

June 27, 2022

VIA EMAIL TO:

Harrison County School Board
Henry Arledge Administration Building
11072 Hwy 49
Gulfport, MS 39503

Rena Wiggins: rwiggins@harrison.k12.ms.us

Dr. Barbara Thomas: bthomas@harrison.k12.ms.us

David Ladner: davidladner@harrison.k12.ms.us

Eric Simmons: ersimmons@harrison.k12.ms.us

Tom Daniels: tdaniels@harrison.k12.ms.us

Re: Harrison County School Board Redistricting

Dear Harrison County School Board Members:

The Legal Defense Fund (“LDF”), Gulfport Branch of the NAACP, Southern Poverty Law Center, and One Voice write to notify you that we are closely following the post-2020 redistricting cycle in Mississippi, including in Harrison County. We encourage the Harrison County School Board (the “School Board”) to create meaningful opportunities to ensure that all residents’ voices are heard and meaningfully included at *all* stages of the redistricting process. Recent actions by the School Board suggest that it is not committed to ensuring a transparent process to allow members of the community to meaningfully participate in decision-making about redistricting. As nonprofit, nonpartisan civil rights and racial justice organizations, we aim to ensure the adoption of fair and nondiscriminatory redistricting plans at every level of government, and we are available to serve as a resource.

In pursuit of these pro-democracy goals, as you develop and consider your redistricting plans, we write to (1) recommend how to involve community members and ensure transparency in the redistricting process, and (2) remind the School Board of its affirmative obligations to comply with the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution’s one person, one vote principle and Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act (“VRA”).

We understand that the School Board currently is engaged in the redistricting process. The School Board held an executive session on June 16, 2022, concerning redistricting, and it posted proposed maps *without* critical demographic information at

the end of the business week this past Friday, June 24, 2022—providing **just one business day** before it intends to adopt a map. As more fully explained below, **before adopting a new map, the School Board must share the shapefiles and/or block equivalency files of any proposed maps it is considering on its website, and it must do so with adequate time to allow members of the public to assess and review the proposed maps. The School Board should also hold several public hearings to hear from members of the public with regard to proposed maps. Moreover, given the meaningful number of Spanish-speaking voters in Harrison County, we also strongly encourage the School Board to make notices, information about public hearings, and other information about the redistricting process available in Spanish, and to make interpreters available during the public hearings.**

As detailed below in Section II(B), any maps that the School Board adopts during this redistricting cycle must preserve VRA-compliant districts that remain necessary and effective for Black voters in Harrison County to elect candidates of their choice.

I. The School Board Must Ensure Transparency and Public Involvement During All Phases of the Redistricting Process

The School Board's actions thus far in the redistricting process indicate a lack of commitment to transparency and public input. First, as explained in more detail below, the School Board entered executive session to discuss redistricting on June 16 without adequately explaining the basis for an executive session. Second, the School Board has failed to provide enough information or time for the residents of Harrison County to adequately assess the School Board's proposed redistricting plans. We provide several recommendations to the School Board to enhance its engagement with the public and ensure that Harrison County's residents have an adequate opportunity to have input in the redistricting process.

As the School Board is aware, the Mississippi Open Meetings Act requires that the School Board hold its meetings in public.¹ The School Board may enter executive session for a narrow set of reasons specifically enumerated in the Act.² The reason for holding an

¹ See *Helmer v. Board of Trustees, Harrison County School District*, Open Meetings Case No. M-20-015, Final Order (Mar. 16, 2021), available at https://www.ms.gov/msec/ethics/OpenMeeting/Document/M-20-015%20Final%20Order_Website.pdf.

² Miss. Code § 25-41-7.

executive session must be announced to the public in an open session and recorded in the minutes.³ The Mississippi Ethics Commission has explained that “[i]t is the responsibility and obligation of a public body to state a genuine and meaningful reason with sufficient specificity so that the audience will understand that there is an actual, specific matter which is to be discussed in the executive session.”⁴

On June 16, 2022, the School Board held a Special Called Meeting to discuss redistricting. However, rather than holding its discussions in public, it entered executive session without adequately explaining the basis for entering executive session. In doing so, it is possible that the School Board violated the Mississippi Open Meetings Act because it did not publicly state with sufficient specificity the reason for the executive session.⁵

This possible violation of the Open Meetings Act is made worse by the lack of information and time that the School Board has provided residents of Harrison County to participate in the redistricting process. Late last week, the School Board posted notice on its website of a Special Called Meeting to discuss redistricting on Monday, June 27, at 3:00 P.M. On Friday afternoon, June 24, the School Board posted two Harrison County School Board maps on its website as part of the agenda for the Monday, June 27 Special Called Meeting.

