



ACLU OF MISSISSIPPI

2019 Legislative Agenda

OUR PRIORITIES AND GOALS FOR MAKING
MISSISSIPPI A MORE JUST AND EQUITABLE
STATE 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 2019 Legislative Agenda, which prioritizes criminal justice, voter, and equality reforms.



We work to propose new bills, make bills better, and defeat harmful legislation. We do this by calling, writing, and meeting with our elected officials as well as by changing the public narrative through public education, letters to the editors, opinion-editorials, and social media.

ON THE 2019 DOCKET



- Smart Justice Reforms

- Cash Bail Reform
- Body-Worn Cameras Policy
- Written Consent to Search



- Voter Reforms

- Online Voter Registration
- No-Excuse Early Voting
- Voting for Pretrial Detainees



- Equality Reform

- MS Civil Rights Act

*Red Indicates Priority Bill



2019 Legislative Priorities

FOR THE UPCOMING 2019 LEGISLATIVE SESSION, THE ACLU OF MISSISSIPPI HAS FOUR MAIN LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES: BAIL REFORM AND BODY CAM POLICY (SMART JUSTICE CAMPAIGN), AND EARLY VOTING AND ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION (LET PEOPLE VOTE CAMPAIGN).

WHY SMART JUSTICE IN MISSISSIPPI?



WORKING TO END MASS INCARCERATION

- The Smart Justice campaign is an effort to reduce the jail and prison population by 50% and to combat racial disparities in the criminal justice system.
- Available Tools:
 - [Blueprint for Smart Justice](#)
 - [Vote Smart Justice](#)

MISSISSIPPI IS ADDICTED TO PRISON

- Mississippi ranks **#3** nationally in the rate of people imprisoned.
- Drug offenses are the leading driver of incarceration.
- While Black men comprise 34% of the male population in Mississippi, they make up 65% of the prison population.
- Taxpayers are footing a near \$300 million corrections bill.

SMART JUSTICE: CASH BAIL REFORM

WHAT IS CASH BAIL?

- The practice of judges issuing bond amounts to individuals facing criminal charges. If the person presumed innocent can pay, they are released. If not, they remain in jail until their court date –which can be days, weeks, months, or even years away.
- Pretrial detention ruins lives and puts people in a place where they are more likely – regardless of guilt or innocence – to take a plea deal.

WHAT IS THE STATE OF CASH BAIL IN MISSISSIPPI?

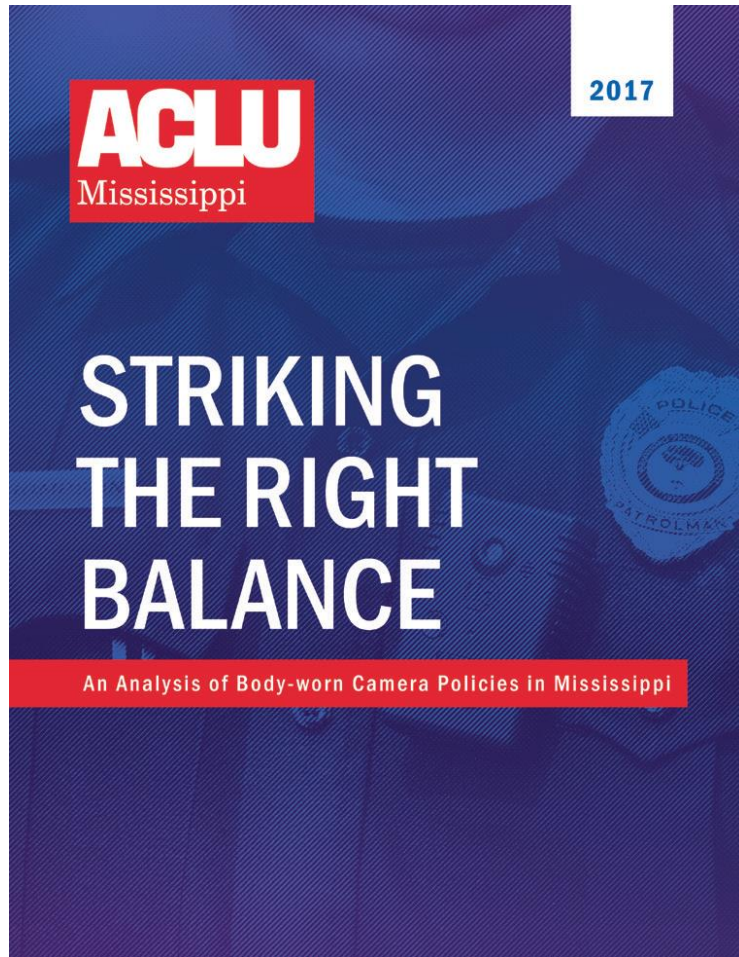
- 56% of incarcerated Mississippians have not been convicted of a crime.
- Average length of pretrial detention is 170 days.
- Many detainees face losing homes, jobs, and their families.

