



2017 POLICY PRIORITIES



The Urban League of Louisiana (ULLA), formerly known as the Urban League of Greater New Orleans, has undergone unprecedented growth in the past year. ULLA is an affiliate of the National Urban League that works to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power, and civil rights for African Americans across Louisiana. Its expansive policy platform aligns closely with the work of its three Centers of Excellence: The Center for Education and Youth Development, the Center for Workforce and Economic Development and the Center for Policy and Social Justice.

This document outlines the League's policy priorities for the 2017 legislative session and covers issues impacting African American families across Louisiana, especially in the Baton Rouge and New Orleans Metropolitan areas where the League maintains its strongest presence. These policy priorities expand across the areas of criminal and juvenile justice, economic and workforce development and education that coincides with ULLA's core work.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND JUVENILE JUSTICE



The State of Louisiana has made significant strides in the past year to enact reforms to its juvenile justice system that improve public safety, promote efficiency and facilitate rehabilitation of youth within the system. In 2016, Louisiana:

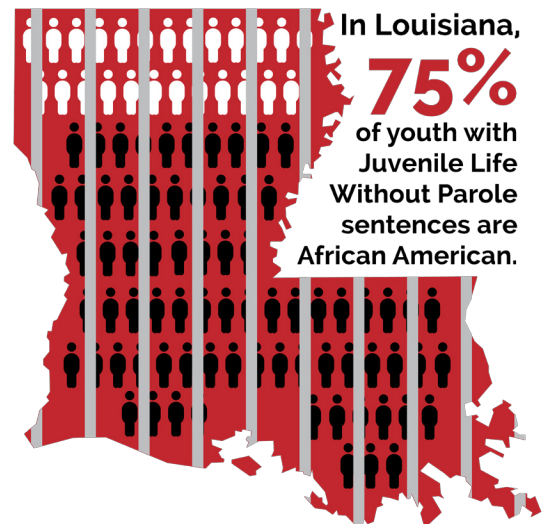
- ✓ Increased the age of juvenile court jurisdiction to 17, aligning it with national best practices.
- ✓ Established new standards for the education of youth in custody, and
- ✓ Took steps to improve the effectiveness of the system including ensuring resources to provide proper representation for indigent youth.

In New Orleans, the City Council passed an ordinance to enact municipal bail reforms that eliminates bail for most non-violent municipal offenses.

The proposed policies for which ULLA is advocating that continue to expand important improvements to the juvenile and criminal justice systems are as follows:

ULLA supports SB16, which repeals parts of the criminal code to make individuals with a Juvenile Life Without Parole (JLWOP) sentence for crimes committed while under the age of 18 eligible for parole. The League is advocating for an amendment to this bill to provide for parole eligibility retroactively and pro-actively at 25 years.

- ➔ JLWOP sentences are disproportionately applied to African American youth who are given these sentences per capita 10 times more than White youth. In Louisiana, 75% of those with JLWOP sentences are African Americans.
- ➔ The United States of America is the **ONLY** country in the world in which juveniles are serving JLWOP sentences, a practice that goes against the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- ➔ Parole is sensible since research indicates that recidivism rates are less than 2% for individuals released after long sentences.
- ➔ Youth are still developing during adolescence and thus are more likely to be rehabilitated and less culpable for the crimes they commit.



ULLA supports HB74, which eliminates mandatory minimum sentences for juveniles.

- ➔ Mandatory minimum sentences take this discretion from judges regardless of what is in the best interest of the child and in the interest of public safety.
- ➔ Judges should be granted the discretion to determine sentences for juveniles based on the pathway most likely to lead to rehabilitation.

ULLA supports revisions to expungement policies that allow for the expungement and sealing of juvenile records for two years after the individual has completed the terms of their sentences, provided they have not acquired an adult felony conviction, a misdemeanor involving a firearm, or an indictment of outstanding bill of information.

- ➔ Juvenile expungement is a national best practice that affords youth an opportunity to succeed by removing barriers associated with juvenile court records (i.e., housing, employment, education, etc.).

ULLA supports the establishment of the Task Force on Secure Care Standards and Auditing that assembles a group of experts and key stakeholders to develop auditing standards to promote the safety of youth in secure facilities in Louisiana.

- ➔ Louisiana currently lacks safety standards for its secure facilities, a practice that puts youth at risk and that is misaligned with security standards imposed by the state for other youth-serving facilities.
- ➔ The Task Force would put in place standards that will be used by the Louisiana Legislative Auditor in an annual review of secure facilities to ensure that they follow the newly established safety standards and regulations for operation.