Although the agenda does not explain what either of these maps are, we assume they are the School Board’s proposed redistricting plans. Neither map includes any information concerning population numbers, racial, voting-age and other demographic information, or any further explanation about how the proposed maps make changes from the existing School Board map. For example, the maps lack information concerning

³ *Id.* at § 25-41-7(3).

⁴ *Coursin v. Board of Trustees, Carnegie Public Library*, Open Meetings Case No. M-21-013, Order of Dismissal (June 10, 2022), available at [https://www.ms.gov/msec/ethics/OpenMeeting/Document/Order%20of%20Dismissal%20\(M-21-013\).pdf](https://www.ms.gov/msec/ethics/OpenMeeting/Document/Order%20of%20Dismissal%20(M-21-013).pdf).

⁵ Miss. Code § 25-41-7(3); see *Hinds Cnty. Bd. of Sup’rs v. Common Cause of Mississippi*, 551 So. 2d 107, 114 (Miss. 1989) (“A meaningful reason is of sufficient specificity that the audience will at some later date be able to check it out. . . . A board which only announces ‘litigation’ or ‘personnel matters’ for going into executive session has said nothing. It might as well have stated to the audience, ‘Ladies and gentlemen, we are going into executive session,’ and stopped there. The Act requires that a board cannot use its statutory authority to go into executive session upon certain matters as a device to circumvent the very purposes for which it is under the Open Meetings Act. The purpose of the Act is that the business conducted at all meetings of public boards be wide open.”).

any total population deviations/imbbalances between each School Board District as well as the demographic breakdown of each district by race and voting age population, among other information.⁶

This information is critical for the community to be able to adequately evaluate the School Board’s proposed maps, their compliance with relevant legal standards, and whether they properly reflect the communities of interests and their needs in Harrison. The only demographic information provided by the School Board is a shaded map showing the concentration of the “predominant race” in a particular geographic area.⁷ However, this information is too broad to provide the community a meaningful basis to analyze the proposed maps. And even if the School Board had provided the necessary information, one business day is certainly not enough time for Harrison County residents to evaluate the proposed maps and provide the School Board their input.

No one is more qualified than Harrison County’s residents to discern which maps allow (or do not allow) communities to have a voice in the process of electing their representatives. Any map that the School Board proposes or otherwise considers must reflect the County’s residents in all their diversity. As the School Board develops its plan, we share the following recommendations to assist it in meeting this significant responsibility.

(1) Delay the Vote on the School Board’s Proposed Maps: The residents of Harrison County have had woefully insufficient time and information provided to them to properly participate in the redistricting process. It is necessary for the School Board to provide additional information, including, but not limited to, population and demographic data, as well analyses of whether and what districts will perform for minority voters, and time for the community to evaluate the School Board’s maps and provide alternatives.

(2) Ensure Transparency: Informed involvement by all residents requires transparency and meaningful opportunities for public participation at all stages of the redistricting process. We further encourage the School Board to:

a. ***Publish a tentative schedule and criteria for proposing and adopting maps.*** To allow opportunities for meaningful input and

⁶ Agenda for Special Called Meeting on June 27, 2022 at 3:00 PM, available at <https://meetings.boardbook.org/Public/Agenda/2161?meeting=537364>.

⁷ *Id.*

informed participation by interested residents, share with the public a tentative schedule or timeline by which the School Board is likely to consider and vote on maps and the criteria that the School Board will use to develop its maps.

- b. ***Regularly update its website about redistricting and share information on social media platforms.*** These updates should include public meeting notices, proposed meeting agendas, and proposed maps, which should be posted at least a week before the School Board considers any map, along with all relevant district-level data associated with any proposed maps, including but not limited to demographic data.
- c. ***Publicize all data used by the School Board to inform its redistricting plans.*** Make data available in real time, including any data released by the U.S. Census Bureau relevant to Harrison County and redistricting. This data should be publicized in a format that can be easily accessed and used by the public.

