



ACLU

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION
of MISSISSIPPI

2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alison Steiner
BOARD PRESIDENT

Monica Galloway
TREASURER

Jack Williams
SECRETARY

Olga Osby
NATIONAL BOARD REPRESENTATIVE

Catherine Sullivan
CLASS REP. 2014-2017

Sam Edward Arnold

Melanie Deas

Mary Figueroa

Mary Graham

Charles Holmes

Alexander Martin

Laura Martin

Eddie Outlaw

Ravi Perry

Dan Roach

Julie Schroeder

Stephen Silberman

Cassandra Welchlin

FOUNDATION BOARD

Dorothy Abbott

Andy Guerra



Mississippi is famous for always being last on the good stuff and first on the bad stuff. We

are at the end of the list when it comes to issues of health, education, and women's rights. We are at the head of the pack when we look at issues of over-incarceration, lack of educational attainment, and poverty. With such dismal statistics, especially fifty years after significant civil rights victories, our outlook could be negative. Fortunately, the ACLU of MS has centered its focus on addressing issues of equity in Mississippi.

Board President's Letter

Through legal, legislative and advocacy efforts, the ACLU of Mississippi has stood in defense of freedoms and advanced civil liberties. We stood beside partners as deliberate attempts were made to deny the law of the land recognizing marriage equality. We fought back against legislation which would deny a woman's right to access health care. We challenged officials who forgot that students and teachers do not leave their rights at the school house door. These are just a few of the amazing efforts of this affiliate. This report only highlights the incredible work of the staff of this affiliate. This team works diligently every day across the state to ensure we are fulfilling our core mission.

As we move forward, I am excited

the ACLU of MS is launching its "We are All Mississippi" campaign. This campaign highlights the reality that Mississippi is a very diverse state and that it takes all of us working together to make Mississippi better. Please be a part of this effort by reaching out to your friends and family and asking them to join the ACLU of MS. If each one will agree to reach one we can double our membership, build our base of support which can be leveraged to ensure not only equality but equity for all. Only with your support will be able to challenge and overcome historical and systemic obstacles to freedom.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alison Steiner". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Alison Steiner
President, ACLU of Mississippi

ACLU-MS STAFF

Jennifer Riley-Collins
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dylan Singleton
**DIRECTOR OF
OPERATIONS &
ADMINISTRATION**

Tabuthia Bell
FINANCE OFFICER

Zakiya Summers
**DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNICATIONS**

Morgan Miller
**FORMER
COMMUNICATIONS
DIRECTOR**

Keia Johnson
LEGISLATIVE STRATEGIST

L. Rene' Hardwick
**ADVOCACY COORDINATOR,
RESTRAINT AND
SECLUSION**

Todd Allen
**ADVOCACY COORDINATOR,
EQUALITY FOR ALL**

Blake Feldman
**ADVOCACY COORDINATOR,
CRIMINAL JUSTICE
REFORM**

Charles Irvin
LEGAL DIRECTOR

Andres Wallace
STAFF ATTORNEY

Syretta Salahadyn
PARALEGAL



Executive Director's Letter: What We Did This Year

Our work this year demonstrates our commitment to strategic initiatives aimed at reforming

the criminal legal system, ensuring equality for all Mississippians and protecting freedoms of speech, expression, privacy and access to the public.

By monitoring conditions of confinement in prisons, petitioning for the release of non-violent offenders and advocating for medical care access prior to re-entry, we laid the foundation to reduce the prison population by 25% by 2020. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, evolving from a number of tragic events involving law enforcement, police transparency and accountability were a priority. We worked with law enforcement departments across the state to ensure a citizen's right to record was

established as policy. We advocated at the local and state level for the use of body cameras balanced with policies which considered privacy concerns. We ensured citizens across the state were equipped not only with knowledge of their rights but with our smartphone app, Mobile Justice.

We recognize that an unfortunate feeder of the school to prison pipeline is an inadequately funded, overly harsh, discipline focused education system. We, therefore, concentrated on reducing the use of restraint and seclusion in schools and initiated a pilot project to address discipline and policing of young men of color.

Achieving equality for all Mississippians is an up-hill battle. We are not deterred. We, therefore, continued to monitor legislation and regulation targeting public benefit recipients. We successfully advocated for laws which recognized persons first over disabilities. We advanced college tuition for undocumented in-state students. We continued our voter access, protection and

education efforts. Our 2015 Equity Agenda provided a roadmap for policy and law makers to follow on issues of fairness for all Mississippians.

