



ACLU

Mississippi

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

2021-2025

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A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

At the ACLU of Mississippi, we have the humbling charge to defend the civil rights and liberties of all Mississippians. We are part of a nationwide network of affiliates that fights tirelessly to advance and preserve the First Amendment, equal protection, due process, and privacy rights of our state's most vulnerable citizens. As the new leader of an organization with a 50-year history in Mississippi, I have prioritized securing and expanding voting rights, protecting the most vulnerable Mississippians, and holding our state government accountable through advocacy and litigation.

It is an historic and trying time for our nation. While we contend with an ongoing pandemic, we are also fighting to maintain a democracy.

Now more than ever, we must be deliberate in our work. Over the past 6 months our staff and board members have taken on the methodical task of developing a strategic plan that will guide our efforts through 2025.

This playbook reflects the awesome responsibility we have, as an affiliate, to protect and expand civil rights. It also serves as an instrument of accountability for our supporters. It is a privilege to take on this work. We must always remember that there are thousands of Mississippians that need us to excel at our jobs.

Many of the folks relying on us may have never uttered in sequence, the letters A-C-L-U. Regardless, the ACLU of Mississippi must speak on their behalf. We must make plain what we wish to accomplish on their behalf and then do the work.

In solidarity,

Jarvis Dortch
Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

Developing a strategic plan is an important act of self-determination. It is a plan that is reflective of the needs and vision of the ACLU-MS. Most importantly, it is not developed by the national affiliate or the region, but is developed by and for the ACLU-MS. The plan reaffirms the mission and vision of the community, prioritizes strategies, and reconfirms values to maintain while working towards achieving the vision. A strategic plan acts like a road map to identify the route to take to get where the ACLU-MS wants to go – the vision for a better future. It also serves to help coordinate the work of the ACLU-MS, make efforts more effective and is an important reminder to stay true to the ACLU-MS's values. It also allows the organization to be more accountable and transparent to the community, supporters, and members. This strategic plan will be implemented to help guide the actions of the Board of Directors, executive leadership, and staff. This means it must remain integrated into the annual planning, decision making, and reporting of the ACLU-MS's governance.

MISSION

The ACLU of Mississippi is dedicated to promoting, defending, and extending civil rights and civil liberties to all Mississippians with emphasis on issues related to criminal justice reform, education opportunities, equal access/equality for all, voting rights, and governmental transparency and accountability.

We accomplish our mission through legislation, litigation and advocacy.

VISION

Our vision is that every Mississippian live in a just and equitable state free from discrimination where they can enjoy all the freedoms afforded them inherently and by the U.S. Constitution.

VALUES

Values are the ACLU-MS's source of guidance and what it stands for. They are timeless and seldom change.

- **We value inclusion.**
- **We make a difference in the community we serve.**
- **We fight for justice, equality, and fairness.**
- **We are guardians of civil liberties.**
- **We are responsible, accountable, honest, and passionate.**

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Based upon the Mission, Vision, Values, the Current State Analysis, the ACLU-MS has identified five (5) Strategic Priorities that will assist the ACLU-MS in getting where it wants and needs to be.

VOTING RIGHTS & POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Our democracy is shaped by the character of those who avail themselves of their most fundamental right to vote. The abridgement of that right in any way mocks the ideals and sacrifices upon which our democracy is built. This priority is important because it supports and preserves the ACLU-MS's identity and ensures the integrity of our state and nation. Voting opens the door to participate in the broader political process to bring about systemic change in ACLU Mississippi's focus areas.

Key Considerations

- **Improve access to voting,**
- **Promote, restore, and protect voting rights for the historically disenfranchised,**
- **Create public awareness about voting rights, inequities, and accessibility,**
- **Engage and educate voters on the wider voting issues like redistricting and change through ballot initiatives, and**
- **Advocate for favorable local, state, and national voting rights policies and legislation.**

EQUALITY AND EQUITY OF ACCESS

The ACLU of Mississippi is working to ensure equality to all Mississippians. All Mississippians deserve to be treated equitably regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, immigrant status, gender, sexual orientation, religion, familial status, or disability. The ACLU of Mississippi also recognizes that while “equality” is a great goal to aim for, equity takes a step further by focusing on the unique circumstances and needs of individual groups. We recognize that we must commit our efforts and resources to understanding and addressing the issues that affect the way individual groups interact with and are impacted by certain systems.

