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Police Reform Blueprint Lay Out Platform for Accountability Statewide

ACLU of MS calls for 5 reforms: independent prosecutors for police violence; body cameras for police; written consent to search; prohibit civil asset forfeiture seizures; and racial impact statement requirement

January 25, 2017 – Jackson, MS - Five key reforms could transform policing in Mississippi, the American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi (ACLU of MS) said with the release of a [blueprint for statewide police accountability](#). During its Legislative Advocacy Day news conference, the ACLU of MS called on state officials to adopt five key components of accountability into law, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and fair practices that protect public safety and civil rights. The policies themselves would be adopted by state officials and apply to individual departments throughout the state.

"Together, these five policy reforms make up a blueprint for protecting the rights — and lives — of all people in our state," said ACLU of MS Executive Director Jennifer Riley Collins. "With every new human tragedy that arises from unaccountable policing, we see the same common links: aggressive policing of Black and brown communities and little accountability or oversight. Like the rest of the country, Mississippi faces an epidemic of aggressive enforcement and a drought of public accountability. We aim to change that in order to make Mississippi a better place for all of us."

The ACLU of MS's blueprint highlights five key statewide policy proposals that together would usher in a new era of accountability throughout the state:

- **Independent prosecutors** and investigations when officers kill or seriously injure people ([SB 2491](#))
- **Body cameras for police** with policies that protect public access and privacy ([HB 635/SB 2339](#))
- **Written consent to search** when there is no probable cause or a warrant ([HB 756/SB 2054](#))
- **Prohibit civil asset forfeiture seizures** in which police unfairly take people's property ([HB 812](#), though not our bill, calls for greater transparency.)
- **Require racial impact statements** to any legislation affecting changes in the criminal justice system (not assigned as of yet)

"The Legislature, Attorney General, and Governor all have work to do. Police departments can't police themselves," said Blake Feldman, Criminal Justice Reform Advocacy Coordinator for the ACLU of MS. "Mississippians deserve police that will respect their rights, be transparent, and be held accountable when they engage in misconduct or abuse."

The ACLU of MS has found problems in departments statewide with over-aggressive, racially disparate enforcement of low-level offenses, and indicators of enforcement motivated by the potential profits from civil asset forfeiture. Law enforcement agencies across the state are acquiring body-worn cameras, and creating policies to go along with them. Our research has found that these policies deprive the public of the right to access footage, which renders the cameras as tools of management and surveillance, rather than accountability. In order to achieve true transparency and accountability, conflicts of interest must remain minimal in order for justice to be carried out and achieved.

"Advancing legislative reform is not an attack on law enforcement," said ACLU of MS Director of Policy Erik Fleming. "Our proposals help to rebuild the relationship between law enforcement and the community, while proposed 'blue lives matter' legislation creates an 'us versus them' mentality. These unnecessary measures increase protections for law enforcement without increasing or even approaching balanced protections for citizens against abusive and intrusive police practices. Mississippi is capable of change, and now is the time to do it."

For more information, please visit www.aclu-ms.org.

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