



One
Voice

2024 Legislative Priorities:

Building resilient communities: A whole community approach



2024 Legislative Priorities

Mission

Guided by principles of self-determination, One Voice ensures historically silenced communities have representation and influence in spaces of power.

Vision

We envision a Mississippi where we all THRIVE.

One Voice's 2024 Legislative Priorities: Building resilient communities: A whole community approach

Strong, resilient communities are the heartbeat of our state. A continuing strengthening of communities throughout the state takes a whole community approach. This means that it will take ALL of us to support effective leadership, increase collective impact, and expand economic wealth in communities of color.

In sharing our 2024 Legislative Priorities, One Voice believes that by building community awareness and increasing the capacity of communities, local organizations and leaders are empowered and provided opportunities to engage in the formation of public policy that affects their lives. Ultimately, our goal in building resilient communities is to create a fair, inclusive Mississippi for every individual, regardless of race, color, class, gender, background, or zip code. . . ensuring that everyone in every Mississippi community THRIVES.

Tagline

ONE VILLAGE. ONE VISION. ONE VOICE.

Values

Community Centered
Empowerment
Excellence
Leading Through Love

5 Strategic Priorities:

Education:

Increase resources to make quality public education available to all.

Voting Rights:

End voter suppression.

Criminal Justice:

Redefine public safety in our communities.

Energy Democracy:

Advance climate and environmental equity.

Policy:

Advocate for systems that advance economic mobility.



Education

Education

One Voice's education policy priorities seek reform in efforts to dismantle attacks on public schools through privatization, school choice, and consolidation efforts. Our ultimate goal is to find and resource equitable education opportunities for all children and families across the state of Mississippi.



Issue: Expand state-funded early pre-K public education

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
Expand state-funded early pre-K public instruction	Pre-K programs provide educational opportunities to 4- and 5-year-old children who have not started kindergarten. Pre-K programs may include Head Start agencies, childcare centers, private non-profit organizations, and public school districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase kindergarten readiness• Provide financial support for families with young children• Advance safe, reliable, high-quality childcare

Issue: Fully fund the Mississippi Adequate Education Program

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
Fully fund the Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP)	The MAEP is a funding formula set by state law to determine the amount of funding the state should provide each public school district to meet academic standards established by the Mississippi State Board of Education. For the 2023-2024 school year, Mississippi's public schools were underfunded by more than \$175 million. Since its inception in 1997, MAEP has only been fully funded twice— leaving schools without more than \$3 billion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance the quality of public school education• Increase student achievement• Increase school resources

Issue: Invest in higher education

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase state funding to institutions of higher learning• Increase state financial aid and target that aid to students in need• Implement free community college	<p>There are 8 public institutions of higher learning and 15 community colleges in Mississippi that comprise the state's "higher-ed" programs. Nationally and statewide, the cost of higher education tuition has skyrocketed over the last decade.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produce a more qualified workforce• Increase wages• Strengthen Mississippi's economy• Reduce reliance on student loan debt

Issue: End corporal punishment

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<p>Prohibit corporal punishment in Mississippi's K-12 schools</p>	<p>Corporal punishment is a method of discipline in which a supervising adult deliberately inflicts pain upon a child in response to a child's unacceptable behavior. These practices include spanking, paddling, confinement in small spaces, excessive exercise, and fixed postures for long periods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foster student growth, belonging, and dignity• Increase students' social, emotional, and mental health needs• Improve school climate and safety

Issue: Public school funding

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep public school funding in public schools• Restore diverted public school funds back to public schools• Prevent the use of public school funds for private use• Defeat privatization measures such as all new vouchers or tax credit scholarship proposals or expansions• Propose an equitable school funding model that accounts for the diverse needs of different communities and promotes fair and equal opportunities for all students	<p>Public school funding can come from various sources, including government budgets, property taxes, and federal grants.</p> <p>Over the last few decades, there have been attacks on public schooling through efforts to privatize education either through the opening of charter schools with public dollars, use of public buildings, or increased use of school voucher programs that use public school funds for student enrollment in private or home schools.</p> <p>The adequacy and equitable distribution of public school funding plays vital roles in determining the overall effectiveness and inclusivity of the education system. As a result, state and local elected officials should ensure that all money received for public school funding be used to support the operation, maintenance, and improvement of public educational institutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote equity within Mississippi's public school system• Increase social mobility• Produce a more qualified workforce• Protect current public school funding for academic programs, essential school resources, and teacher salaries.

Issue: Expand community schools

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fund public services such as health and human services, workforce development, and parks and recreation to advance community schools.• Leverage federal funding from the Every Students Succeeds Act in a way that best suits the needs of school district and the families they serve.	<p>Community schools are public schools. Community schools' priorities include: 1) integrated student support; 2) expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities; 3) active family and community engagement; and 4) collaborative leadership and practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mitigate the impact of public school disinvestment• Advance high-quality, equitable schools• Meet the needs of the whole child• Increase academic performance, attendance, and graduation rates• Reduce racial and economic achievement gaps



Criminal Justice Reform



Criminal Justice Reform

One Voice's criminal justice policy priorities seek to redefine public safety in our communities. This work includes reducing disparities, lowering incarceration rates, enhancing facilities, and addressing the social and financial costs of imprisonment while providing robust reentry support.



