

A Message from  
Illinois Attorney General  
**KWAME RAOUL**




Equality is an essential principle of our nation and the State of Illinois, requiring fair and equal treatment, rights and opportunities for every individual.

Our state and federal laws guarantee Illinois residents the right to live free of unlawful discrimination based on race, religion, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and other protected characteristics. I am committed to the work of upholding these rights and fighting for equality for all Illinois residents.

My office's Civil Rights Bureau works with local, state and federal agencies, as well as with civil rights and community groups, to identify patterns and practices of discrimination. The bureau vigorously enforces the law to prohibit discrimination and ensure equality.

Please review this brochure to learn more about unlawful discrimination and how my office defends your rights. For additional information, please visit our website at [www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov).

  
Kwame Raoul  
Attorney General

## Filing a Complaint

If you believe you have been a victim of unlawful discrimination, you may file a complaint by:

1. Calling the Civil Rights Bureau at **1-877-581-3692**. Individuals with hearing or speech disabilities can reach us by using the 7-1-1 relay service;
2. Filling out a complaint form on the Illinois Attorney General's website [www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/Rights-of-the-People/civil-rights/](http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/Rights-of-the-People/civil-rights/) and sending it by email or printing and mailing it to the Civil Rights Bureau at **115 S. LaSalle St., Chicago, IL 60603** or faxing it to **(312) 814-3212**; or
3. Filling out a complaint form in-person at **115 S. LaSalle St., Chicago, IL 60603**.

**NOTE:** The Illinois Attorney General represents the People of the State of Illinois, not the individual making a complaint. Filing a complaint with the Illinois Attorney General is not a substitute for bringing an individual lawsuit in court, and it does not affect any of the filing deadlines or other administrative prerequisites for filing a lawsuit in court or with other government agencies.

[www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov](http://www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov)

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This material is available in alternate format upon request.

# CIVIL RIGHTS BUREAU

## DEFENDING YOUR RIGHTS



**KWAME RAOUL**  
ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL

## **What does the Civil Rights Bureau do?**

The Attorney General's Civil Rights Bureau protects the civil rights of all Illinois residents. The Civil Rights Bureau does not represent individuals; we represent the interests of the people of the State of Illinois. The Bureau monitors, investigates, and enforces civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination on behalf of the state. The Bureau also works to strengthen the civil rights laws and participates in community outreach programs.

The bureau conducts "pattern and practice" investigations – civil rights violations that are the standard policy or operating procedure rather than an isolate incident – under civil rights laws.

Illinois law gives the office the authority to:

- Address patterns and practices of discrimination in housing, public accommodations, employment, and financial services.
- Address patterns and practices of unlawful or unconstitutional conduct by police departments or county corrections, including violations of the Freedom from Drone Surveillance Act.
- Bring civil hate crimes lawsuits.
- Monitor compliance of colleges and universities in Illinois with the Preventing Sexual Violence in Higher Education Act.
- Enforce and monitor compliance with the Illinois Trust Act and VOICES Act, which govern law enforcement interactions with immigrant communities.

\*Protected categories include: race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age (40 and above), physical or mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, sexual orientation (including gender-related identity), order of protection status, unfavorable discharge from military service and military status. Unlawful discrimination in employment also includes discrimination based on citizenship status, arrest record and conviction record. In housing, discrimination on the basis of familial status or arrest record is also prohibited.

## **What are patterns and practice investigations of law enforcement?**

"Patterns and practices" refer to broad, systemic problems with law enforcement agencies, including county corrections, rather than individual incidents of alleged misconduct. Investigations examine whether policies, training, or practices systemically violate the law or the constitution.

## **What is a hate crime?**

A hate crime is an offense where a person or a group of people is targeted because of their actual or perceived identity. Illinois hate crime laws protect people who are targeted based on characteristics like race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, immigration or citizenship status, or physical or mental disability.

## **How do the Illinois Trust Act and VOICES Act protect immigrants in Illinois?**

The Trust Act generally prohibits local law enforcement in Illinois from participating in immigration enforcement. The VOICES Act gives procedural protections for immigrants victimized by violent crime or human trafficking who have assisted law enforcement in investigating or prosecuting certain types of crimes.

## **What is discrimination in housing?**

It is a civil rights violation for an owner, real estate agent or any person involved in a housing transaction to discriminate on the basis of a protected category.\* Examples include:

- Refusing to rent, sell, finance or insure housing.
- Changing the terms or conditions of a housing transaction.
- Refusing to rent to families with children.

- Harassing a tenant based on a protected category.
- Using advertisements expressing intent to unlawfully discriminate.

It is a civil rights violation to coerce, intimidate, threaten or interfere with any person's exercise of his or her civil rights in housing.

## **What is discrimination in employment?**

It is a civil rights violation for any employer, employment agency or labor organization to discriminate in hiring or the terms and conditions of employment on the basis of a protected category.\*

Examples include:

- Failing or refusing to hire or promote.
- Discharging or demoting.
- Providing different pay or benefits.
- Failing to provide a reasonable accommodation for pregnant employees.
- Sexually harassing employees.
- Segregating jobs or work sites.
- Instituting "English-only" workplace policies.

**Retaliation** is a civil rights violation. Employers cannot retaliate by punishing employees who complain of discrimination or sexual harassment or cooperate in an investigation.

## **What is discrimination in public accommodations?**

It is a civil rights violation for any person in a protected category\* to be denied the full and equal enjoyment of a place of public accommodation for a discriminatory reason.

Public accommodations include, but are not limited to: hotels, restaurants, theaters, retail stores, laundromats, banks, hospitals, museums, parks, gyms and the offices of an accountant or lawyer.