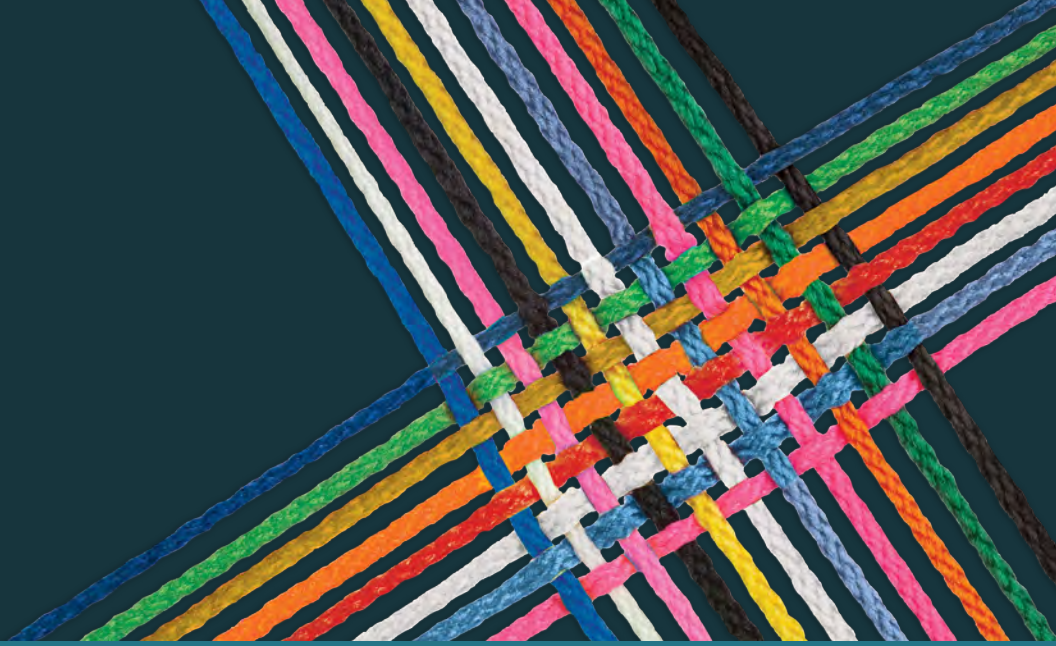


SPRING 2025 NEWSLETTER



Strength in Solidarity:

FACING THE FUTURE TOGETHER



GENDER
JUSTICE

GENDER
JUSTICE
ACTION

GENDER
JUSTICE
ACTION PAC

Dear Supporters,



MEGAN PETERSON, Executive Director
(she/her/hers)

“

WITHOUT THIS
PROGRESS, WE
WOULD BE FACING
A VERY DIFFERENT
REALITY TODAY.

”

When we look at the state of the nation today, it's clear that without the work we've done together in Minnesota, our communities would be facing unimaginable setbacks.

We're witnessing a relentless push to roll back civil rights—led by a federal administration eager to return us to a society shaped by white Christian nationalism, where gender, race, ethnicity, and ability determine our opportunities in life. Amid this backward slide, our state-based work has never felt more critical. Thanks to your support, **Minnesota has become a North Star for justice—a place where the right to live authentically and make decisions about our own bodies is not just protected, but championed.**

Together, we've secured landmark victories: *Doe v. Minnesota*, which struck down unconstitutional barriers to abortion; *Lusk v. Minnesota Department of Corrections*, which affirmed dignity for transgender inmates; and legislative wins like paid family and medical leave, an end to state funding for crisis pregnancy centers, the Trans Refuge Bill, and more. **Without this progress, we would be facing a very different reality today—one where our hard-won rights would be rapidly eroding in the face of national hostility.**

But we didn't get here by chance. Our decision to focus on state-level protections during Trump's first term put us one step ahead—and it's paid off. Instead of waiting for change from Washington, we created it right here at home, building a foundation of justice that has held strong, even as the national landscape grows more hostile. Your support made that possible. And with your continued partnership, we'll ensure this progress endures no matter the challenges ahead.

This year marks Gender Justice's 15th anniversary. Since 2010, we've accomplished so much, but there is still more to do. The attacks on our rights and freedoms don't stop at Minnesota's borders. That's why we've expanded into North Dakota, challenging unconstitutional bans on gender-affirming care and abortion and bringing our proven state-based litigation model to communities that need it most.

In Minnesota, our work is far from over. We're more committed than ever to securing gender justice and equality—starting with the Equal Rights Amendment. This is the cornerstone of our strategy to make our progress permanent. Through our new, powerful coalition—Minnesotans for Equal Rights—we're keeping up the momentum to pass the ERA as soon as possible.