Protecting freedom of speech, expression, privacy and public access remain corner stone issues. We responded with determination when students across the state were denied the right to form Gay Straight Alliances and attend prom in a manner that expressed their individual identity. We reminded officials of the First Amendment when illegal gag orders were placed on parents advocating for their children. We defeated legislation which would have allowed pharmaceutical companies providing death penalty compounds to hide behind public records exemption.

Thank you for your continued support. We could do nothing without you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Riley-Collins'.

Jennifer Riley-Collins
Executive Director, ACLU of
Mississippi

SEPTEMBER 2014

- Keynote speaker Vanita Gupta, joined us for our 2014 Annual Dinner.
- We filed a suit against Scott County on behalf of Mississippians jailed indefinitely without lawyer or indictment.
- We filed a friend of the court brief in a same-sex divorce case.
- We hosted our first Meet & Greet in Oxford.
- We sent letters to law enforcement in Mississippi ensuring a citizen's right to record police actions.



NOVEMBER 2014

- Launched Android Mobile Justice Mississippi App
- We received a two-year \$350,000 grant from W.K. Kellogg Foundation to restrict the use of restraint and seclusion in schools.
- Released a statement about the grand jury decision not to indict Officer Darren Wilson in the shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO.
- US District Court Judge Reeves overturned Mississippi's same-sex marriage ban.



JANUARY 2015

- Each legislator in Mississippi received an Equity Agenda to guide their actions to ensure fairness in Mississippi.
- Pursued legislative priorities for the 2015 session: person first, tuition equity, school resource officer training, anti-bullying and police body cameras.
- Challenged the Rankin County School District club policy change after students wanted to start a Gay Straight Alliance.



DECEMBER 2014

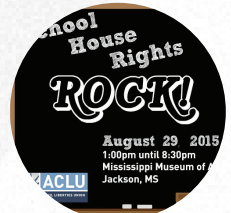
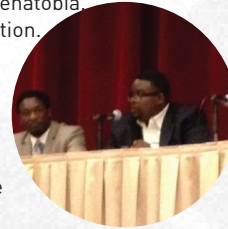
- We publicly commented on the Jackson Public Schools restraint and seclusion policy resulting in more specific changes.
- We hosted an open house to introduce the community to our work.





JUNE 2015

- Defended free speech rights of Senatobia, MS family for cheering at graduation.
- Supreme Court rules in favor of marriage equality! We worked to ensure compliance across MS.
- Charles Irvin, legal director, spoke on a panel at the DOJ Hate Crimes Conference.
- Andres Wallace worked with the William Winter Institute to conduct Know Your Rights trainings.
- We presented and launched keepstudentssafems.org at the MS disability Mega Conference.
- ACLU National wins case against Walnut Grove Correctional Facility upholding prisoner safety.



AUGUST 2015

- We hosted Schoolhouse Rights Rock, back-to-school event to teach students about their rights.
- We participated in the Annual Toogaloo Summit discussing religious discrimination and Religious Freedom Restoration Acts



APRIL 2015

- We supported the Springboard To Opportunities' Run for the Community 5k.
- The Mississippi School of the Arts allowed a transgender student to wear a dress to prom after we sent a letter affirming the student's rights.



MARCH 2015

- ACLU-MS joined other ACLU staff in Selma, AL to commemorate the 50th anniversary of those who marched for voting rights.

MAY 2015

- Launched the Mobile Justice Mississippi App for IOS.



JULY 2015

- Voting rights fans sent to churches across the state.
- We received a \$1 Million systems change grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to work to eliminate racial inequities for young black men of color.

LET ME VOTE

Mississippi Voter ID Law

What kind of ID can I show?

- Mississippi driver's license;
- ID card with your photo issued by the State of Mississippi;
- U.S. passport;
- U.S. military ID with your photo;
- Government employee ID card with your photo;
- Mississippi firearms license with your photo;
- Student ID with your photo from a Mississippi college or university;
- Tribal photo ID;
- Photo ID issued by any branch, department, or agency of the U.S. government or the government of any other state;
- FREE Mississippi Voter Identification Card
- FREE ID CAN BE EXPIRED as long as it is no more than ten years old.

What if I don't have any ID?

- If you are registered to vote, you can get a FREE ID for voting, called a Voter Identification Card.

How do I get a free ID for voting?

