

In 2021, Power Coalition engaged in the legislative session, connected with legislators, partners, community members, and activists to ensure that Louisiana’s policies create a more equitable and just state. Often, it can be difficult to engage with the Louisiana legislature. Racism and sexism persist in policies and they are continually propped up with refusals to acknowledge their harm. Despite difficulties, Power Coalition and our partners continue to show up every day and fight for the rights of Louisiana citizens, and we are WINNING. In 2021, we moved the needle on important issues and created inroads to move mountains in the coming years. We continue to engage with legislators about our priorities so that as we move forward we can make sure that our policies reflect our priorities.

Democratic Expansion: As other deep south states restricted voting rights, Louisiana expanded voting opportunities for people because of the deep advocacy work of Power Coalition and our partners.

Early Voting for presidential elections will be extended by 3 days thanks to **HB 286**.

Additionally, **HB 285** extended the 3-minute voting rule to 6 minutes so that voters have more time in the booth.

VOTE’s historic win in 2019 weant a step further this year with the passage of **HB 378**, a voting rights restoration bill that will make registering to vote easier for people with convictions.

Community Health: Louisiana passed a number of bills to improve health outcomes for birthing people this session. Companies will be required to provide reasonable accommodations for pregnant workers thanks to **SB 215**, and health insurance can cover doula and midwife services due to the passage of **HB 190**.

Workers Rights: Power Coalition’s partner Step Up fought hard to advocate for Fair Chance in Hiring with **HB 707**. This will prohibit employers from discriminating against people with a criminal history and will help our community access quality jobs!

Criminal Justice Reform: VOTE is a founder and anchoring partner of Power Coalition and had historic wins in 2021.

This session, **HB 84** ended the lifetime jury service ban on people with felony convictions.

HB 106 requires that a person is informed about how a felony conviction will impact their lives before they plead guilty to a crime and **HB 145** will restore parole eligibility to people after completing 20 years of a sentence and reaching 45 years old.

Please visit VOTE’s website for a full list of their wins in 2021.



Power Coalition is also proud to have supported these pieces of legislation led by the Legislative Black Caucus, our partners, powerful nonprofits, and leaders across the state.

HB 216 eliminates the court costs, fines, and fees on children in the juvenile system.

HB 652 decriminalized small amounts of marijuana possession.

HB 7 removed the “pink tax” a sales tax on diapers and feminine hygiene products.

HB 46 means that an individual can not stay in jail for more than 30 days without being charged with a crime.

HB 325 creates a procedure when arresting people with minor children.

HB 232 allows for multiple misdemeanor expungements in one application.



THE FIGHT CONTINUES



Though there are many things to celebrate this session, we know that the work is not done and there are still things our communities need if we are going to succeed. Some of these issues we have been working on for years and have been making slow and deliberate progress. These are the areas that we are prioritizing as we move forward because we know that they can change the outcomes for the state.

Ability to Pay Framework: Power Coalition has been working to create an ability to pay framework for criminal fines and fees in Louisiana for the past few years. Despite the passage of **Act 260** in 2017, the statewide framework has not been implemented and people have not felt the relief. Power Coalition proposed 2 bills in 2021 to provide relief for community members now that were unsuccessful due to confusion about the implementation of Act 260. People need relief now from the excessive burdens of court costs, fines, and fees.

Ending Corporate Welfare: Louisiana is a rich state that is made poor by the excessive tax breaks and corporate welfare for corporations and industry in the state. Every year, we play defense to corporate interests, we fight for clean air and water and try to get industry to pay their fair share in taxes. This session, communities won when **HB 456** to reduce transparency for ITEP exemptions was stopped. This will not be the end. ITEP and ending corporate welfare will remain one of the biggest fights that will ensure strong communities that are appropriately resourced and equitable.

Minimum wage: Louisiana uses the federal rate of \$7.25, resulting in many people around the state living in poverty. In 2021 there were multiple bills to raise the minimum wage though nothing passed. This remains a priority for us and we will continue to work to raise the minimum wage for communities.

Paid Sick Leave: This session, Power Coalition advocated for **HR 118**, which creates a task force to study the implementation of a paid sick and family leave program in the state. While a good start, the legislature removed community representation from the committee and replaced it with additional business representation. We are concerned that the findings of this committee will not represent the needs of our community, your advocacy is still needed and we must hold them accountable!

Community Health: Power Coalition remains committed to making our communities safer, and one of the biggest threats to our communities right now is gun violence. In the 2021 session, we tried to stop dangerous legislation that will allow people to permitless concealed carry firearms. We will work with the community and lawmakers to create common-sense gun laws and regulations.

Although the 2021 legislative session is over, the work to create a more equitable Louisiana is ongoing. **Power Coalition is dedicated to educating, advocating, and bringing light to all of the areas that we have highlighted and we need your sustained engagement.** Using your voice in this moment is critical to bring attention to the issues that were not addressed this legislative session. The fight continues!