

## Community Use Guide

### State of the State: Placing Power Back in the Hands of the People, Demanding a New Way, and Reigniting the Fight for Freedom in Mississippi

Mississippi has consistently been at the forefront of radical shifts, serving as ground zero in the struggle for democracy and freedom since its inception. The Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi has played a vital role in securing voting rights and political representation for marginalized people, particularly those who had been systematically disenfranchised and denied a voice in the democratic process. The struggle in Mississippi provided a model for ordinary citizens who sought to courageously build a movement to claim their rights and disrupt an undemocratic status quo. By continuing to address the unfinished business of political, economic and social injustice in Mississippi, we honor the civil rights legacies of our heroes and possess the wherewithal needed to truly strengthen and redefine democracy as we see it.

### What is “The State of the State”?

The State of the State report is the inaugural publication by the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Mississippi state office that comprehensively analyzes Mississippi’s current social, political, and economic landscape. Released in 2024, it coincides with the 60th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Freedom Summer — serving as both a reminder of how far we have come and a mile-marker of how much further we have left to go.

The State of the State brings together insights from subject matter experts, researchers, and community members to assess the persistent racial and socioeconomic injustices affecting vulnerable communities throughout Mississippi. It highlights the impact of these issues on democracy and civic participation while also proposing actionable strategies to address long-standing inequities and empower minority communities.



### Summary

Mississippi is grappling with persistent racial and socioeconomic injustices that disproportionately affect marginalized communities, particularly Black, Brown, Indigenous, female, and disabled individuals. The report highlights ongoing voter suppression tactics: strict voter ID laws, polling place closures, voter roll purges, etc. All of these practices hinder and discourage full civic participation. Felony disenfranchisement laws continue to suppress Black political power. These

issues extend beyond politics, impacting individuals’ ability to self-govern and advocate for their needs, ultimately perpetuating socioeconomic disparities and health inequities.

The report calls for a multifaceted approach combining legal strategies, policy advocacy, grassroots organizing, and mutual aid efforts to address these challenges. Key recommendations include implementing a statewide

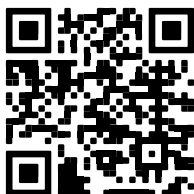
voter protection program, advocating for election reforms, establishing a robust public defender system, and supporting initiatives directly assisting low-income families. The report also emphasizes the importance of community-based voter education, civic engagement, and mutual aid efforts led by Black women. Additionally, it calls for policies that expand access to affordable child care, reinstate an expanded Child Tax Credit, implement guaranteed income programs, and address education inequities through a federal right to education.

## The Findings

The State of the State report includes several in-depth, analytical essays that examine specific areas of concern in Mississippi. Authored by experienced and dedicated advocates for change, these essays offer readers comprehensive descriptions of the issues and propose actionable solutions to address and correct many of the issues that are plaguing tens of thousands of Mississippians. With voting and voting rights being the common thread, the contributors discuss how to restore power to the hands of the common person, demand a better quality of life and demand a new way forward that prioritizes the future of all Mississippians.

### To see change realized, Mississippians must:

- Continue to advocate for election reforms (early voting, automatic registration, etc.)
- Demand the establishment of a state-funded, statewide voter protection program
- Establish a robust, statewide public defender system that is fully funded and resourced by the of Mississippi
- Support initiatives that provide direct cash assistance to low-income families and implement guaranteed income programs
- Prioritize community-based voter education and civic engagement
- Push for policies expanding access to affordable child care
- Reinstate an expanded Child Tax Credit
- Advocate for strategies to keep children in schools
- Call for a federal right to education to address inequities



To learn more scan the QR code or visit [splcenter.org/ms-state-report](https://splcenter.org/ms-state-report)

## Action Center

Motivated by what you've learned? Ready to reignite the fight for freedom in Mississippi?

Here are a few things you can do today:

1. Engage with the Report:
  - Read it at [splcenter.org/ms-state-report](https://splcenter.org/ms-state-report)
  - Share with 3 friends
  - Contact your representatives at [legislature.ms.gov/legislators](https://legislature.ms.gov/legislators)
2. Contact your Mississippi SPLC state office to:
  - Request an Advocacy Bootcamp in Your Community: [advocacy@splcenter.org](mailto:advocacy@splcenter.org)
  - Request a group discussion on the State of the State report in your community.
3. Share Our Report Online and Tag: [@splcenter](https://twitter.com/splcenter) [#MississippisGotNow](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState) [#TheRoadto60](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState)

## Sample Posts

[#MississippisGotNow](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState) [#TheRoadTo60](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState)  
[#MSStateoftheState](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState) [#ReigniteFreedomMS](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState)  
[#VoterRightsMS](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState) [#NewWayMS](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState)

**Twitter/X:** 60 years after Freedom Summer, the fight for voting rights in Mississippi continues. Read [@splcenter](https://twitter.com/splcenter)'s State of the State report to learn how we can reignite the fight for freedom: [splcenter.org/ms-state-report](https://splcenter.org/ms-state-report) [#MSStateoftheState](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState)

**Facebook:** The Southern Poverty Law Center has released its inaugural State of the State report for Mississippi, examining ongoing racial and socioeconomic injustices and their impact on our democracy. Join us in demanding a new way forward for all Mississippians. Read the full report here: [splcenter.org/ms-state-report](https://splcenter.org/ms-state-report) [#NewWayMS](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState) [#TheRoadto60](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState) [#MississippisGotNow](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState)

**Instagram:** Did you know? Mississippi still has a lifetime ban on voting for certain crimes, disproportionately affecting Black communities. It's time to change this. Learn more about voter suppression and how we can combat it in the new State of the State report. LINK IN BIO. [#VoterRightsMS](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState)

**LinkedIn:** As we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, [@splcenter](https://twitter.com/splcenter) releases a comprehensive State of the State report for Mississippi. This report brings together experts to envision a new way of life for Mississippians, addressing voter suppression, economic disparities, and more. Read and share: [splcenter.org/ms-state-report](https://splcenter.org/ms-state-report) [#MSStateoftheState](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState) [#TheRoadto60](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState) [#MississippisGotNow](https://twitter.com/MSStateoftheState)