Key Considerations

- **Advocate for equitable access to public benefits and services,**
- **Expand services for disadvantaged groups,**
- **Challenge embedded power imbalances through advocacy and policy recommendations.**

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

The ACLU of Mississippi works to promote criminal justice reform aimed at reducing Mississippi's prison population and protecting the inherent and constitutionally guaranteed rights of the accused, defendants, incarcerated persons, and formerly incarcerated persons.

Key Considerations

- Addressing systemic practices of police misconduct,
- Reducing over-incarceration through bail reform,
- Exposing and challenging debtors' prisons, convict leasing, and modern-day slavery and sharecropping,
- Advocating for transparency and accountability in law enforcement,
- Supporting restorative justice,
- Advancing alternatives to policing, and
- Advocating for effective reentry policies and programs for returning persons.

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS & IMMIGRATION REFORM

The ACLU-MS believes that non-citizens have constitutionally guaranteed rights that safeguard them against undue and unfair treatment by local, state, and federal law enforcement.

Key Considerations

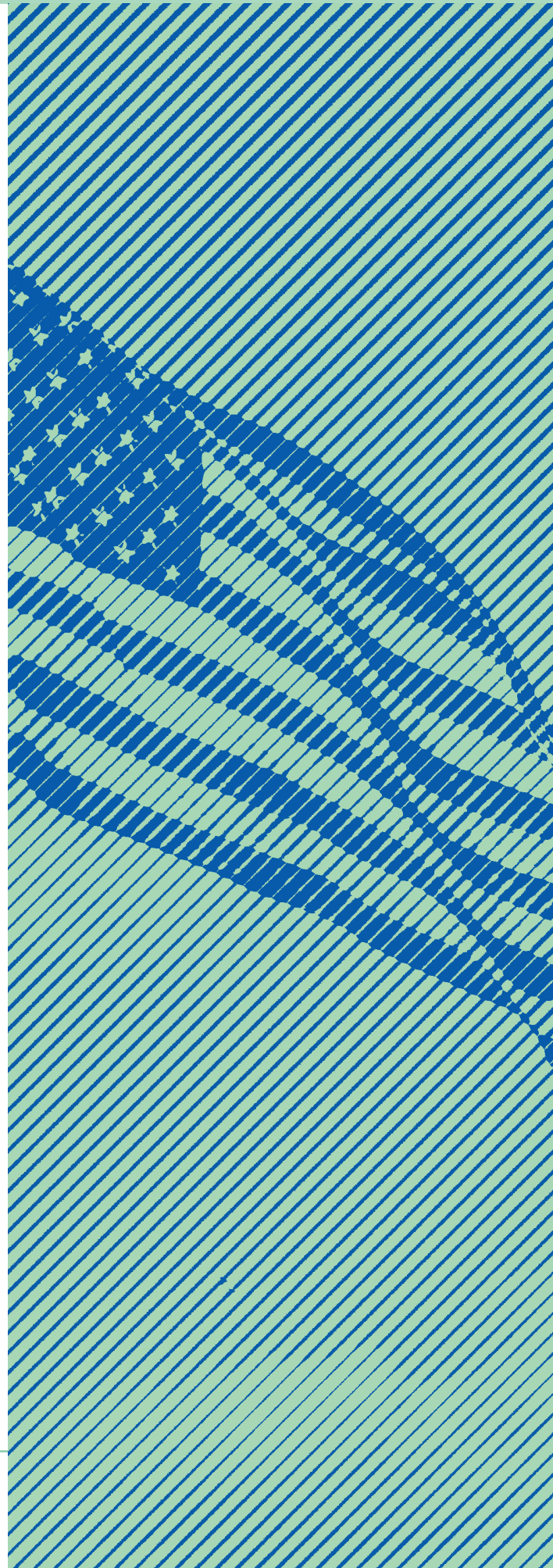
- Promote and protect immigrant rights,
- Create public awareness about immigrant rights and the illegal denial or disenfranchisement of those rights,
- Educate immigrants about their rights and responsibilities, and
- Advocate for favorable local, state, and national immigrant rights and policy reforms.

ORGANIZATIONAL ENDURANCE

Survival, change, sustainability. This is the current cycle of strategy for many organizations – survive the often unexpected changes in the current environment, change to provide for continuity of the mission and to establish the infrastructure required for success in the new environment, and then sustain the effort with a mode of operation for endurance over time. This priority is important because it creates a nimble, effective organization with a culture and pride in doing things the “ACLU of Mississippi’s” way.