WHAT DO WE PROPOSE?

- Stop wealth-based incarceration.
- Cash bail should be used to ensure court appearance, and only as a last resort.
- Pretrial liberty should be the rule, not the exception that is reserved for people with wealth.

We are currently working with our allies and other stakeholders on moving a bail reform bill forward. While there has been increasing political will around the broader concept of criminal justice reform, our membership and supporters must engage on this issue to ensure that the right bill with the strongest language will pass.

BWC POLICY FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT



Body-worn cameras (BWCs) can serve as a win-win for police and the community they serve.

How can we assure that they aren't just another surveillance device?

- Community Policing and Transparency Act will create body-worn camera policy standards that balance police protection and citizen privacy. The act promotes transparency and accountability.

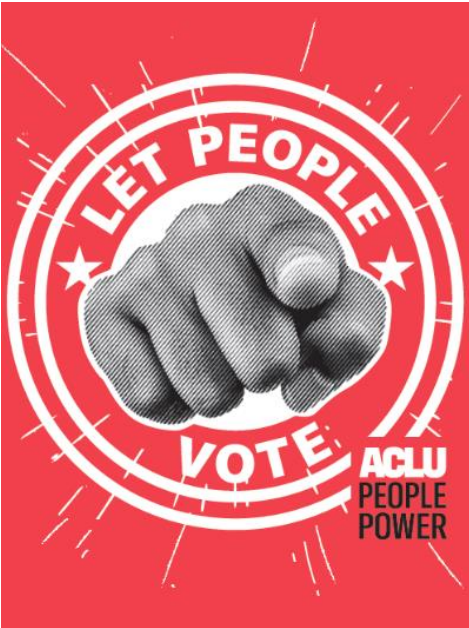
NOVEMBER 24, 2018



Hundreds wait in line at the Hinds County Courthouse to Absentee Vote during the General Run-Off Election.

Picture taken by DeKeither Stamps

LET PEOPLE VOTE



The Let People Vote campaign is a People Power initiative focused on reforms that expand access to the ballot.

HOW DO WE LET MISSISSIPPI VOTE?

- Access to the voting polls in Mississippi is limited and not reflective of how most voters live.
- Policy Initiatives:
 - Early Voting
 - Online Voter Registration

PRIORITY LEGISLATION

EARLY VOTING



WHAT IS EARLY VOTING?

- Early voting is **NOT** the same as absentee voting. No-excuse early voting allows for two weeks of early voting **BEFORE** Election Day in Mississippi. Absentee voting requires an application process and a valid excuse for voting before Election Day.

BENEFITS OF EARLY VOTING

- Reduces Stress on the Voting System on Election Day
- Shorter Lines on Election Day
- Improved Poll Worker Performance
- Prevention and Correction of Errors
- Greater Access to Voting and Increased Voter Satisfaction

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION



PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM

- The current PAPER-BASED REGISTRATION system relies on forms with illegible and incomplete information
- Election officials sometimes make errors transcribing this data (misinterpretation of the registrant's handwriting or by clerical typos).
- Conflicting information can cause problems during elections and force to cast affidavit ballots.

SOLUTION

- An online voter registration system expands access to voting for all citizens. In this digital age, availing voter registration online is critical to moving democracy forward.
- Online voter registration would supplement the current system, providing the convenience that voters need, increasing accuracy of voter rolls, and saving taxpayer dollars.
- 38 states already offer online voter registration.