Issue: Reduce mass incarceration

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address sentencing laws to set lower penalties for low-level, non-violent offenses, particularly drug offenses• Eliminate the state's habitual offender law• Increase alternatives to incarcerations for Mississippians suffering from mental health and drug abuse• Expand probation and parole reforms	Mississippi ranks number one in mass incarceration—incarcerating more people than any other state in the country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote healthy communities• Strengthen families• Reduce disparities in the criminal legal system• Improve local and state economies

Issue: Bail reform

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• End money bail• Enact legislation to tackle pretrial detentions except where necessary to prevent imminent violence or willful flight	Bail is the amount of money individuals must pay to be released from incarceration as they await trial.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow individuals experiencing poverty or individuals unable to pay other options for securing their freedom until trial• Reduce mass incarceration

Issue: Improve prison conditions

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase medical and mental health care in facilities• Reform facilities' needs and risk assessment and classification system processes• Update existing equipment and infrastructure• Suspend the building or enlarging of new and existing jails and prisons	<p>Examples of poor prison conditions include overcrowding, violence, poor medical care, and lack of access to treatment, education, or rehabilitation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect individuals incarcerated• Promote public safety

Issue: Reduce collateral consequences, decrease recidivism, and increase access to re-entry services

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ban the Box• Reduce state and local reliance on fines and fees• Invest in and increase access to re-entry services and human services or public assistance programs related to education, housing, employment, and health	<p>Collateral consequences result from an individual's interaction with the criminal legal system. These consequences may include the inability to get a driver's license, a permanent criminal record, the permanent loss of voting rights, ineligibility for housing, the revocation of a business or professional license, and more.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve public safety• Decrease recidivism• Support individuals' successful reentry into society• Reduce mass incarceration

A man with a beard, wearing a white t-shirt, is holding a white sign with the word "VOTE" written in large, bold, black capital letters. He is standing in front of an American flag. The image is partially obscured by a green bar at the bottom.

VOTE

Voting Rights

Voting Rights

One Voice's voting rights policy priorities seek to end voter suppression. By targeting voter suppression and advocating for equitable voting policies, we seek to enable all eligible citizens to exercise their right to vote freely and without obstacles.



Issue: Reform the state's disenfranchisement laws and enact an effective suffrage procedure

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• End felony disenfranchisement in Mississippi• Establish a new process for Mississippians to request suffrage through the Mississippi Legislature	<p>Mississippi ranks highest in the nation in the percentage of disenfranchised, or people restricted from voting, while incarcerated, under criminal justice supervision outside of prison, or permanently. And twice the national average for African Americans of the state's black voting age population is disenfranchised.</p> <p>Currently, a Mississippian seeking to regain the right to vote can do so in three ways, including by seeking to have the Mississippi Legislature pass a Bill of Suffrage on his or her behalf. However, that process is ambiguous and subjective.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restore voting rights to those disenfranchised• Reduce disparities created by restrictive voting practices

Issue: Restore the state's ballot initiative process

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<p>Create a ballot initiative process that meets state constitutional standards</p>	<p>Mississippi's ballot initiative law was a process by which voters could place constitutional amendments directly on the ballot when the Mississippi Legislature refused to act on issues important to them. However, the Mississippi Supreme Court struck down the state's initiative process in 2021.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that Mississippians' voices are heard that may be important to them but are less popular with state leadership

Issue: Expand voting rights

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminate voter purge policies• Prohibit strict voter ID laws• Reform voter registration procedures to allow for automatic, online, and same-day voter registration, as well as extended voting hours• Address language barriers to voting• Allow for no-excuse early voting and mail-in voting• Extended polling hours and locations	<p>Mississippi's voting laws are some of the most restrictive in the nation. For instance, Mississippi is one of only three states to permanently restrict people convicted of certain felonies from voting. Mississippi also requires a photo ID to cast a ballot in person at the polls or by absentee ballot in the circuit or municipal clerk's office, does not provide no-excuse absentee voting, does not allow early voting, and does not allow mail-in voting, except for a few categories of absentee voting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase access to voting• Protect election integrity• Ensure that lawmakers are representative of their voters



Energy Democracy

Energy Democracy

One Voice's energy democracy policy priorities seek to advance climate and environmental equity. To achieve environmental justice, we are forging paths toward a sustainable, equitable, and empowered community through energy democratization, ensuring equal protection for all.



