



For Immediate Release
Thursday, June 1, 2023

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**Voters Urge Mississippi Supreme Court to Allow Lawsuit Challenging
Unconstitutional Takeover of Hinds County to Continue**

Jackson, MS – Last night, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF), MacArthur Justice Center, Mississippi Center for Justice (MCJ), and ACLU of judges and (ACLU-MS) filed a [brief](#) in the Mississippi Supreme Court to reverse the dismissal of a [lawsuit](#) challenging H.B. 1020, a newly-enacted law that violates the Mississippi Constitution by taking away the right of Hinds County voters to elect their circuit court judges, and establishing an illegitimate court covering broad swaths of Jackson.

The brief, filed on behalf of Jackson residents Ann Saunders, Sabreen Sharrieff, and Dorothy Triplett, argues that in the court’s dismissal, the lower court failed to follow the plain meaning of the Mississippi Constitution.

Following the filing, the coalition released the following statement:

“The Mississippi Constitution is clear: circuit court judges must be elected by Mississippi voters – not appointed. H.B. 1020 is in direct violation of this rule and allowing it to remain in effect would send the very disturbing message that this hostile takeover of Hinds County – whose population is 74% Black – is somehow acceptable.

“In a democracy, the rights of voters must be protected. The state legislature must be held accountable for violating the state constitution, silencing Black voters, and contributing to the unjust criminalization of Black communities. We hope the court will side with democracy and strike down H.B. 1020.”

H.B. 1020 was fiercely opposed by community advocates, local officials, and elected representatives in the legislature, and gives state officials extensive power, including a separate court system, in a geographic carve-out of Jackson that includes the city’s long-established majority white neighborhoods.

Furthermore, the new and illegitimate court H.B. 1020 creates will have authority over traffic violations and misdemeanor offenses, certain city ordinances related to “disturbing the peace,” and preliminary matters in felony criminal cases. The court has no accountability to Jackson voters and lacks any right of appeal to a higher court. And while people who commit misdemeanor offenses in the rest of the state face possible incarceration in local county jails, H.B. 1020 gives this court—unlike any other court in the state—the authority to send people to Central Mississippi Correctional Facility, one of Mississippi’s notoriously unsafe state prisons.

In addition, in violation of the constitutional requirement that circuit court judges must be “elected by the people” in the counties they serve, the new law requires the Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court Chief to appoint four judges to the Hinds County Circuit Court, doubling the court’s size. While elected judges across the state must reside in the district where they serve, H.B. 1020 allows for the four appointed judges to have no connection to Hinds County or Jackson.

The case was brought alongside and arises from the broad-based community education, organizing, and direct-action work of the Jackson Undivided Coalition (#JxnUndivided), which is comprised of dozens of member organizations who work together to protect the right to vote, the right to flourish, and the right of political self-determination for Jackson residents.

Read the brief filed in the Mississippi Supreme Court [here](#).

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Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.

The Mississippi Center for Justice is dedicated to dismantling the state’s culture of inequity and injustice. Supported and staffed by attorneys and other professionals, the Center develops and pursues strategies to combat discrimination and poverty statewide.

The [ACLU of Mississippi](#) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization that defends and expands the constitutional rights and civil liberties of all Mississippians guaranteed under the United States and Mississippi Constitutions, through its litigation, legislative and public education programs. It is an affiliate of the national ACLU.