

Civil Civil Rights News



United States Attorney's Office
Southern District of Mississippi

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Civil Civil Rights Symposium

The Civil Division of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Mississippi hosted a Civil Civil Rights Symposium in June 8, 2016 at the Jackson Medical Mall in Jackson, Mississippi. The purpose of the symposium was the announcement of a new Civil Rights Section within the Civil Division of the USAO that will investigate and remedy civil rights violations within the district. The new Civil Civil Rights Section welcomes information from the public regarding possible violations of our nation's civil rights laws.

The symposium focused on the nation's federal civil rights laws in the areas of disability, housing and education and highlighted the role of the U.S. Attorney's Office in ensuring compliance and effective monitoring in the areas of

affirmative civil rights enforcement. Other topics covered by various speakers during the event included: civil rights enforcement; military rights; disability rights; LGBT rights; discrimination in access to housing and credit; juvenile justice; school discipline; jails and policing; equal educational opportunities; and improving local communities through an active civil rights practice. Conference attendees, including members of various civil rights organizations, members of state and local bar associations, and local, state and federal officials, were able to raise questions or concerns regarding civil rights issues in the Southern District of Mississippi.



Members of the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division pose with Former U.S. Attorney Greg Davis and Former Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General and Head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, Vanita Gupta.

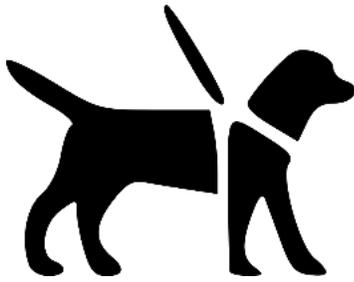
Justice for the Justice System

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On June 23, 2016, the Department of Justice reached a landmark settlement agreement to reform the criminal justice system in Hinds County, Mississippi. The agreement resolves the department's findings that the Hinds County Adult Detention Center and the Jackson City Detention Center – which together form the Hinds County Jail – failed to protect prisoners from violence and excessive force and held them past their court-ordered release dates, in violation of the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act (CRIPA).

The settlement agreement is the first of its kind to incorporate broader criminal justice system reform through diversion at the front end and reentry to the community after incarceration. The agreement also addresses unlawful enforcement of court-ordered fines and fees by ensuring that the county cannot incarcerate an individual for non-payment if the court does not first assess whether the individual is indigent.

CRIPA authorizes the department to seek a remedy for a pattern or practice of conduct that violates the constitutional rights of persons confined in a jail, prison or other correctional facility. For more information on the Civil Rights Division's work in this area, please visit www.justice.gov/crt.



Service Dogs Deserve Service Too

Grand China Buffet Restaurant and its owner, Zhen Fei Chen, entered into a Settlement Agreement with the United States in December 2015 following an investigation conducted by the local

U. S. Attorney's Office. The investigation concluded that Vickie Killingsworth had been denied her civil rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act as the result of the treatment she received while

at the restaurant with her service dog. Even though Grand China Buffet eventually allowed Killingsworth and her service dog to enter the restaurant, she was restricted to a certain area and told to never return with her service animal. Killingsworth was paid \$2,500.00 in compensatory damages by the restaurant, and a civil penalty of \$500.00 was paid to the United States in order to partially vindicate the public interest. The restaurant's owners and employees (now and in the future) must undergo specific training regarding customers with service animals, signs must be posted on the exterior entrances of the business alerting patrons that persons accompanied by their service animals will be welcomed, and the settlement also prohibits future discrimination at the restaurant.

UPCOMING EVENTS

HEED Fair Housing Conference, Jackson, MS, April 27, 2017

Southern Minority Leadership Conference, Biloxi, MS, May 31, 2017

The new Civil Civil Rights Section welcomes information from the public regarding possible violations of our nation's civil rights laws. Click [here](#) to learn how to file a complaint.

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