



WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE

FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Strategic and Financial Plan **Adopted June 2024**

In July 2017, The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs adopted a strategic plan that emphasized our historic focus on combating racial oppression and underscored our focus on five priorities:

- Creating equal opportunity to economic stability for individuals and families.
- Challenging the conditions that create racial and economic segregation and that limit options for safe, decent and affordable housing based on race and national origin.
- Reducing barriers to public services and public accommodations.
- Creating equal opportunity for an education.
- Reducing the impact of an unfair criminal system.

Our 2024 Strategic and Financial Plan builds on this strong foundation and emphasizes the central role that our history of successful impact litigation plays in creating change. This plan also articulates an approach to ensure our long term sustainability and influence.

Our History

The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs was born in 1968 out of the Civil Rights Movement following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Leading Washington, DC law firms came together to form a network of pro bono lawyers to provide high quality services on civil rights and poverty issues in the Washington, DC region. In the 56 years since, we have provided legal assistance to individuals and groups in a variety of civil rights matters. More recently, our commitment to dismantling white supremacy has expanded and deepened.

Through systemic litigation, we have challenged racial oppression in the areas of education, housing, employment, prisoners' rights, policing, disability, and immigration.

Who We are Today and Going Forward

We remain committed to ensuring civil rights for disadvantaged and underrepresented individuals and groups. We stand with low-income communities of color, particularly Black and Brown communities, under threat — prioritizing litigation but also using advocacy and communications strategies to dismantle systems of racial oppression and to achieve lasting change in the Washington DC region. Located in the nation's capital, we have an impact not only in the Washington, D.C., region but across the country.

Our Vision

The Washington Lawyers' Committee envisions a society in which the legacy of discrimination has been overcome and there is an equitable application of law and access to justice.

Our Mission

The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs works to **create legal, economic and social equity, primarily through litigation, but also through client and community education as well as public policy advocacy.** While we fight discrimination against all people, we recognize the central role that current and historic race discrimination plays in sustaining inequity and recognize the critical importance of identifying, exposing, combating and dismantling the systems that sustain racial oppression. We have partnered with individuals and communities facing discrimination and with the legal community to achieve justice.

How We Create Change

Movement towards social and racial equity happens when committed individuals, communities, and aligned partners take legal or political action aimed at eliminating racism and unfair discrimination affecting their lives. Although there are many ways to do this, WLC's primary tools are litigation and related public policy advocacy.

WLC empowers communities by providing strategic legal expertise and representation for underrepresented, low-income, and vulnerable individuals and communities. WLC pursues the goals of anti-racism and anti-discrimination in areas that affect people's ability to thrive: housing, employment, accessibility for people with disabilities, education, the criminal legal system, and, more broadly, fair treatment by the government.

We Pursue Action When

- There's a strong potential to make a significant impact by providing relief to a great number of people, establishing new law, changing an inequitable system or policy, or meeting an urgent, unmet need in the legal advocacy landscape.
- Litigation or related policy advocacy are the appropriate tools for driving change.
- Intervention aligns with community needs, interests, and priorities.
- WLC is well-positioned to do the work because of staff expertise or expertise and resources we can access from our partners.

We Support Our Work By

- Engagement with community groups
- Limited advocacy for policy and legislative change
- Strategic communications
- Community education