

MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR JUSTICE LAUNCHES IMPACT LITIGATION INITIATIVE

The Mississippi Center for Justice announces a major impact litigation initiative in honor of its distinguished former Board member and supporter, the late George Riley. MCJ launches this work by strengthening ties with long-time Mississippi civil rights attorney Rob McDuff of the law firm, McDuff & Byrd, one of the preeminent civil rights firms in the South. While continuing to lead his firm, McDuff will join forces with MCJ over the next two years to pursue public interest litigation affecting a large number of Mississippians in MCJ's areas - healthcare, housing, education, and fair credit - as well as other civil rights opportunities that may arise.

“With this initiative, we intend to take on new cases to advance racial and economic justice, both in Mississippi and beyond,” said Reilly Morse, MCJ President. “We are pleased to be joined in this endeavor by our friend and colleague Rob McDuff, whose firm, McDuff and Byrd, has done much to reshape the civil and voting rights landscape of Mississippi. And we are pleased to do so in honor of another friend, George Riley, whose pro bono work for MCJ was part of his inspiring public service spirit.”

McDuff was one of a group of Mississippi lawyers who founded MCJ in 2003. He was the Vice-Chair of its Board for many years. While leading the new initiative with MCJ, McDuff will continue to lead and practice with his law firm, McDuff & Byrd, which includes attorneys Sibyl Byrd and Jake Howard. The firm handles complex civil litigation, particularly in the area of civil rights, and maintains a vibrant criminal defense practice. Most recently, McDuff & Byrd and MCJ joined together to obtain a preliminary injunction against Mississippi House Bill 1523, the 2015 law that encouraged discrimination against LGBT citizens.

“With this new initiative, we look forward to expanding our work together,” said McDuff. “Given the troubling signs from the new government in Washington and from the state government in Jackson, it is vital that we have the resources to go to court to challenge unconstitutional actions that promote discrimination and threaten poor people. MCJ's initiative adds valuable resources to that effort at a crucial time in our history.”

Today's announcement is made possible by the George Riley Impact Litigation Fellowship, a ten-year initiative at MCJ created with generous

support from Apple and Emerson Collective. George Riley, a native of Memphis who lived in California, practiced law for the international firm of O'Melveny and Myers and represented a distinguished list of clients. Riley's lifelong commitment to public interest included an extraordinary pro bono caseload, much of it with MCJ. He served on the MCJ Board from 2009 until his untimely death in 2016 at the age of 59.

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About the Mississippi Center for Justice

The Mississippi Center for Justice is a nonprofit, public interest law firm committed to advancing racial and economic justice. Supported and staffed by attorneys, community leaders and volunteers, the Center develops and pursues strategies to combat discrimination and poverty statewide.