(3) Create Formal Mechanisms for Public Involvement and Prioritize Public Involvement: The School Board should establish a formal mechanism that allows residents to provide meaningful input about proposed redistricting criteria, maps, and other redistricting procedures—during all stages of the redistricting process. The School Board should also adopt processes and safeguards for the benefit of all Harrison County residents:

- a. ***Receive and consider public input on any redistricting guidelines and principles—a critical first step—before drawing or considering any maps.***
- b. ***Formally make public input part of the public record and incorporate public testimony into any redistricting principles the School Board may adopt to supplement federal and constitutional redistricting requirements.***
- c. ***Host regular public hearings and publish adequate notice and documentation of all such meetings during all stages of the redistricting process.*** To account for community members' caretaking, family, and work commitments and schedules, public meetings should be easily accessible and not ordinarily held during regular business hours. The public should be granted sufficient notice of hearings in advance to allow communities to prepare meaningful testimony and supporting materials, including proposed maps. To ensure that the voices of voters of color are

heard, the School Board should proactively post notice of public hearings at minimum on its website, but also in media outlets that serve communities of color. The School Board should also utilize social media platforms that reach a wide range of residents to ensure that voices integral to the redistricting process are included.

d. Allow remote participation for members of the public who cannot travel or take time off from work or other obligations to attend any School Board redistricting hearings in person, or who cannot attend due to health concerns. Such individuals should be provided multiple opportunities, as early as possible, (1) to respond to maps proposed by the School Board, (2) to offer legally compliant alternatives to the School Board's proposals, (3) to have the School Board consider any such alternatives and engage in robust discussion with members of the public about proposed maps through remote testimony options, and (4) to submit written comments and questions to be incorporated into the record leading to the adoption of any final plan.

In addition to the guidance and recommendations in this letter, we also urge the School Board to review ***Power on the Line(s): Making Redistricting Work for Us***,⁸ a guide for community partners and policy makers who intend to engage in the redistricting process at all levels of government. The guide provides essential information about the redistricting process, such as examples of recent efforts to dilute the voting power of communities of color and considerations for avoiding such dilution. The guide includes clear, specific, and actionable steps that community members and policy makers can take to ensure that voters of color can meaningfully participate in the redistricting process and hold legislators accountable. We also recommend that the School Board review the U.S. Department of Justice's recently published guidance on federal statutes regarding redistricting and methods for electing public officials.⁹

Again, it is vitally important that, before adopting any map, the School Board **publish on its website the proposed map it is considering with shapefiles and/or block**

⁸ See LDF, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, and Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC, *Power on the Line(s): Making Redistricting Work for Us*, (2021), <https://www.naacpldf.org/press-release/civil-rights-organizations-release-redistricting-guide-to-support-black-latino-and-aapi-communities-participation-in-crucial-process/>.

⁹ Guidance Under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, 52 U.S.C. 10301, for Redistricting and Methods of Electing Government Bodies, U.S. Dept. of Justice (Sept. 1, 2021), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1429486/download>.

equivalency files and allow the public to provide feedback on the School Board’s proposed map and maps proposed by members of the public.

II. The School Board Must Comply with the U.S. Constitution and Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act

To ensure equality of representation—a cornerstone of our democracy—the U.S. Constitution’s Fourteenth Amendment requires states and localities to balance the populations of people among districts at all levels of government. To ensure that racial minority voters have equality of opportunity to elect their preferred candidates, Section 2 of the VRA prohibits states and localities from drawing electoral lines with the purpose or effect of diluting the voting strength of voters of color. That is, the Voting Rights Act requires that voters of color be provided equal opportunities to elect representatives of their choice not only for state-level representative bodies, but also for city and county councils, school boards, and other elected local bodies. The School Board must, therefore, ensure that any maps it adopts complies with the “One Person, One Vote” mandate of the Fourteenth Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause¹⁰ and the VRA’s “nationwide ban on racial discrimination in voting.”¹¹

A. Fulfilling the “One Person, One Vote” Requirement

The “One Person, One Vote” principle provides that redistricting schemes that weaken the voting power and representation of residents of one area of a state or locality as compared to others elsewhere in the same state or locality cannot withstand constitutional scrutiny.¹² In *Reynolds v. Sims*, the U.S. Supreme Court explained that: “[d]iluting the weight of votes because of place of residence impairs basic constitutional rights under the Fourteenth Amendment just as much as invidious discriminations based upon factors such as race . . . or

¹⁰ *Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U.S. 533, 565–68 (1964); *id.* at 558 (quoting *Gray v. Sanders*, 372 U.S. 368, 381 (1963)) (“The conception of political equality from the Declaration of Independence, to Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, to the Fifteenth, Seventeenth, and Nineteenth Amendments can mean only one thing—one person, one vote.”); see U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 1 (“No State shall . . . deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”).