- Apply for a Voter Identification card at your circuit clerk's office. You can go anytime before Election Day. You can even go on Election Day, but make sure you leave yourself enough time to get to the polls.

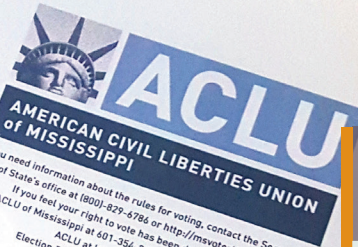
You must prove your identity before you get your Voter Identification Card.

If you can, bring ONE of these:

- Expired photo ID from the list on the left;
- Birth certificate or other document with your full legal name, date, and place of birth;
- Social security card;
- Medicare or Medicaid card;
- Mississippi voter registration card without your photo;
- Utility bill, bank statement, or government check with your name and current address issued in the last six months; OR
- IRS Form W-2 issued in 2014.
- If you do not have any of these IDs, don't worry. Tell the clerk your full legal name, date of birth, state of birth, gender at birth, and mother's maiden name. The clerk will verify your identity.
- Once your application is approved, your card will be mailed to you or the clerk will give you a receipt. You can show the receipt instead of photo ID to vote at the polls.

Do I have to show ID if I vote by mail?

- No. If you vote absentee by mail, you do NOT need photo ID.



If you need information about the rules for voting, contact the Secretary of State's office at (800)-827-6786 or <http://mvevoterid.ms.gov>.
If you feel your right to vote has been denied contact:
ACLU of Mississippi at 601-354-3608 or www.aclu-ms.org;
ACLU at letmevote@aclu.org;
Election Protection Hotline at 866-687-8683.

PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Fundamental to the right to vote is knowledge of rights related to voting. As we headed into the 2015 elections, the ACLU of MS strengthened our growing relations with the faith community by distributing church fans with voting rights information to over 300 churches across the state of Mississippi. We ensured our web and social media sites were replete with voter educational materials and information. On election days, with the support of attorneys and law students we manned action response teams to ensure voters had undeterred access to the polls.



CENTERS OF FOCUS

“Mississippi might help the country lead the way into having a new forthright history of itself.”

—ROBERT MOSES, FREEDOM SUMMER LEADER

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM



- Parole for non-violent offenders
- Mobile Justice Mississippi smartphone app
- Right to record
- Police body cameras
- Unreasonable holding times
- For-profit prison reform

Petition for the Release of Non-Violent Offenders

2014 House Bill 585 (HB 585) promised much needed reform to Mississippi's criminal justice system. Notable is the change to the parole eligibility statute which now allows non-violent habitual offenders that have served at least twenty five percent of their sentence to petition their sentencing judge for a recommendation to the Parole Board. In response, we filed several petitions on behalf of several non-violent habitual offenders currently incarcerated in Mississippi state prisons.

We petitioned on behalf of **Larry Dozier** (*pictured, left*) who had been incarcerated for the last 25 years at the Mississippi State Prison for a non-violent crime. As a result of our efforts, Larry Dozier is now a free man. We also filed petitions for other individuals. Among others, we remain committed to reducing Mississippi's prison population by filing these actions.

Ensuring Police Accountability

We released the Android and iPhone versions of Mobile Justice Mississippi, a smartphone app that records police interactions and provides information about police stops. We have had almost 3000 downloads and over 200 videos and reports submitted.

We sent letters to law enforcement agencies informing them of a citizens' right to record police actions and encouraging them to adopt policies that ensure that right. We received a welcomed response from many agencies across the state who have since implemented policies on the right to record.

During the 2015 legislative session, we supported a bill to require officers to wear body cameras and require agencies to have strict privacy guidelines on the use of cameras. This legislation was a clear

effort to increase police transparency and accountability. A win-win, it sought to protect the public against police misconduct and protect police from false accusations of misconduct. Unfortunately this measure died in committee but we are committed to supporting similar legislation during the 2016 legislative session.

Reducing Mass Incarceration

In September 2014, the ACLU, the ACLU of Mississippi, and the Roderick and Solange MacArthur Justice Center filed a class action suit against Scott County, Mississippi, the Sheriff, the District Attorney and Judges after learning that the Scott County Detention Center has held people for as long as a year without appointing counsel and without indicting them. The county's practices violate the Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments' rights to counsel, to a speedy trial, and to a fair

bail hearing. We are demanding that Scott County align its policies and practices with the Constitution.