Alongside our partners in UnRestrict Minnesota, we're also advancing strategies to make access to abortion and reproductive health care truly real. The infrastructure in Minnesota is still not enough to meet the needs of patients coming from across the region, and the attacks on abortion have not stopped.

We're also in the thick of the "debate" on trans equity in sports, as we await a monumental decision from the Minnesota Supreme Court in *Cooper v. USA Powerlifting*. It's painful to watch the powerful rise of the far-right on a wave of anti-trans hate disguised as concern for women's rights. **We cannot achieve equal rights for all while leaving transgender people behind, including their right to participate in sports.** I hope you'll take a moment to read the piece in this newsletter laying out why this issue matters so deeply to us at Gender Justice.

We believe the states hold the key to creating a future where all people are respected and treated with dignity. We can't pull out of this slide toward authoritarianism by looking to national solutions alone. State by state—including those some have written off—we must protect and build the country we want to live in again. **Together, we can fight back against hate and corruption and build a future rooted in our most fundamental values: equity, justice, empathy, acceptance, dignity, opportunity, and freedom.**

This newsletter highlights the recent progress we've made together, but it also marks the beginning of our next chapter. With your continued support, we will keep fighting and advancing, making sure that the progress we've made stands firm, no matter what lies ahead.

Thank you for standing with us for the last 15 years. Let's make some good trouble together as we embark on the next 15 years.

Megan Peterson



Thank you for making the Gender Justice Brunch a success!

Thank you to our 2024 Gender Justice Brunch attendees, sponsors, speakers, and performers! Your generosity and partnership allow us all to continue working to dismantle the barriers to gender equity in Minnesota and the upper Midwest. With over 400 people joining us that day, we're grateful to have spent the morning in community with all of you.

Please watch for a 2025 save the date for this fall's brunch, celebrating 15 years of Gender Justice, to be shared later this spring!



Legal Updates

This year, we've entered a deeply concerning political reality, but it has only strengthened our resolve to fight for gender equity, trans rights, and bodily autonomy through the law.

Here are the latest legal developments in our ongoing work:



Trial Concludes in Case Challenging North Dakota's Trans Healthcare Ban

In February, we concluded our trial in *T.D. v. Wrigley*, challenging North Dakota's sweeping ban on gender-affirming care for trans youth, with a ruling expected in the coming months. During trial, moving testimony from trans youth and their parents underscored the devastating toll of this law. The trial took place the same week the Trump administration issued an unconstitutional executive order attempting to block gender-affirming care for youth nationwide.



Restoring Access to Abortion in North Dakota

In January, the North Dakota Supreme Court denied the State's attempt to reinstate a near-total abortion ban. For now, abortion remains legal in North Dakota while the State's appeal continues, but the fight is far from over. Gender Justice remains committed to defending reproductive freedom and ensuring all North Dakotans can access the care they need.



Fight Against LGBTQ+ Workplace Discrimination Continues

Our lawsuit on behalf of Reyzi Grace, a staff librarian who was effectively terminated after coming out as trans, continues after our filing last fall. This case could not be more timely. As trans protections continue to be undermined across the country, we must ensure Minnesota remains a safe haven where no one has to fear for their job simply because of who they are.



Fighting for Trans Inclusion in Sports

In December 2024, we held oral arguments at the Minnesota Supreme Court in *Cooper v. USA Powerlifting*, our case challenging the ban on trans women's participation in sports. We now eagerly await the court's decision, which could have far-reaching implications for trans rights in Minnesota.

Attorney of the Year: Fourth Year Running!

For the fourth year in a row, members of Gender Justice's legal team have been named among Minnesota Lawyer's Attorney of the Year Honorees. **Jess Braverman** and **Christy Hall** were recognized for their work on *Anderson v. Thrifty White*, a landmark case that established that a pharmacist's refusal to fill an emergency contraception prescription based on personal beliefs constitutes sex discrimination under the Minnesota Human Rights Act.



Legislative Updates

Minnesota's role as a regional safe haven for abortion access, trans rights, and those seeking refuge from oppression has never been more critical. But this legislative session has served as a stark reminder that we can't take that status for granted.

When the Minnesota House briefly fell under anti-LGBTQ, anti-abortion control at the start of the session, extremist lawmakers wasted no time pushing dangerous bills attacking abortion rights, trans people, and gender equity. While we successfully held the line, it underscored the vital work of Gender Justice Action to elect a strong pro-equality majority.



