

2021

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

PRIORITIES FOR MAKING MISSISSIPPI MORE JUST AND EQUAL FOR ALL

ACLU

Mississippi

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- Since 1969, the ACLU of Mississippi has stood side-by-side with you to seek a better Mississippi for all of us. We are freedom's watchdog, working daily in courts, legislatures, and communities to defend the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to all people by the U.S. and Mississippi Constitutions.
- This guide is a toolkit to highlight our 2021 Legislative Agenda, which prioritizes:
 - Voter and criminal justice reforms,
 - Supporting legislation on fair housing and community schools.
- We work to propose new bills, and defeat harmful legislation by:
 - Calling, writing, and meeting with our elected officials
 - Changing the public narrative through public education, letters to the editors, opinion-editorials, and social media.

ON THE 2021 DOCKET

- **ELECTION & VOTING REFORM**
- **CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM**
- **FAIR HOUSING**
- **COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**

2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

ELECTION & VOTING REFORM

- ACLU Mississippi is committed to protecting the voting rights of all Mississippians, especially Black communities who have historically been denied full access to the right to vote free of suppression.
- The ability to vote without unnecessary obstacles and suppression is not simply about the ability to cast a vote, it is about the ability of every Mississippian to fully participate in the political process and exercise the inherent rights bestowed upon each citizen of this state - the right to adequate housing, healthcare, education, economic pursuits, and freedom from discrimination.
- We will join dozens of advocacy groups demanding common sense election reforms to expand access to voting by removing barriers to participation. ACLU of Mississippi will advocate for and support legislation to:
 - **Establish Online Voter Registration;**
 - **Restore Voting Rights for Formerly incarcerated Mississippians;**
 - **Establish No-Excuse Early Voting; and**
 - **Establish Automatic Voter Registration at Age 18.**

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

- Mississippi has the third-highest imprisonment rates in the country. Mass incarceration, long sentences, habitual penalties and cash bail systems are all failed public safety strategies.
- The need to reduce the prison population in Mississippi has been heightened by COVID-19. As of October 2020, the Mississippi Department of Corrections confirmed at least 805 positive COVID-19 cases in prisons across the state, with outbreaks in at least 23 prisons.
- Joining forces with other advocacy organizations, ACLU of Mississippi will advocate for and support legislation aimed at safely and strategically reducing the state's dangerously high prison population by:
 - **Reforming the statewide system of excessive and unconstitutional pre-trial detention;**
 - **Limiting mandatory life sentences for less serious offenses; and**
 - **Creating greater parole opportunities.**

FAIR HOUSING

- ACLU of Mississippi will support legislation to ensure that every Mississippian is able to obtain housing free from discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and HIV/AIDS status.
- Adequate housing is more than just having a roof over one's head. Indeed, housing discrimination contributes to housing segregation and concentrated poverty leading to greater inequalities in access to employment opportunities, health care, and education.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

- ACLU of Mississippi supports amendment of the Districts of Innovation legislation to make way for Mississippi schools to become community schools. ACLU of Mississippi believes that education and community are inseparable.
- Educational models like community schools merges academics, health/social services, youth/community development and engagement in one place – the community. This holistic approach to education produces improved learning, stronger families and healthier communities.

FOR TIPS ON LOBBYING TO YOUR LEGISLATORS...

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LOBBYING GUIDE

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