¹¹ *Shelby Cty., Ala. v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 529, 557 (2013); 52 U.S.C. § 10301(a) (“No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied . . . in a manner which results in a denial or abridgement of the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color”).

¹² See *Reynolds*, 377 U.S. at 567–68.

economic status”¹³ Since *Reynolds*, “the seats in both houses of a bicameral state legislature must be apportioned on a population basis.”¹⁴

Maps may violate this principle if a legislative body’s districts impermissibly deviate from population equality. State and local legislative bodies, such as the School Board, may have an overall maximum population deviation of less than 10 percent.¹⁵ This requirement is intended to ensure both equal electoral power for all voters and equal access to representation for all people throughout a state.¹⁶ Impermissible deviations from population equality among districts may elicit a malapportionment lawsuit, requiring the legislative body responsible for redistricting to show that an adopted plan legitimately advances a rational state policy formulated “free from any taint of arbitrariness or discrimination.”¹⁷

In the 2016 case of *Evenwel v. Abbott*, the U.S. Supreme Court acknowledged the longstanding principle that “representatives serve all residents, not just those eligible or registered to vote.”¹⁸ Relying on this principle, the Court affirmed that an appropriate metric

¹³ *Id.* at 565–66.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ See *Reynolds*, 377 U.S. at 568 (“The Equal Protection Clause demands no less than substantially equal state legislative representation for all citizens, of all places as well as of all races.”); see also *Gaffney v. Cummings*, 412 U.S. 735, 744–45 (1973) (“minor deviations from mathematical equality among state legislative districts” are not constitutionally suspect, but “larger variations from substantial equality are too great to be justified by any state interest”); *Brown v. Thomson*, 462 U.S. 835, 842 (1983) (holding that apportionment plans with a maximum population deviation among districts of less than 10% are generally permissible, whereas disparities in excess of 10% most likely violate the “one person, one vote” principle).

¹⁶ See *Reynolds*, 377 U.S. at 567–68; see also *Kirkpatrick v. Preisler*, 394 U.S. 526, 531 (1967) (explaining that “[e]qual representation for equal number of people is a principle designed to prevent debasement of voting power and diminution of access to elected representatives.”); accord *Eastern R.R. Presidents Conference v. Noerr Motor Freight, Inc.*, 365 U.S. 127, 137 (1961); see also *Garza v. County of Los Angeles*, 918 F.2d 763, 775 (9th Cir. 1990) (explaining how all residents have a “right to petition their government for services” and “[i]nterference with individuals’ free access to elected representatives impermissibly burdens their right to petition the government”).

¹⁷ *Roman v. Sincock*, 377 U.S. 695, 710 (1964); see *Brown*, 462 U.S. at 847–48 (stating that “substantial deference” should be given to a state’s political decisions, provided that “there is no ‘taint of arbitrariness or discrimination’”); see also *Brown*, 462 U.S. at 852 (Brennan, J., dissenting) (“Acceptable reasons . . . must be ‘free from any taint of arbitrariness or discrimination’”).

¹⁸ *Evenwel v. Abbott*, 136 S. Ct. 1120, 1132 (2016).

for assessing population equality across districts is total population—counting all residents.¹⁹ In cases dating back to at least 1964, “the Court has consistently looked to total population figures when evaluating whether districting maps violate the Equal Protection Clause by deviating impermissibly from perfect population equality.”²⁰

Relying on total population is necessary to ensure that elected officials are responsive to an equal number of residents, as well as that their residents have an equal ability to “make their wishes known” to them.²¹ The School Board, for example, provides key governmental services to all Harrison County residents.