HERE'S WHAT WE'RE TRACKING:

The ERA is Stronger & More Urgent Than Ever

As attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion increase, a new poll shows that 67% of Minnesotans support the Equal Rights Amendment (HF 473 & SF 501). This poll makes it crystal clear: Minnesotans want an inclusive ERA in our state constitution. Now is the time to get the ERA passed!

Defending Abortion Access

The so-called "Born-Alive Bill" (HF 24) was a deliberately misleading anti-abortion bill that targeted abortion providers and would interfere with critical health care options for people facing complicated and often very painful decisions later in pregnancy. Fortunately, the bill failed on the House floor.

Demanding Dignity for Trans People in Custody

Another dangerous bill in the Minnesota House (HF 435) sought to force the Department of Corrections to violate the Minnesota Human Rights Act by housing trans inmates in facilities that do not match their gender, subjecting them to violence and harassment. We've fought and won cases like *Lusk v. Department of Corrections*, affirming the right of trans women to be housed safely, and will continue to fight bills like this.

Standing Up Against Attacks on Trans Athletes

HF 12, a bill that sought to ban trans girls and women from sports, is another example of the harmful and discriminatory bills pushed early this legislative session. This bill was not only morally wrong but illegal under the Minnesota Human Rights Act. Fortunately, it failed to pass the House.

Protecting State Funds From Redirection to Anti-Abortion Centers

Another troubling bill (HF 25) sought to redirect four million dollars from the base budget of the Minnesota Department of Health to deceptive and unregulated anti-abortion centers, also known as Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs). We worked hard, alongside our partners at UnRestrict Minnesota, to ensure that this attack on reproductive health funding did not succeed.



North Dakota's 2025 Legislative Session: The People Deserve Better

Once again, North Dakota lawmakers have ignored the real challenges families face—like rising costs, childcare, and education—and instead pushed a divisive, extreme agenda.

Instead of expanding reproductive freedom, they introduced a dangerous "fetal personhood" bill (HB 1373) that would criminalize pregnancy outcomes. They also failed to advance policies that would have protected access to birth control and IVF (HB 1478, HB 1477, HB 1282, HB 1384). They also attacked trans and LGBTQ+ rights, attempting to penalize inclusive schools (HB 1144, SB 2104), overturn protections against conversion therapy (HB 1430), erase legal recognition for transgender people (HB 1181), and more.

Why We're All-In on Trans Inclusion in Sports

At first glance, the conversation around trans inclusion in sports might seem complicated. But when we look closer, this issue isn't simply about who gets to compete—it's about something bigger: who has the power to define fairness, identity, and freedom for all of us. And allowing politicians to decide whose bodies, identities, and rights deserve protection sets a troubling precedent for all of us.

At Gender Justice, we envision a society where everyone—regardless of gender identity or expression—can thrive free from discrimination. As a proudly feminist organization, we believe in rejecting harmful stereotypes and dismantling the confining boxes society tries to place us in—whether around gender, race, ability, or any other factor limiting our potential. Our work is about expanding opportunities and ensuring everyone has the freedom to live their full and true lives.

Who's Driving the Anti-Trans Backlash and What's Their Goal?

The recent wave of anti-trans sports bans isn't happening by chance. It's part of a carefully orchestrated campaign led by the same far-right groups that have long targeted reproductive freedom. These groups have poured untold sums into spreading fear, misinformation, and divisive rhetoric. In the 2024 election cycle alone, they spent over \$215 million on anti-trans political ads designed to stir panic about trans athletes and pronouns.

When Trump returned to office, one of his first actions was to target trans people—a move echoing troubling historical patterns. Authoritarian and far-right regimes have often scapegoated vulnerable groups to consolidate power, distract the public, and fracture solidarity among communities who would otherwise unite against injustice. Targeting trans people isn't just about trans rights—it's part of a broader strategy to erode democratic protections and divide movements for equality.

Why trans people? Because their very existence challenges rigid, traditional gender norms many of us grew up accepting without question—norms that

are central to the vision of white Christian nationalism. This ideology seeks to align our laws and society with conservative religious beliefs, enforcing strict gender roles, marginalizing LGBTQ+ identities, and excluding or erasing those who don't conform.

Trans identities reveal the possibility of a world beyond narrow gender roles, and that possibility threatens the social order the far-right seeks to impose. By targeting trans women athletes, the far-right aims to pit women against each other, reinforcing harmful stereotypes that portray cisgender women as weak and trans women as threats. It's a calculated attempt to fracture solidarity and dismantle the broader fight for gender equality.