ACLU of Mississippi and the ACLU National Racial Justice Program are investigating the use of for-profit probation companies who are the drivers of the debtors' prison. For-profit probation companies are promising municipalities that they can collect the fines owed more efficiently and at a greater rate than previously achieved. The dark secret of this is that for their efforts they are supervising their way to extreme profits and landing those who cannot afford to pay in jail. We are actively investigating the use of for-profit probation companies statewide. Our goal is to bring light to their methods, reform state law and educate the populace so that wherever these practices are occurring we can work towards ending them. No one should go to jail because they cannot afford to pay a fine.

Systems change project to advance lives of young men of color

In July 2015, we received a two-year \$1 million dollar grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to address excessive discipline in schools and disparate punishment of young men of color. The Sunflower County System Change Project will engage the key stakeholders in the educational, law enforcement, judicial, community and media systems. It will provide a model for Mississippi to promote policies that create effective schools, stronger communities, and fiscal health.

The project will assess current practices and develop a statewide model of fair school discipline practices fostering conditions for success. This project aims to dismantle the systems of structural and institutional racism and bias by identifying the structures that perpetuate the current practice of disparate implementation of discipline. We will engage these systems to create positive and supportive



institutions and pathways for young men of color.

Extreme and destructive approaches to school discipline have devastated the students and families of Mississippi,

harmed its teachers, members of law enforcement, and community members, and caused profound damage to the economic health and well-being of the State at large. Mississippi's Black students

are hit the hardest by harsh discipline practices. Statewide, they are three times more likely to receive an out-of-school suspension than their White peers, with an even greater disparity in some school districts. There are no successful schools that suspend, expel, and refer large numbers of students to law enforcement. Yet, there are no statewide prescribed standards for school discipline that ensure that the codes of student conduct in Mississippi's school districts meet basic standards of fairness and common sense. Such harsh and extreme punishment works counter productive to the State's school improvement efforts and educators' efforts to promote teaching and learning in healthy and productive ways.

Reducing the use of restraint and seclusion in schools

Restraint and seclusion are practices used disproportionately on students with disabilities and students of color. This year we told the story of Cade Rhodes,

a 9-year-old who was secluded in a box by a teacher because his behavior was escalated. Cade has Autism Spectrum Disorder, Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD), and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The teacher held him in the box until his mother, Heather, who was visiting as school for his birthday, heard him screaming "let me out, I want my momma, please let me out." Heather continues to be an advocate for positive policy change and took part in our campaign, Keep Students Safe. As a part of this campaign we launched the www.keepstudentsafe.org website to educate the public on the harmful practices of restraint and seclusion and provide an opportunity for parents to share their stories.

Along with our partners, the Mississippi Center for Justice, Mississippi Parent Training Institute, and Families as Allies, we publicly commented on a restraint and seclusion policy at the Jackson

Public School (JPS) Board of Trustees meeting. We expressed our concerns regarding a revised policy that the JPS Board was proposing to enact. The policy as proposed failed to focus on creating a safe environment for students and faculty, lacked clarity in the definitions of the techniques that open the door for harm, and did not promote positive behavioral interventions, among other concerns. We worked in partnership with the Superintendent, Dr. Cedric Gray, and members of the school board to craft a policy that outlined the use of restraint and seclusion techniques in school. In February 2015, the JPS Board adopted a revised policy that has more emphasis on prevention, robust definitions, more specificity in the training component and inclusion of proper reporting guidelines.

Our work on the issue of the use of restraint and seclusion in schools is supported by a two year \$350,000 grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

EQUALITY FOR ALL



Heather Rhodes, Parent and Advocate

Champion TANF recipient protection

The ACLU of MS continues to monitor and stand in defense of public benefit recipients. We have continued to question the discriminatory practice of drug testing TANF recipients. Last year, we advised MS Department of Human Services of our concerns about the use of the SASSI instrument as an indicator of probable cause. Earlier this year, the SASSI Institute, published a position paper, echoing our concern that the instrument is not suited for the identified uses of DHS in the TANF program. The ACLU of Mississippi along with our key partners met with DHS to request that they stop and seek any avenues that would relieve this burden from TANF applicants. We continue to refine our legal and advocacy strategies around the contentious use of SASSI, and targeting of public benefit recipients.

