



ECONOMIC JUSTICE

We're working to ensure that people living in poverty in the Deep South, especially communities of color, are not punished or exploited because of their economic status.

They're victimized by predatory lenders who trap them in a cycle of debt and rob them and their communities of scant resources.

They're denied access to the social safety net by politicians who stigmatize low-income workers and blame them for our country's problems.

They're exploited and imprisoned by local governments that target impoverished communities for revenue-generating traffic fines – and by profiteering companies that charge exorbitant, unfair fees for privatized, court-ordered “services” like payment plans or probation oversight.

For more than 40 years, we've represented the most vulnerable people in society – often those living in poverty who cannot afford to mount legal challenges to the injustices they face. Today, our Economic Justice Project is

fighting back against deeply engrained policies and practices that exploit and punish the poor simply because of their economic status. Our work has a national reach but is primarily focused on the Deep South.

We are focused on the following priorities:

- **Reforming policies that trap the poor in a cycle of court debt.**

We're shutting down modern-day debtors' prisons across the Deep South. We're stopping the use of "offender-funded" services such as private "probation" companies that use the power of the justice system to extort payments from the poor. We're also committed to stopping the collateral consequences of court fines and fees, such as driver's license suspensions, which can force people to choose between driving with a suspended license and losing a job. We're working to reform bail systems that discriminate against the poor and to stamp out abusive practices by bail bond companies. We're also dedicated to stopping the abuse of civil asset forfeiture, a practice that allows law enforcement to seize property but is too often driven by profit rather than public safety.

- **Protecting the safety net for the poor.**

We're working to ensure that the poor are not denied access to the social safety net. In Tennessee, for example, we filed suit when officials erected barriers to keep many residents from obtaining health care coverage under the state's Medicaid program. Our suit led to a preliminary injunction that has helped thousands. More recently, we have sued in Kentucky to fight the state's efforts to impose work requirements on

Medicaid recipients – requirements that serve little purpose other than to deny services to those most in need.

- **Protecting low-income consumers from predatory practices.**

We're helping lead the charge to protect consumers from payday and title lenders that prey upon low-income communities and trap the poor in a cycle of debt. And, we're educating the public and supporting a national effort to create strong consumer safeguards to rein in this rapacious industry. We're also taking aim at abusive wage garnishment practices, and fighting the efforts of private companies to exploit the criminal justice system for their own profit.

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Contact us

We are dedicated to defending the rights of those living in poverty. Please contact us using this form.

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Civil Asset Forfeiture: Forfeiting Your Rights

Learn more about Alabama's profit-driven civil asset forfeiture scheme and how it undercuts due process and property rights.

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