We've Seen This Before: Sports and the Politics of Exclusion

History reminds us that exclusion in sports is nothing new. From barring Black athletes in professional leagues to quotas limiting Jewish participation, we now recognize these moments as shameful—driven by prejudice, not fairness.

Today, trans athletes are the newest target. Under current bans, any girl whose body, voice, or appearance doesn't neatly match stereotypes about femininity could face humiliating and invasive tests simply to participate. Young women, especially those of color or whose bodies don't align with restrictive definitions of white femininity,



would be the first to face suspicion. We've already seen this happen to athletes like Caster Semenya, whose career has been disrupted by invasive scrutiny rooted in racial and gender biases.

Imagine your daughter, granddaughter, or niece denied the opportunity to compete—not because of her talent or commitment, but because someone else decided she wasn't "feminine enough" to belong. For many, this humiliating treatment would discourage participation altogether, robbing them of the joy, confidence, and connection that athletics provides. These policies undermine decades of feminist advocacy that made sports a powerful space for empowerment and inclusion.

Banning Trans Athletes Threatens Everyone's Rights

Allowing politicians to define who qualifies as a "valid" woman sets a dangerous precedent that extends far beyond sports. As a legal advocacy organization, we see clearly how dangerous this is—and that's why we've taken on cases like JayCee Cooper's, challenging discrimination in powerlifting.

When politicians gain the power to define gender and identity, they gain the power to decide who qualifies for fundamental rights—like healthcare, employment protections, marriage equality, and reproductive freedom.

We've seen this playbook before. Politicians have redefined "personhood," granting embryos and fetuses rights at the expense of women's autonomy over their own bodies. The logic behind anti-trans athlete bans is the same: politicians deciding whose rights matter and whose don't. If lawmakers succeed in excluding trans people from protections, it establishes a dangerous legal precedent that could lead to widespread erosion of personal autonomy.

Who might be targeted next? Same-sex couples seeking marriage equality, workers facing gender discrimination, or individuals seeking contraception? These are not hypotheticals.

What You Can Do:



Sign our **letter** in support of trans inclusion in sports:
genderjustice.us/letter



Check out our **Trans Inclusion in Sports Toolkit** to learn more.
genderjustice.us/toolkits/trans-inclusion-sports



History has shown us that when politicians get to decide who deserves rights and protections, everyone's freedom is at risk.

Standing Together: Our Freedoms Are Connected

This isn't just about sports. It's about bodily autonomy, equality, and civil liberties for everyone. When we stand up for trans athletes, we're standing up for a fundamental truth: everyone deserves dignity, respect, and equal rights under the law.

Your support is crucial. And just as importantly, your voice is needed. Help us move the public conversation toward inclusion and empathy. Talk to your friends, family, or coworkers who are still wrestling with what this issue means.

Sign our letter in support of trans inclusion in sports, and watch your inbox for opportunities to join an upcoming trans equity training to deepen your learning and sharpen your advocacy.

By standing together for trans inclusion, we build a stronger, more unified movement for justice. The far right is counting on us to be divided. But when we understand that our rights are interconnected—we become unstoppable.

Building Power at the Ballot Box

The 2024 elections made one thing clear: the fight for reproductive freedom, LGBTQ+ equity, and gender justice is far from over. With Trump back in the White House and an emboldened conservative movement, we are facing unprecedented attacks on our rights. But thanks to the work of Gender Justice Action, our PAC, and the support of our donors, we helped elect champions who will stand up for our communities—and we're just getting started.

Our Impact in 2024

We made strategic endorsements in key races, helping elect 40 candidates committed to protecting gender justice, reproductive rights, and LGBTQ+ equity.

We also built power in communities—launching our first-ever Election Crew, mobilizing volunteers, and reaching out to voters who might not have otherwise made it to the polls. Additionally, we partnered with Minnesota Voice to help ensure that formerly incarcerated Minnesotans knew their voting rights were restored—strengthening democracy for everyone.

Our efforts paid off: We defended a pro-reproductive freedom and LGBTQ+ supportive majority in the Minnesota Senate and prevented an anti-LGBTQ+ agenda from taking hold in the House.



The Work Ahead

The 2026 midterms will be a critical opportunity to expand our power, strengthen our majorities, and push for bold policies that advance gender justice. But we can't wait until the next election year to get started—building political power requires year-round organizing.

That's why ongoing support for Gender Justice Action is so important. Unlike our 501(c)3 work, which is limited in how it can engage in elections, our c4 and PAC allow us to directly support candidates, shape the political landscape, and fight back against attacks on our rights. Every dollar invested in this work helps us elect leaders who will protect reproductive freedom, LGBTQ+ equity, and the rights of all Minnesotans.

