



We hope that the municipal leaders of this state will embrace the American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi Municipal Equity Agenda as their own agenda. Providing a foundation for a more equal and just Mississippi is a standard that is not too lofty to attain. Encouraging respect amongst their fellow Mississippian is not too altruistic to comprehend and visualize. Courageously tearing down barriers to progress while protecting the rights of its citizens is not too difficult a balancing act to perform.

This agenda should serve as a tool to help those entrusted with leadership in this great state to speak out for those that have no voice, and provide a blueprint for a Mississippi that will be beneficial for the many residents that inhabit it. It is our desire that your actions reflect a spirit of collaboration by joining with us to see this agenda brought forward. Visit our website [www.aclu-ms.org](http://www.aclu-ms.org) to learn more.



# LEADING FOR A BETTER MISSISSIPPI

## Municipal Equity Agenda



Municipal leaders are considered the frontline of democracy. Our day-to-day lives are impacted greatly by decisions and policies of mayors and local officials. As we continue to grow, we must not fall short in making sure that all Mississippians thrive in an environment of racial, cultural and economic equity. Mississippi has seen its peaks and valleys over the last 200 years, but we firmly believe that our state's best years have yet to come. We also believe that the foundation for the future of our state lies within the capacity of courageous leadership emanating from our municipal leaders. It is in that belief that we present our Municipal Equity Agenda.



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# 1/ COMMIT TO CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Many Mississippians have their first encounter of the state's criminal justice system through the actions of local law enforcement. Therefore, it is imperative that municipal leaders take an active role in ensuring the state's criminal justice system is just and fair.

## PROMOTE COMMUNITY POLICING, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Transparency and accountability is required to ensure better relations and trust between community and police. City councils should be empowered to determine if and how local law enforcement use surveillance technologies, preferably through a process in which local communities have input and influence. More particularly, utilization of drones in the work of law enforcement should be held to the highest standard of accountability and transparency. Municipal leaders should uniformly adopt body camera policies that ensure accountability and transparency while protecting the privacy of citizens. Policies should also be encouraged that seek to restrict the militarization of law enforcement. Finally, community policing ensures that residents are not discriminated against, and policies and practices should reflect the same.

## SUPPORT RESTORATIVE AND RACIAL JUSTICE

The U.S. Constitution prohibits citizens from being imprisoned for a debt. The practice of placing people in jail for indefinite amounts of time because of an inability to pay a fine has to end. Formerly incarcerated persons need to re-enter society and become productive. Implementing a 'ban the box' policy, which removes questions on employment applications concerning criminal history, is a productive step to encourage re-entry and discourage recidivism.



# 2/ EXTEND EQUALITY TO ALL MISSISSIPPIANS



Just as municipalities vary throughout the state, our citizenry is just as diverse. All Mississippians should feel safe and welcomed here. This can only be achieved by prioritizing equality for all. As municipal leaders, your commitment to this principle will carry tremendous influence and remind citizens and visitors alike that Mississippi truly is a hospitable state.

## PROTECT CIVIL RIGHTS

Supporting protections for all Mississippians regardless of race, color, religion, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, familial status, or immigrant status in all facets of societal life through non-discrimination ordinances will surely help reshape our narrative. No one in Mississippi should face discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, health care, government programs or education. Local governments should ensure that they promote local non-discrimination policies by passing ordinances that recognize the dignity of all persons.

## EQUAL TREATMENT FOR ALL PEOPLE

Government services and facilities should be accessible to the disabled and affirming to all citizens, especially those in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) community. The general public should have access to meetings that greatly impact them in the spirit of a truly open government and policies should not be implemented that target citizens because of their status. Local leaders should review policies and budgets to ensure that all employees, especially women, receive fair and equitable pay so that they can support their families.

# 3/ GUARANTEE FREEDOM OF SPEECH & EXPRESSION, PRIVACY & ACCESS



Sections 13 and 18 of the Mississippi Constitution of 1890 protects Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Religion, and holds both of these rights as fundamental. Mayors and other municipal elected officials take an oath to uphold these and other rights embedded into that same Constitution. No ordinance should be introduced or voted upon that jeopardizes or compromises in any way these fundamental rights given to all Mississippians.

## DEFEND & PROTECT THESE FREEDOMS

Religion should never be used as a tool for discrimination. Freedom of speech and expression should be encouraged. The right to privacy and access cannot be compromised. Municipal leaders are asked to promote policies that protect these freedoms and oppose any proposals which attempts to deprive citizens of these values.