Issue: Increase broadband access

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
Increase access to reliable, high-speed internet access, including underserved and rural areas across the state	Broadband is another term for high-speed internet access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decrease educational, income, and health disparities• Promote economic development

Issue: Increase renewable energy, equity, and economic development in rural areas

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invest in the development of infrastructure to improve energy efficiency• Move the state toward renewable energy sources• Fund utility assistance programs• Reduce harmful emissions, including greenhouse gases in favor of the increased use of renewable energy source• Advance energy efficiency and clean energy• Increase programs to help mitigate the effects of flooding for weather events	Renewable energy is energy produced from sources like the sun and wind that are naturally replenished and do not run out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote economic development• Reduce carbon emissions and air pollution• Increase energy affordability• Reduce impacts of natural disasters



Policy

Policy

One Voice's fiscal policy priorities seek to advocate for systems that advance economic mobility. By engaging with local, state, and federal policies related to tax and budget, education, criminal justice, voting, health, immigration, climate justice, and economic justice matters, we tackle disparities and champion anti-poverty initiatives.



Issue: Improve the state's budget process

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adopt participatory budget practices• Make the state's budget process transparent, open, and inclusive	Every year, through the budget appropriation process, the Mississippi Legislature passes a collection of laws that determine how to spend state revenue. However, over the years, the budget process has become shorter and less transparent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase community participation in budget decisions that impact their lives• Increase equity in the state's budget process

Issue: Strengthen the state's income system

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Save the state's 5% income tax bracket• Create a new 6% income tax bracket at \$100,000	The income tax is the only tax in Mississippi that makes the wealthy pay a larger share than the poor. However, during the 2022 Mississippi state lawmakers enacted the state's largest tax cuts for the wealthy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase state revenue• Increase investments to public services• Improve income, race, and gender inequality

Issue: Enact an Earned Income Tax Credit

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
Enact an Earned Income Tax Credit set to 10% of the federal credit and made refundable	Earned Income Tax Credits are tax credits that benefit low-to-moderate-income working families by reducing personal income tax liability based on a certain percentage of the family's earnings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase income for workers with low-wage jobs and families with children• Improve income, race, and gender inequality• Reduce poverty

Issue: Enact a Child Tax Credit

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
Enact a Child Tax Credit that is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• refundable• extended per child including a young child bonus• eligible for all residents• indexed so it does not erode over time• advanceable/monthly	Child Tax Credits are tax credits that support working families with children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help families make ends meet• Reduce child poverty• Boost state and local economies

Issue: Grocery tax reform

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
Eliminate the state's grocery tax, reduce the state's grocery tax in half from 7.0% to 3.5%, or provide a grocery tax credit	Mississippi, Alabama, and South Dakota are the only states of the thirteen that tax groceries at the full state sales tax rate. Mississippi's current sales tax rate of 7.0% results in the state having the highest sales tax rate on food purchases in the nation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decrease food insecurity• Improve income, race, and gender inequality• Make the state's tax code fairer

Issue: Medicaid expansion

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
Expand Medicaid	Currently, there are approximately 150,000 uninsured adults in Mississippi with incomes below the poverty line who are caught in the Medicaid “coverage gap” and who would be eligible for Medicaid if the state were to expand its Medicaid program. However, Mississippi is one of ten states that has not yet expanded Medicaid.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase access to healthcare• Reduce health disparities• Stabilize the state’s health care system• Improve child outcomes

Issue: Liveable wage

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
Create a \$15 state minimum wage	A livable wage ensures that more low-wage workers are paid enough to cover basic living expenses. Forty-three states have a state minimum wage. However, Mississippi is one of five states that have not adopted a state minimum wage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce poverty• Support Mississippians with low wages• Improve income, race, and gender inequality

Issue: Reform Mississippi Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase benefits levels• End behavioral control and restrictions to assessing assistance	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides food assistance for people with low incomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect families from poverty and hardship• Support workers with low wages• Support healthy eating and improved health• Help the economy• Reduce poverty

Issue: Reform Mississippi's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase basic assistance spending • Raise benefits • Raise caseloads • Restrict TANF funds to people at or below 200 percent of the poverty level • End behavioral control and restrictions to assessing assistance 	<p>Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is a cash assistance program that combines federal and state funding to provide much-needed support to working families experiencing poverty.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce poverty • Help families meet basic needs • Stabilize families facing crisis • Promote racial equity • Increase child outcomes

Issue: Paid family and medical leave

Policy Solution	Definition	Impact
<p>Adopt up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave</p>	<p>Under the federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), an employee can receive up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave to care for a newborn, adopted or foster child, or to care for a family member, or to attend to the employee's own serious medical health condition during twelve months. Eleven states have now offered state paid family leave programs to offer these same benefits to their employees; sixteen states require paid sick leave; three states offer paid parental leave for state employees; several states offer school leave for parents to attend school-related events and activities for their children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve maternal health • Reduce financial insecurity • Improve retention and productivity in the labor force • Improve overall health outcomes



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