

LEVI STRAUSS FOUNDATION

Pioneers in Justice



Abdi Soltani

Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California

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Abdi Soltani represents a new generation of public interest leaders in California. Having worked his entire career in Northern California, he understands its diverse communities, geographic idiosyncrasies, political dynamics, ideological fault lines and key players.

A card-carrying member of the ACLU for many years, Abdi became executive director of the Northern California affiliate in 2009. Previously, he served as executive director at Californians for Justice, the Campaign for College Opportunity and PARSA Community Foundation.

Abdi's passion for freedom of speech and constitutional protections is intensely personal as well as political. As a child in Iran, his early experiences were shaped by government abuse of power before and after the Iranian Revolution.

Abdi has extensive experience leading social justice campaigns related to statewide policy and ballot initiatives. As a leader in the "No on 54" campaign in 2003, he helped defeat a proposition that would weaken racial equality by barring state and local government agencies from collecting vital data on Californians' race, ethnicity, color or national origin.

Abdi was awarded the John Gardner Public Service Fellowship in 1995 and the Gerbode Foundation Fellowship in 2002. He serves on the board of Public Advocates, a legal advocacy organization and is a graduate of Stanford University.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California is the country's largest ACLU affiliate. In 2009, it celebrated its 75th anniversary as a leader in defending and advancing the civil rights and civil liberties of all Californians.