Help us build the future we need—make
a gift to Gender Justice Action today.

genderjusticeaction.us/donate





MINNESOTANS FOR EQUAL RIGHTS

**Write to Your
Lawmaker Today!**

genderjusticeaction.us/write



A Movement for This Moment

On the first day of Minnesota's legislative session, hundreds of supporters packed the Capitol rotunda to demand equal rights in our state's constitution.

The energy was electric as over a dozen lawmakers and members of the new Minnesotans for Equal Rights coalition delivered impassioned speeches about what an inclusive ERA will mean for Minnesota—and why it's more urgent than ever in the face of renewed attacks on our civil rights.

With Trump back in office, Minnesota has the opportunity—and the responsibility—to lead. Passing the ERA is about ensuring lasting protections for bodily autonomy, gender equity and equal opportunity. This fight isn't just about policy—it's about the future we choose to build together.

We are grateful for the leadership of Representative Leigh Finke and Senator Mary Kunesh, who are championing this critical effort in the legislature. Our bills, HF 473 in the House and SF 501 in the Senate, are a big step toward enshrining equal rights in Minnesota's constitution.

"The Minnesota ERA is an affirmation that everyone is somebody. The ERA is an affirmation that we will not stand by and allow anybody to be subtracted from the human family. We're going to stand up for everyone's right to live with dignity." – Rev. Dr. DeWayne Davis, Plymouth Congregational Church of Minneapolis

"There is a false narrative being shared, and it's one that we've seen both in Washington and here in Minnesota as the ERA was debated last year, that somehow granting equality to more of us takes equality away from some of us. I don't believe that equality is a finite resource." – Kat Rohn, Executive Director of OutFront Minnesota

"The Equal Rights Amendment is a critical step to protect the rights and autonomy of all women—especially women of color, immigrant women, LGBTQ+ women, and others long impacted by systemic inequities." – Gloria Perez, President and CEO of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota

"The Minnesota ERA is critical to ensuring that Minnesotans with disabilities are afforded the same dignity, opportunity, and protections as everyone else. Discrimination impacts all of us, and the ERA is a vital step toward dismantling the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from thriving in our communities." – Trevor Turner, Public Policy Director at the Minnesota Council on Disabilities



SUPPORT THE FIGHT FOR GENDER EQUITY

Contribute to the fight to stand up for reproductive rights and LGBTQ+ equality. Each and every dollar raised contributes to Gender Justice's ability to win historic victories on issues like abortion access and trans rights, setting groundbreaking legal precedents, and cultivating transformative movements.

GIVE MONTHLY OR ONE-TIME

Joining Gender Justice's monthly giving program makes the biggest possible impact by helping to sustain the fight for gender equity. Your gift of \$3, \$13, \$30, or \$300 monthly keeps the momentum going and supports our work. We also appreciate one time contributions!



genderjustice.us/donate

OTHER WAYS TO GIVE

- Matching Employer Gifts
- Leave A Gift In Your Will
- Donate Stock
- Make A Gift Through Your Donor Advised Fund
- Get Tax Benefits By Giving Through Your IRA
- Hold a Fundraising House Party with Your Friend

We'd love to hear from you! Please contact:

Anne Page, Development Director
(651) 400-7563 • anne.page@genderjustice.us

You can also reach the Development Team at
development@genderjustice.us

Your generosity allows us to hold people and institutions accountable—and ensure human, civil, and constitutional rights for us all. Thank you!



Brave, Brilliant, and Tireless: Christy Hall's Legacy at Gender Justice

After nearly 14 years of dedicated work, Christy Hall has moved on from Gender Justice to serve as an Assistant Attorney General for Minnesota.

Her journey has been marked by incredible bravery, brilliance, and tirelessness, from winning pivotal cases to shaping the organization's success.

We are grateful for her invaluable contributions and excited to see her continue making a difference in Minnesota's legal landscape.

Read more about Christy's impact from Gender Justice co-founder Jill Gaulding and Legal Director Jess Braverman.

genderjustice.us/christy



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Meet Iman: Our New Advocacy Director

Iman Hassan is no stranger to Gender Justice—she previously served as our board vice chair, and now she's back as our new Advocacy Director!

A proud Minnesotan, Iman recently returned home after years of legal advocacy focused on disability and juvenile justice in Boston. Now, she's bringing her passion and expertise to the fight for gender equity in Minnesota and North Dakota.

Get to know Iman and her vision for this work in our Q&A on the website.

genderjustice.us/iman





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