Demanding Compliance after SCOTUS Marriage Equality Decision

On Friday, June 26th the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that state bans against same-sex marriage are unconstitutional. Marriage equality became a reality across the country. Mississippi Attorney General Jim Hood immediately sent guidance to the Circuit Clerks advising them to not issue marriage licenses until the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals lifted its stay. The ACLU of Mississippi, standing right next to couples as they attempted to marry, prepared an immediate response. The Attorney General rescinded his guidance. Along with our partner organization, Campaign for Southern Equality, and a team of attorneys across the state, we ensured Circuit Clerks in Mississippi were issuing marriage licenses and complying with the Constitution. We still have work to do to ensure full marriage

equality in Mississippi. Discrimination continues to be a major issue. The ACLU of Mississippi is prepared to defend against discrimination in the workplace, housing, education, and public accommodations.

2015 Equity Agenda

Marginalized communities (communities of color, immigrant communities, the impoverished, persons with disabilities, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community) face barriers to true opportunity every day in MS. The American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi 2015 Equity Agenda offers a chance for leaders in Mississippi to pay attention to the unfinished business of “justice for all” in Mississippi.

The path to this reality demands inclusion and equity for all of our diverse communities. It is our sincere hope that MS leadership will help us to realize the



vision of a better MS. The 2015 Equity Agenda sets out some solutions and acts as a guide to issues that have gone unaddressed in Mississippi. This agenda documents opportunities for our state legislators and governor to dismantle barriers, and increase equity. While it is not exhaustive of all challenges Mississippians face, it should be used as an informative tool.




- Rankin County Gay-Straight Alliance
- MS School for the Arts prom
- Execution drug suppliers
- Senatobia graduation free speech case
- The 'Heritage Initiative'

Protecting the Freedom of Expression and Assembly

The Rankin County School Board and Superintendent changed the district's club policy after students tried to form a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA). Students and advocates who had been trained and equipped with the knowledge of their rights via the ACLU LGBT Advisory Council responded. With the ACLU of MS standing with them, they challenged this policy. Our efforts also triggered the interest from student groups across the state to review their schools'

club policy. The ACLU of MS helped them determine whether they are being treated fairly under the law. We have outlined advocacy efforts to change policies we found to be discriminatory.

The Mississippi School of the Arts in Brookhaven erred when officials told a transgender student she could not wear a dress to prom. As a direct result of our action affirming the student's right to expression, the school reversed their decision allowing the student to wear the attire of her choice.



We went a step further and reminded schools across the entire state that requiring all boys to wear traditionally male attire to school dances constitutes gender discrimination and violates First Amendment right to the freedom of expression.

Ensuring transparency in government

During the 2015 Legislative Session, we strongly fought legislation that would have amended a statute in Mississippi to prevent disclosure of the suppliers of drugs used in executions. In light of the botched executions conducted around the country, it was more important than ever that there be accountability and transparency when it comes to the drugs and suppliers used in executions. The bills would have put up a wall of secrecy around the source of drugs to be used in executions. The secrecy would have made it impossible for the courts and the public to know whether executions will be carried out humanely and in compliance with state and federal

laws and the U.S. Constitution.

As a result of our strong opposition and lobbying efforts, the legislation died.

Protecting the Freedom of Speech

In June 2015, we responded to the criminal action taken against a family cheering at the Senatobia High School graduation ceremony. We asserted that the First Amendment clearly prohibits the making of any law that would impede the freedom of speech. Citizens should be able to enjoy the right of free speech, especially at a congratulatory event, like a high school graduation. Senatobia Municipal School District Superintendent Jay Foster infringed upon the family's exercise of this right when he charged the family with disturbing the peace. Cheering by the family does not qualify as a disturbance of the peace and should not have elicited a criminal response.

The school's response pointed to the issue

of the subjective enforcement of these kinds of laws in Mississippi and across the country. We will continue to stand in defense of citizens' freedom of speech and condemn an unnecessary criminal response to these kinds of actions.

Speaking out against a discriminatory ballot initiative

Ballot Initiative 46, also called the Heritage Initiative, would discriminate against Mississippians with different religious beliefs as well as racial and ethnic minorities. The initiative calls for Christianity as the official religion of Mississippi, English as the official language, requires the Confederate Flag to fly over the State Capitol, and establishes a Confederate Heritage Month, Confederate Memorial Day, along with other divisive proposals. We cannot let that happen, and we will continue to ensure that all individuals are protected from discrimination.