ULLA supports changes recently enacted by the Baton Rouge Police Department regarding its use of force policies and advocates for the following improvements for BRPD:

- ➔ Continued improvements to training for law enforcement officers including a focus on implicit bias
- ➔ Improvements to recruitment strategies to attract a more representative police force in Baton Rouge
- ➔ Calls for the independent investigation of officer involved shootings and excessive force complaints

FACT Whites make up 36% of the Baton Rouge population but represent almost 70% of officers in the BRPD, the highest disparity among major, majority-African American cities.²

ULLA supports HB276, which establishes guidelines for officer involved incident investigations:

- ➔ Establishes a time line for the investigation providing 14 days for officers to acquire council
- ➔ Provides 60 days administrative leave with pay for involved officers for the duration of the investigation and unpaid leave thereafter until the matter is resolved

ULLA supports HB277 that provides for ongoing professional development and training of peace officers to maintain Peace Officers Standards and Training (P.O.S.T.) certification:

- ➔ Requires a minimum of 400 hours of core curriculum training and at least 20 hours of in-service training on an annual basis
- ➔ Calls for the implementation of de-escalation, bias policing recognition, sudden in-custody death, and crisis intervention training for peace officers by January 2018
- ➔ Includes similar provisions for part-time peace officers

ULLA supports HB278, which revokes a peace officer's P.O.S.T. certification under the following conditions:

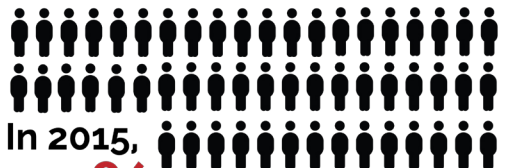
- ➔ Convicted of an offense that restricts them from use of a firearm
- ➔ Misdemeanor domestic violence convictions or any felony conviction
- ➔ Released from duty for disciplinary reasons
- ➔ Failure to complete training requirements
- ➔ Voluntary surrendering of the P.O.S.T. certification or in the event of judicial disposition in a criminal case that requires revocation

FACT African Americans are 3.5 times more likely to be unarmed and shot by police than their White counterparts, and more often subjected to force by police than Whites.¹

1 <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2016/12/cover-policing.aspx>

2 <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/baton-rouge-police-department-clears-cops-force-article-1.2701115>

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



In 2015, **32%** of African Americans in Louisiana were living

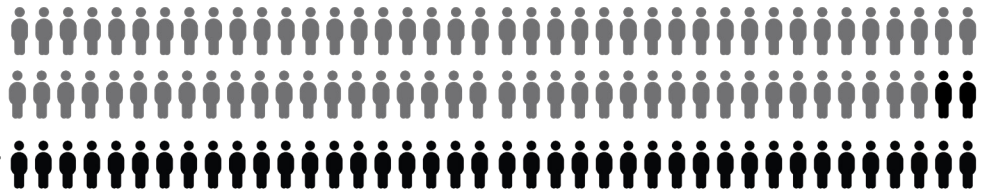
below the poverty line.³

POVERTY remains a significant issue facing African American Louisianans. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2015, 32% of African Americans in Louisiana were living below the poverty line.³

Living above the poverty line is not an indication of economic wellness. Many families in Louisiana are considered "asset-limited, income-constrained and working," also known as the **WORKING POOR**. African Americans in Louisiana represent 42% of these households, indicating that the overwhelming majority of African Americans in Louisiana are living in poverty or are among the working poor, both of which tell us that these families are struggling to afford their basic household needs.⁴

WORKING POOR: ASSET-LIMITED, INCOME-CONSTRAINED AND WORKING.

42%



of the "working poor" are African Americans.⁴

Another core issue impacting Louisiana families' economic well-being is the **WAGE GAP** in Louisiana between women and men, the widest gap in the nation at \$0.66 to every dollar paid to White men.⁵

For African American women, the gap is \$.48 to every dollar paid to White men, on average costing African American women \$28,898 per year.⁶



3 https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_1YR_B17001B&prodType=table
 4 <http://www.launitedway.org/united-way-alice-report-louisiana>
 5 <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/workplace-fairness/fair-pay/4-2016-la-wage-gap.pdf>
 6 <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/workplace-fairness/fair-pay/african-american-women-wage-gap.pdf>

The following policy recommendations address these matters and support the improved economic well-being of African Americans in Louisiana:

ULLA supports increasing the minimum wage to a rate that allows families to afford the basic cost of living.

Currently, the New Orleans living wage is \$11.29 for a single individual and \$22.89 for an adult with one child.⁷

ULLA supports equal pay legislation.

The Urban League supports equal pay legislation that addresses this matter on public contracts including equal pay policies for government contractors and subcontractors and pay equality measures impacting all employees in the public and private sector in Louisiana.

ULLA supports legislation that bans pay secrecy and retaliation in the private sector in Louisiana.

- ➔ Pay secrecy is the policy or practice of an employer that forbids or discourage employees from discussing their pay with their colleagues.
- ➔ Almost half of workers in a pay secrecy/wage discrimination study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research/Rockefeller indicated that their employers enact some sort of pay secrecy policy. Among private sector employers, the rates were higher (about 61%).⁸
- ➔ This practice perpetuates wage inequities and must be abolished to help end the gender wage gap.

