July 24, 2009

RE: ACLU Urges "NO" Vote on Souder Amendment #2 to Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 (H.R. 3293) – Will Harm Public Health

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), a non-partisan organization with more than a half million members, countless activists and supporters, and fifty-three affiliates nationwide, we write to urge you to oppose and vote no on Representative Souder's amendment to H.R. 3293, which would prohibit federal funding for syringe exchange programs. The amendment is scheduled for a vote this afternoon.

Every scientific study of needle exchange programs has concluded that access to sterile injection equipment is a proven way to reduce the spread of deadly, infectious blood-borne diseases. Organizations supporting increased sterile syringe access include the National Academy of Sciences, the American Medical Association, the National Institute of Health (NIH), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The House Appropriations Committee wisely chose to end the prohibition on funding for syringe exchange programs. To vote to restore the prohibition, as the Souder amendment proposes, would be deeply misguided and harmful to public health. The ACLU joined dozens of other national organizations in a