LOOKING AHEAD



STRATEGIC INITIATIVES FOR 2015 -2016

Criminal Justice Reform

- 25% X 2020
- Indigent Defense CLE
- Consent to Search Legislation
- Law Enforcement Accountability and Transparency
 - Body Camera Legislation
 - Right to Record Municipal Policies
- School to Prison Pipeline Impact Projects
 - Reduction of Restraint and Seclusion in Schools
 - Sunflower County Systems Change Project
 - School Resource Officer Legislation
- Washington County Restorative Justice Project
 - Ban the Box
 - Re-entry Support
 - Expungement Clinic

Equality for All Mississippians

- Operation Equity
 - 2015 Legislative Score Card
 - 2016 Equity Agenda
- Voter Access, Protection, and Education
- We Are All Mississippi Campaign
 - Non-discrimination Legislation
- LGBT Advocacy
 - Equality Day
 - Equality litigation
 - GSA Support and Prom Watch
- ADA Compliance and Accessibility Report (Mississippi Courthouses)

Freedom of Speech and Expression, Privacy and Public Access

- First Amendment Rights Protection
- Public records access
- Protection of privacy rights

As we move forward into another year we remain committed to protecting the right to vote, reforming the criminal legal system and restorative justice initiatives, continuing to change outcomes for Mississippi's vulnerable youth both in and outside the school house, establishing legal protections against non-discrimination for all Mississippians, and continuing our freedom campaigns.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

JOIN the ACLU as a member

DONATE to the ACLU


GET ACTIVE in your community


VOLUNTEER with ACLU


SUBSCRIBE to the Action List

FOLLOW our work online:

 ACLUMississippi

 ACLU_MS

 ACLU_MS

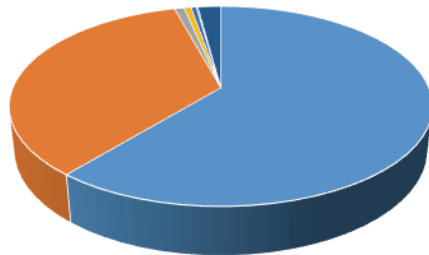
 ACLU of Mississippi

FINANCIALS

ACLU of MS Foundation, Inc.

REVENUE AND SUPPORTS

Support from National ACLU	607,323
Private Foundations	346,741
Interest and Dividend Income	8,793
Professional Fees	6,300
Events Income	4,768
Other Income	1,361
Unrealized Gain (Loss) on Investments	20,957
Total revenues and support	996,243



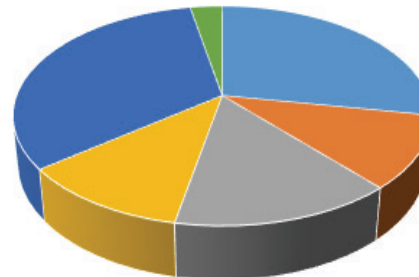
EXPENSES

Programs and Services

Legal	253,248
Legislative	96,527
Advocacy	132,054
Communications	103,175
Total Program Services	585,004

Supportive Services

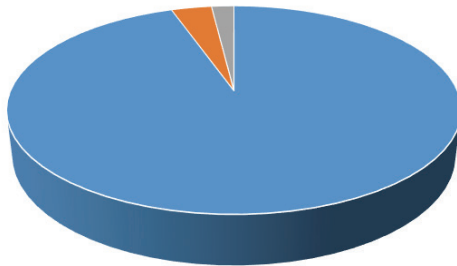
General and Administrative	296,695
Fundraising	26,813
Total Supportive Services	323,508
Total Expenses	908,512



ACLU of MS, Inc.

REVENUE AND SUPPORTS

■ Support from National ACLU – Guaranteed Minimal Income	32,283
■ Support from National ACLU – Membership Income	1,165
■ Support from National ACLU – Private Grants	650
Donations	0
Bequest	0
Total revenues and support	34,098



EXPENSES

Programs and Services

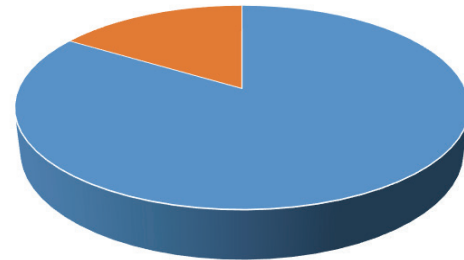
■ Legislative	8,650
---------------	-------

Total Program Services

Supportive Services

■ General and Administrative	1,661
------------------------------	-------

Total Expenses	10,311
-----------------------	---------------





ACLU

**AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION
of MISSISSIPPI**

www.aclu-ms.org • P.O. BOX 2242 JACKSON, MS 39225 • 601.354.3408