ULLA proposes a study resolution to examine the potential economic impact of mandatory inclusion of minority, women-owned and disadvantaged business enterprises on state contracts.

The participation of small businesses, especially disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE) can be a major driver of economic development and economic parity in the state. Unfortunately, DBE and small businesses face several hurdles in accessing large, state development contracts. The study resolution will examine the potential economic impact of mandatory inclusion of these businesses with the intent to promote small business and DBE participation in state projects.



⁷ Glasmeier, A.K. (2017). Living wage calculation for Orleans Parish, Louisiana. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology. <http://tinyurl.com/j7yhfe4>

⁸ [https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/wpallimport/files/iwpr-export/publications/Q016%20\(1\).pdf](https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/wpallimport/files/iwpr-export/publications/Q016%20(1).pdf)

EDUCATION



Educational equity continues to be a priority for ULLA and its education platform focuses expressly on the issues that advance educational equity for children in New Orleans Public Schools and across the state of Louisiana.

According to the Louisiana Department of Education, the academic achievement gap between African American and White learners in Louisiana is 25% and 29% between the economically disadvantaged and those who are not.⁹ This gap persists in college graduation rates in Louisiana where the six-year graduation rate for African Americans is 34% as compared to 41% for Whites.¹⁰

Access to higher education is growing more important for today's youth since more than half of jobs in the state require some postsecondary education.¹¹ Last year, 62% of New Orleans public school graduates enrolled in college the semester after graduating, the overwhelming majority of whom were economically disadvantaged and students of color.¹²

Yet the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students, the state's program that was originally designed to provide financial assistance to increase access to college for low and moderate income students, had less than 7% of TOPS recipients that were economically disadvantaged and only 17% that were African American.¹³ The most recent data available indicates that the state's public colleges and universities have a six-year graduation rate for African Americans of 34%.¹⁴

THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

between African American and White learners in Louisiana is **25%** and **29%** between the economically disadvantaged and those who are not.⁹

A graphic consisting of a grid of 100 white graduation cap icons arranged in 10 rows and 10 columns. The bottom row of icons is shaded gray, representing 10% of the total. To the right of the grid, the text reads: "TOPS, the state's program that was originally designed to provide financial assistance to increase access to college for low and moderate income students, had only **17%** African American recipients."¹³

To combat the achievement gap, to continue in the state and districts' efforts to provide high quality education for all students, and to increase African Americans' participation in higher education, ULLA endorses the following policies:

ULLA supports HB390 that establishes protocols to set the award amounts for TOPS at 2017-18 levels and safeguards economically disadvantaged students in the event of a funding shortfall.

ULLA advocates for the full support of the Louisiana Department of Education's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Framework that provides direction to the State, to schools and to districts on the following:

- ➔ New accountability metrics that considers growth, achievement and non academic factors important in the learning and development of children,
- ➔ Resources to schools with struggling subgroup (e.g., African Americans, English Language Learners, students with disabilities, etc.) performance to address these gaps,
- ➔ Resources to expand educational offerings across schools and districts to include such opportunities as career and technical education and direct student support services,
- ➔ New proficiency standards for English language learners,
- ➔ Increased access to families and other stakeholders to achievement data (including subgroup data) to help families make informed choices, and
- ➔ Resources to districts for professional development for educators to strengthen the educator pipeline in Louisiana.

ULLA advocates for the unification of New Orleans Public Schools to protect educational equity initiatives during the transition of schools from the Recovery School District (RSD) to Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) by:

- ➔ Safeguarding the enrollment policy for full participation of all New Orleans Public Schools in ENROLL NOLA
- ➔ Successfully transferring the Hearing Office that manages expulsion hearings from the auspices of the RSD to OPSB
- ➔ Establishing an "OPSB Task force on Discipline and Accountability" to examine policies and practices New Orleans Public Schools that impact the school-to-prison pipeline made up of school board members, district leaders, school leaders, community based organizations, parent representatives and youth representatives.
- ➔ Expanding the capacity of the Therapeutic Day Center that provides mental health services to New Orleans Public Schools.
- ➔ Expanding access to career and technical education for all students in New Orleans Public Schools with a special focus on inclusion of students with disabilities.
- ➔ Continuing enforcement of OPSB's policy to have parent participation on public charter school boards.

9 <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/louisiana-believes/essa-framework.pdf?sfvrsn=6>

10 https://s3.amazonaws.com/gnocdc/reports/TheDataCenter_TheYouthIndex2016.pdf

11 <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/LA-South-1.pdf>

12 Orleans All (Orleans Parish + RSD NO Schools: 2015-2016 District Report Card. Retrieved from, <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/data/reportcards/2016/>

13 <http://www.regents.la.gov/assets/BOROctober/TOPS2015.pdf>

14 https://s3.amazonaws.com/gnocdc/reports/TheDataCenter_TheYouthIndex2016.pdf



Urban League of
Louisiana

*Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.*

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