2019 Legislative Goals

THE ACLU OF MISSISSIPPI HAS A SUBSTANTIVE INTEREST IN ADVANCING THESE BILLS LEADING UP TO, DURING, AND AFTER THE 2019 LEGISLATIVE SESSION.

WE MUST EDUCATE LAWMAKERS AND ENGAGE COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ALLY ORGANIZATION IN SUPPORT OF THESE MEASURES.

WRITTEN CONSENT TO SEARCH



- Requiring written consent makes sense for everyone.
- It can protect civilians from overly aggressive law enforcement officials who demand consent.
- It can protect officers with written evidence of an individuals' consent.

Ensuring the rights of civilians...

- Our proposed legislation protects law enforcement without impeding police work and ensures that citizen's understand their constitutional right to say no to a request to search, by requiring written consent with a simple disclosure.
- It would not affect searches authorized by a warrant or probable cause-based vehicle searches without warrants, which U.S. Supreme Court allows.



How are pretrial detainees deterred from voting?

- Pretrial detainees have no assurance that they will be afforded their right to vote because of Mississippi's criteria and burdensome process to obtain an absentee ballot application.

How do we protect the voting rights of those who have not been convicted?

- The ACLU of Mississippi offers a simple solution, inserting a clause for those who have been detained pretrial (not convicted) and are unable to vote in-person. Additionally, waiving the requirement to have a notarized absentee ballot would also help protect their voting rights.

EQUALITY/EQUAL ACCESS

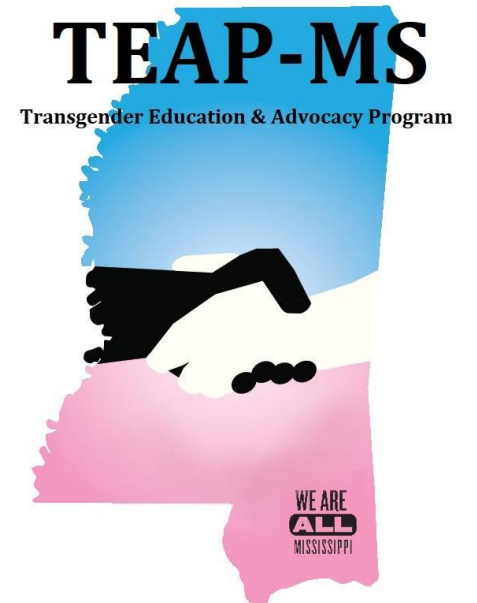
WHAT IS WAAM?

- The We Are All Mississippi campaign's goal is to secure civil rights protections for all Mississippians.

WHAT IS TEAP?

- TEAP-MS combats harmful legislation and misinformation about the transgender and gender non-conforming community in Mississippi.
- Policy Initiative:
 - MS Civil Rights Act

**WE ARE
ALL
MISSISSIPPI**



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MS CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

- Mississippi is one of five states that **does not** provide civil rights for its citizens.
- The Mississippi Civil Rights Act would provide protections for all Mississippians from unfair treatment and discrimination in a number of settings, including education, employment, housing, and more. It would also extend protections inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity.



LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY DAY

JANUARY 24, 2019 / 8 A.M. – 3 P.M. / STATE CAPITOL
PRESS CONFERENCE @ 10:30 A.M.



ADVOCATING TO:

- END CASH BAIL
- ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE UNIFORMED BODY CAMERA POLICY
- LET PEOPLE VOTE WITH VOTING FOR PRETRIAL DETAINEES, EARLY VOTING & ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION
- PROTECT ALL MISSISSIPPIANS WITH THE MISSISSIPPI CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

STAND WITH US!

AGENDA INCLUDES BREAKFAST, LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING & LOBBY TRAINING, NEWS CONFERENCE, AND VISITS WITH LEGISLATORS.

RSVP TO OFFICE@ACLU-MS.ORG OR 601.354.3408

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FOR MORE TIPS ON LOBBYING YOUR LEGISLATOR

- Download the Lobbying Guide.
- Join our Liberty Lobbyist Program.
- Plan to Attend our Legislative Advocacy Day, which begins with a training at our office.

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