



November 2009

Visit us and donate on-line at [www.mscenterforjustice.org](http://www.mscenterforjustice.org).

### Victory in fight against predatory lending



During October, the Mississippi Center for Justice won a huge victory in our efforts to curb predatory lending. Based on the advice of advocates from the Center, the Jackson, Miss. City Council voted unanimously in support of a 45-day moratorium on additional check cashers, title loan stores, payday lenders and pawnshops. The temporary moratorium gives the City Council more time to study the issue and craft more permanent measures.

Because Jackson is home to one of the highest concentrations of check cashing companies in the nation, seeking a moratorium here was a logical step for the Center. Municipalities surrounding Jackson, including Ridgeland, Canton and others, have also instituted moratoriums. [Read more here.](#)

**Photo:** Payday loan companies are concentrated in low-income areas of Jackson, Miss.

### Cottages can stay in Long Beach, Miss.

Even four years after Hurricane Katrina, affordable housing remains elusive for many Mississippi Gulf Coast residents. During the past year, a major initiative of the Mississippi Center for Justice's Katrina recovery effort has been to help families who want to keep their Mississippi Cottages be able to do so on a permanent basis. Our attorneys have battled local ordinances that sought to deny residents building permits and put up other obstacles to permanency.

During October, we claimed one more victory in this on-going campaign: the City of Long Beach voted to issue building permits to five clients seeking to keep their cottages permanently on their land. This action clears the way for our clients to purchase their cottages from MEMA and place them on a permanent foundation. Four years after Katrina, they once again will be homeowners. [Click here to read more about the Mississippi Cottage project.](#)



**Photo:** The Mississippi Cottage is a well-built modular home. The Center is battling local ordinances that seek to ban the cottages from permanent placement on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

### 2009 Champions of Justice Dinner and Road Trip: It's a wrap!

Thanks to everyone who attended the 2009 Champions of Justice Dinner, held Oct. 16 in downtown Jackson, and to those who provided financial support to make the evening possible. Your commitment to making Mississippi a better place for all citizens makes our work possible.

We extend a heartfelt thanks to our 2009 Champion of Justice honorees, Wil Colom of Columbus, Miss. and John Maxey of Jackson, Miss. Each honoree's lifelong work in pursuit of justice for all is a shining example for everyone working in the legal profession. We were also delighted to recognize the amazing *pro bono* contributions from attorneys throughout Mississippi who have given of their time and talents to help families keep their homes through our foreclosure prevention assistance program. And we were honored to have Amos Hartston, *pro bono* counsel with Latham & Watkins, join us to accept an award for his firm's commitment to Mississippi in the post-Katrina era. We were also humbled to honor posthumously Civil Rights legend Jimmie Travis for his leadership in the movement to seek equality for all.



Following the dinner, more than 60 attendees and staff headed out on Saturday morning to enjoy a historical, educational and culturally enlightening tour of the Mississippi Delta. Visit our website, [www.mscenterforjustice.org](http://www.mscenterforjustice.org), to find links to videos, photos and more from the weekend events.

Be sure to mark your calendars for the 2010 Champions of Justice Weekend, Oct. 8-10, 2010. Make plans to join us for the entire weekend, as we celebrate our Champions of Justice honorees and return the Mississippi Delta to highlight our progress and the challenges that remain ahead.

**Photos:** (Right, above) Mississippi Supreme Court Justice James Graves and Mississippi Center for Justice president Martha Bergmark honor Wil Colom. (Left) John Maxey receives his 2009 Champion of Justice award.

### Pro Bono Spotlight

During the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, LLP began providing *pro bono* assistance for FEMA appeals and helping survivors navigate their recovery. Since then, they have assisted minority communities with historic preservation and advised the Mississippi Center for Justice in our micro-enterprise initiative. Their service on a broad range of issues has been invaluable to our organization, and to the recovery effort of hundreds of families.

One case in particular stands out among the rest and stands to affect the next generation of coastal residents. The 28th Street Elementary School, located in the historically African American community of North Gulfport, received major damage from the storm. During one visit to Gulf Coast, former President Bush stood in front of the school and proclaimed that it would be repaired and the children would return. However, the local government devised another plan. They moved the police department into the renovated structure, and the school district decided to relocate the school to a remote area on a small dead end street -- an area that would require the filling of quality wetlands. To make matters worse, the site is dangerously close to where dioxin was stored and where it leaked. Because the chemical spread and mixed with the soil during Katrina, the Center and Orrick were concerned that it would threaten the health of children in the new facility.

Emily Lamond, an associate with Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, took on the case to prevent the relocation of the school to this area. She has worked tirelessly to represent the North Gulfport Community Land Trust in this matter, which is currently awaiting oral argument. It is the kind of case that gives a voice to those who traditionally lack access to the justice system, and one we hope will protect future generations of North Gulfport children.

**Photo:** Emily Lamond, associate with Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, LLP, provides *pro bono* counsel to protect the children and families of the 28th Street Elementary School in North Gulfport.



[Visit Our Website](#) | [Donate](#) | [Email Us](#)

Mississippi Center for Justice  
5 Old River Place, Ste. 203

Jackson, Mississippi 39202

(601) 352-2269 fax (601) 352-4769