B. Complying with the Voting Rights Act

The School Board has an obligation to comply with Section 2 of the VRA as it develops its redistricting plan. Compliance is necessary to ensure that, under the totality of circumstances described below, racial minority voters, such as Black Harrison County voters, have an equal opportunity to participate in the electoral process and elect representatives of their choice.²² Section 2 therefore requires the School Board, under certain circumstances, to draw districts that provide minority voters with an effective opportunity to elect their preferred candidates (“effective minority opportunity districts”).

A School Board map may violate Section 2 when it dilutes the voting power of voters of color, including by “packing” Black voters into districts with unnecessarily high Black populations or by “cracking” them into districts with insufficient populations to provide Black

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.* at 1131; *see also id.* at 1124 (Accordingly, “[t]oday, all States use total-population numbers from the census when designing congressional and state-legislative districts . . .”).

²¹ *See Kirkpatrick v. Preisler*, 394 U.S. 526, 531 (1967) (explaining that “[e]qual representation for equal number of people is a principle designed to prevent debasement of voting power and diminution of access to elected representatives.”); *accord Eastern R.R. Presidents Conference v. Noerr Motor Freight, Inc.*, 365 U.S. 127, 137 (1961); *see also Garza*, 918 F.2d at 775 (explaining how all residents have a “right to petition their government for services” and “[i]nterference with individuals’ free access to elected representatives impermissibly burdens their right to petition the government.”).

²² 52 U.S.C. § 10301(b); *Colleton Cty. Council v. McConnell*, 201 F. Supp. 2d 618, 632 (D.S.C. 2002) (quoting *Gingles*, 478 U.S. at 47 (1986)) (“[Section] 2 prohibits the implementation of an electoral law that ‘interacts with social and historical conditions to cause an inequality in the opportunities enjoyed by black and white voters to elect their preferred representatives.’”); *see also LULAC v. Perry*, 548 U.S. 399, 425 (2006) (describing the operation of the “totality of the circumstances” standard in the vote-dilution claims).

voters with an opportunity to elect their preferred candidates. A map may also violate Section 2 by mechanically employing demographic thresholds.²³ Section 2 prohibits minority vote dilution regardless of whether a plan was adopted with a discriminatory purpose.²⁴ What matters under Section 2 is the effect of the redistricting plan on the opportunity of voters of color to elect candidates of their choice.

The U.S. Supreme Court has established the following three *Gingles* preconditions for evaluating vote dilution under Section 2: whether (1) an illustrative districting plan can be drawn that includes an additional district in which the minority community is sufficiently large and geographically compact to constitute a majority in a single-member district; (2) the minority group is politically cohesive in its support for its preferred candidates; and (3) in the absence of majority-minority districts, candidates preferred by the minority group would usually be defeated due to the political cohesion of non-minority voters in support of different candidates.²⁵ Together, the second and third *Gingles* preconditions are commonly referred to as racial bloc or racially polarized voting, which is described below in more detail.

Once a plaintiff establishes the three *Gingles* preconditions, a “totality of circumstances” analysis is conducted to determine whether minority voters “have less opportunity than other members of the electorate to participate in the political process and to elect representatives of their choice.”²⁶

²³ *Ala. Leg. Black Caucus v. Alabama*, 575 U.S. 254, 278 (2015); *Bethune-Hill v. Va. State Bd. of Elections*, 137 S. Ct. 788, 802 (2017) (finding 12 districts were unconstitutional racial gerrymanders because the legislature decided to make them all meet a 55% BVAP target for which there was no strong basis in evidence).

²⁴ *Gingles*, 478 U.S. at 35.

²⁵ *Id.* at 50–51.

²⁶ 52 U.S.C. § 10301(b); see also *LULAC*, 548 U.S. at 425. Courts examine the “totality of the circumstances” based on the so-called Senate Factors, named for the Senate Report accompanying the 1982 Voting Rights Act amendments in which they were first laid out. *Gingles*, 478 U.S. at 43–45. The Senate Factors are: (1) the extent of any history of discrimination related to voting; (2) the extent to which voting is racially polarized; (3) the extent to which the Parish uses voting practices that may enhance the opportunity for discrimination; (4) whether Black candidates have access to candidate slating processes; (5) the extent to which Black voters bear the effects of discrimination in areas of life like education, housing, and economic opportunity; (6) whether political campaigns have been characterized by overt or subtle racial appeals; (7) the extent to which Black people have been elected to public office; (8) whether elected officials are responsive to the needs of Black residents; and (9) whether the policy underlying the voting plan is tenuous. *Id.* at 36–37. However, “there is no requirement that any particular number of factors be proved, or that a majority of them point one way or the other.” *Id.* at 45.