Key Considerations

- **Develop a strategy to make the ACLU-MS more financially sustainable**
- **Increase the number of training opportunities made available to the community**
- **Develop a strategy for the recruitment and retention of diverse, passionate ACLU-MS staff**
- **Develop a strategy to recruit and train community councils to engage in ACLU-MS’s work**
- **Explore alternative ways to involve community members in decision making**
- **Increase the number of community members utilizing the resources of the ACLU**
- **Increase the ACLU-MS’s connection and participation with other community coalitions, professional and technical organizations, and local, state, and national policy decision-makers**



GOALS

VOTERS' RIGHTS & POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

1 TO EXPAND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES AND ENSURE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION WITHIN THE STATE'S REDISTRICTING PROCESS

Objectives:

By June 2022, we will have:


- Facilitated the creation of an independent state redistricting plan that is a fair representation of the state's electorate;
- Built a partnership with the MS Legislative Black Caucus to assist in the development of an alternate redistricting plan for introduction to the State Apportionment & Elections Committee;
- Leveraged partnerships with other voting rights advocates to share mapping data and other resources for use in plan development; and
- Identified and engaged in strategic litigation of redistricting plans that do not provide fair representation to all Mississippians.

2 INCREASE VOTER PARTICIPATION RATES BY 15% AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN VOTERS IN FOUR (4) TARGETED AREAS FOR THE NOVEMBER 2023 ELECTIONS

Objectives:

By November 2023, we will have:

- Established four (4) target/focus areas within the State;
- Built an educational and awareness campaign around the ballot initiative process, voter suppression, and redistricting;
- Identified and engaged in strategic litigation of legislation and/or public policy that abridge voting rights and access where necessary; and
- Assembled coalitions including community stakeholders to facilitate voter education initiatives.



3 TO ENSURE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION AMONG BLACK WOMEN WITHIN LOCALLY ELECTED BUREAUCRACIES.

Objectives:

By November 2023, we will have:

- **Increased the number of Black Women elected officials;**
- **Developed and implemented an engagement strategy aimed at identifying Black Women political candidates; and**
- **Increased voting participation within underrepresented groups and built stakeholder networks to sustain future efforts.**

EQUALITY AND EQUITY

1 TO INCREASE ADVOCACY AND SERVICE SUPPORT TO THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

Objectives:

By December 2021, we will have:

- Established a LGBTQ justice clinic;
- Recruited staff to manage clinic administration and operations;
- Identified and built a network of legal advocates to provide pro-bono services; and
- Developed and implemented a marketing and awareness campaign around the services available through the clinic.

2 TO INCREASE AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY ON ANTI-TRANSGENDER LEGISLATION

Objectives:

By 2022, we will have:

- Developed an awareness and education campaign around SB 2536 passed during the 2021 MS Regular Session;
- Developed and presented recommendations to the MS High School Athletics Association related to this legislation and other relevant organizations; and
- Develop an advocacy campaign to reduce the burden of obtaining personal identification documents;

- Developed a monitoring plan and reporting infrastructure to ensure appropriate and accurate implementation.

3 TO INCREASE AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY ON EQUITABLE ACCESS TO PUBLIC BENEFITS

Objectives:

By 2023, we will have:

- Established a methodology for evaluating state agencies to identify inequitable policies, practices, and interpretations and/or application of state statutes;
- Investigate and identify barriers to receiving public assistance from state administered social service programs that result in discriminatory impact and resolve through administrative complaints and litigation, where viable;
- Identified state agencies to evaluate and assess;
- Conducted state agency evaluations; and
- Prepared report of findings and subsequent recommendations for presentation to the state decision-makers and other interested advocacy groups.



IMMIGRANT RIGHTS AND IMMIGRATION REFORM

INCREASE TRANSPARENCY AND ADVOCACY FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM

Objectives:

By December 2021, we will have:

- **Built education and awareness campaign through storytelling to increase community organizing & engagement around this issue;**
- **Recommended affirmative policies that discourage partnerships between ICE and police; and**
- **Built networks with other Immigration Advocates to advocate for rights and policy reforms.**

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

1 TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM ADVOCACY.

Objectives:

By the end of 2025, we will have:

- **Expanded advocacy efforts around the following smart justice issues:**
Police Reform,
Decarceration,
Reducing Mississippi's prison population through advocacy for parole, sentencing, bail and reentry policy reforms,
- **Created policy reform recommendations and engaged in local and state advocacy.**
- **Leveraged partnerships with other advocacy organizations to raise awareness and education around the proposed policy recommendations & legislative agenda.**
- **Increased involvement of justice impacted persons in our criminal justice reform work and development of policy recommendations.**

2 TO CREATE EDUCATIONAL AWARENESS AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS AND DECISION MAKERS.

Objectives:

