



ENTRY LEVEL HOUSING ATTORNEY AT GULF COAST OFFICE

The Mississippi Center for Justice seeks to hire an entry level attorney for our Gulf Coast office in Biloxi. The Center seeks an attorney whose substantive law concentrations/educational background/clinical experience includes exposure to the Fair Housing Act and the Mississippi Landlord/Tenant Act.

The Center is a nonprofit, public interest law firm committed to advancing racial and economic justice statewide. Our lawyers work with community leaders to support their social justice campaigns and to channel the energies of the legal community to combat discrimination and poverty. With offices in Jackson, Biloxi and Indianola, we seek systemic solutions that promote educational, opportunity, protect the rights of consumers, secure access to healthcare and child care, and make fair and affordable housing available for all Mississippians.

The Mississippi Center for Justice is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We value a workplace that is diverse in race, gender, economic status, age, geographic origin, sexual orientation, and other differences that enrich our organizational culture.

Fair Housing Act Enforcement

Housing Discrimination remains a persistent issue in Mississippi. Classic examples based upon race, religion, gender, national origin, disability status, and familial status occur with disturbing regularity. Exclusionary zoning is regularly enacted to preserve historical patterns of segregation and support the development and maintenance of “white flight” communities.

Since 2017, the Mississippi Center for Justice Housing Law Campaign has maintained a fair housing enforcement unit to conduct investigations into individual allegations of housing discrimination, as well as systemic testing in the rental, sales, and lending markets for the purpose of identifying violations of the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Our Housing Law Practice operates within a thirty-three-county area of Southern Mississippi. Identified violations are referred to HUD and/or DOJ as administrative complaints or are filed as civil actions in federal district court.

Eviction Prevention

Individuals who rent in Mississippi have the fifth highest risk of being evicted in the country. The laws governing eviction in Mississippi are tilted in favor of the landlord and include provisions such as those providing for same day removal from the home upon eviction and immediate seizure of a tenant’s possessions. Since April 2020, the Mississippi Center for Justice has maintained and staffed a statewide COVID Eviction Prevention Hotline and provided services to over 470 individuals. Services include basic information regarding Mississippi law governing eviction, advice for negotiating with landlords, assistance applying for rental assistance, assistance preparing motions and requests for continuance, and courtroom representation at eviction proceedings in Justice Court.

Job Responsibilities

As a full-time employee, based in Biloxi and reporting to the Housing Law Director, the attorney will support two related projects: (1) a Fair Housing education and outreach project designed to inform Mississippians about their rights under the Fair Housing Act; and (2) a Fair Housing enforcement project designed to investigate and prosecute claims of housing discrimination in Southern Mississippi.

Job duties will include:

- Development of Fair Housing education materials
- Conduct Fair Housing presentations throughout the State of Mississippi
- Client intake and interview
- Investigation of Fair Housing claims
- Negotiation with landlords/property owners
- Representation of eviction clients in Justice and County Courts

Qualifications

- Licensed in Mississippi, or capable of passing the Mississippi Bar within six (6) months
- Background in Mississippi Landlord/Tenant law and Fair Housing Act is required
- Excellent written and verbal communications skills
- Excellent organizational, networking, and relationship-building skills
- Commitment to the mission of the Mississippi Center for Justice

The position will stay open until filled. Please send brief letter of interest, resume, and three (3) references including two from former employers, to jjopling@mscenterforjustice.org.