To comply with Section 2, the School Board must conduct a sensitive and “an intensely local appraisal” of the “totality of the circumstances,” as described above, under a “functional view of the political process.”²⁷ This entails attention not only to the demographic composition of districts, but also to other factors such as “participation rates and the degree of cohesion and crossover voting.”²⁸ Sometimes such effective minority opportunity districts will be single-member districts comprised of a majority (more than 50%) of Black voters (“majority-minority” districts).

During this redistricting cycle, any maps that the School Board adopts must preserve VRA-compliant districts that remain necessary and effective for Black voters in Harrison County to elect candidates of their choice.

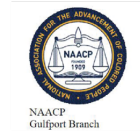
In sharing the information outlined above, our endeavor is to ensure that all voters have access to representation and Black voting power is not diluted during the redistricting process in Harrison County. Any dilutive redistricting plan that deprives Black voters of the opportunity to elect their preferred candidates directly impacts Black voters’ access to representatives who would be responsive to the needs of their communities. The district lines drawn during this redistricting cycle will determine, for at least the next decade, whether Black community members in Harrison County have a voice and representation on issues impacting them, including, among other issues, redevelopment opportunities, access to affordable housing, availability of job-training programs, and critical infrastructure such as roads and sidewalks.

* * *

In closing, we welcome working with the School Board in meeting its obligations during this redistricting cycle. Please feel free to contact Amir Badat at abadat@naacpldf.org or 601-462-9592 with any questions or to discuss the requests or anything else within the letter in more detail. We look forward to hearing from you soon and working together for the people of Harrison County.

²⁷ *Gingles*, 478 U.S. at 45 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted).

²⁸ Bernard Grofman, Lisa Handley, and David Lublin, Drawing Effective Minority Districts: A Conceptual Framework and Some Empirical Evidence, 79 N.C. L. Rev. 1383, 1415 (2001); see also *id.* at 1415–16 (“South Carolina is a particularly useful state in which to examine participation rates by race as the state actually collects this data—there is no need to estimate black and white registration or turnout rates.”).



Please feel free to contact Amir Badat, Voting Special Counsel at LDF, with any questions at 601-462-9592 or email at abadat@naacpldf.org to discuss these issues in more detail.

Sincerely,

/s/ Amir Badat

Amir Badat

Leah Aden, Deputy Director of Litigation

Stuart Naifeh, Manager of the Redistricting Project

Legal Defense Fund

40 Rector Street, 5th Fl.

New York, NY 10006

Gary Fredericks

President

Gulfport Branch of the NAACP

Sonya Williams Barnes

Policy Director – Mississippi

Southern Poverty Law Center

Nsombi Lambright

Executive Director

One Voice



Legal Defense Fund (“LDF”)

Since its founding in 1940, LDF has used litigation, policy advocacy, public education, and community organizing strategies to achieve racial justice and equity in political participation, education, economic justice, and criminal justice. Throughout its history, LDF has worked to enforce and promote laws and policies that increase access to the electoral process and prohibit voter discrimination, intimidation, and suppression. LDF has been fully separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (“NAACP”) since 1957, though LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.

NAACP Gulfport Branch

The Gulfport Branch of the NAACP was at the forefront of major battles of the civil rights movement in Mississippi during the 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s. The Gulfport Branch's mission includes ensuring the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination.

Southern Poverty Law Center (“SPLC”)

The SPLC is a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements, and advance the human rights of all people.

One Voice

Through collaborative efforts with traditional and non-traditional allies, One Voice has played a pivotal role in building alliances that transcend organizational and racial boundaries. One voice grew out of the work undertaken by the Mississippi State Conference NAACP in response to housing, education, civil rights, and other related policy advocacy needs facing historically disadvantaged communities in the wake of the 2005 hurricanes. That work revealed significant needs within the non-profit sector. One such need was access to current and relevant data required to do effective policy analysis. Another need was one of connections between trained and networked community leadership and non-partisan, community-based structures through which broad public involvement could be organized and sustained. One Voice, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization, was formed to address these needs.