By June 2023, we will have:

- **Developed a pilot program with a law enforcement entity and social service providers to establish and implement police training around de-escalation of non-criminal incidents.**
- **Worked with local law enforcement entities to develop budget amendments to allocation funds to hire social workers and establish program.**
- **Created a model program to present to other law enforcement agencies for adoption and implementation.**
- **Increased education and awareness for other local and state community advocates and law enforcement entities.**

3 TO ENSURE THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF HOUSE BILL 747 REENTRY PILOT PROGRAM AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING RE-ENTRY POLICY

Objectives:

By June 2023, we will have:

- **Monitored implementation of the HB 747 Reentry Pilot Program.**
- **Provided support to the Sheriff of Rankin County with the implementation of the program.**
- **Made policy recommendations based on reports by the Sheriff of Rankin County and PEER .**
- **Established working relationship with the Joint Legislative Committee on Performance. Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER) on the evaluation of the pilot program's success.**
- **Developed and advocated for policy recommendations regarding the Reentry omnibus bill, focusing on expungements.**

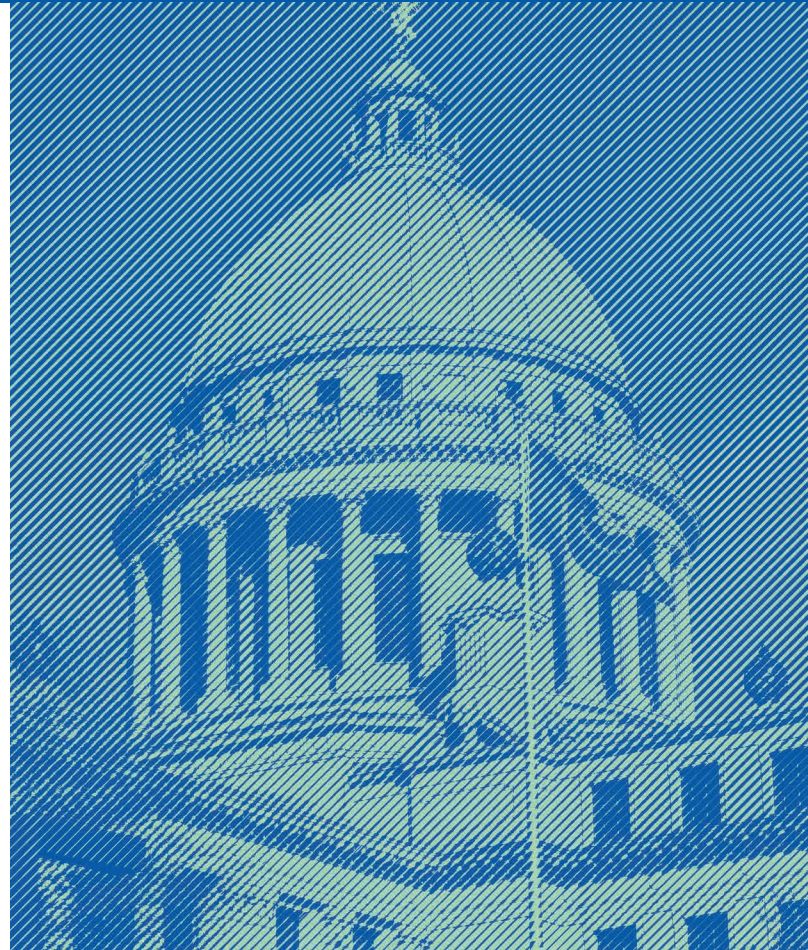
ORGANIZATIONAL ENDURANCE

1 TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF NEW, RECURRING DONORS BY 15%

Objectives:

By the end of 2022, we will have:

- Identified new donor growth sectors;
- Developed a marketing strategy to acquire new donors;
- Developed a marketing strategy to recapture lapsed recurring donors; and
- Developed a tracking and communication infrastructure to increase two-way communication with donors.



2 EXPAND ENGAGEMENT BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS, COUNCILS, AND COALITIONS

Objectives:

By the end of 2023, we will have:

- Developed strategy to recruit and train community councils to engage in ACLU's work;
- Identified and leverage existing networks to recruit new community partners; and
- Increase the number of partnerships by 20%
- Established strategy to involve community members in decision-making

3 EXPAND RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACLU STAFF

Objectives:

By the end of 2024, we will have:

- Increased the number of training opportunities for ACLU staff;
- Developed a succession plan for advocacy work to provide greater organizational continuity; and
- Increase opportunities for staff to participate in local, state, and national professional and technical organizations.



