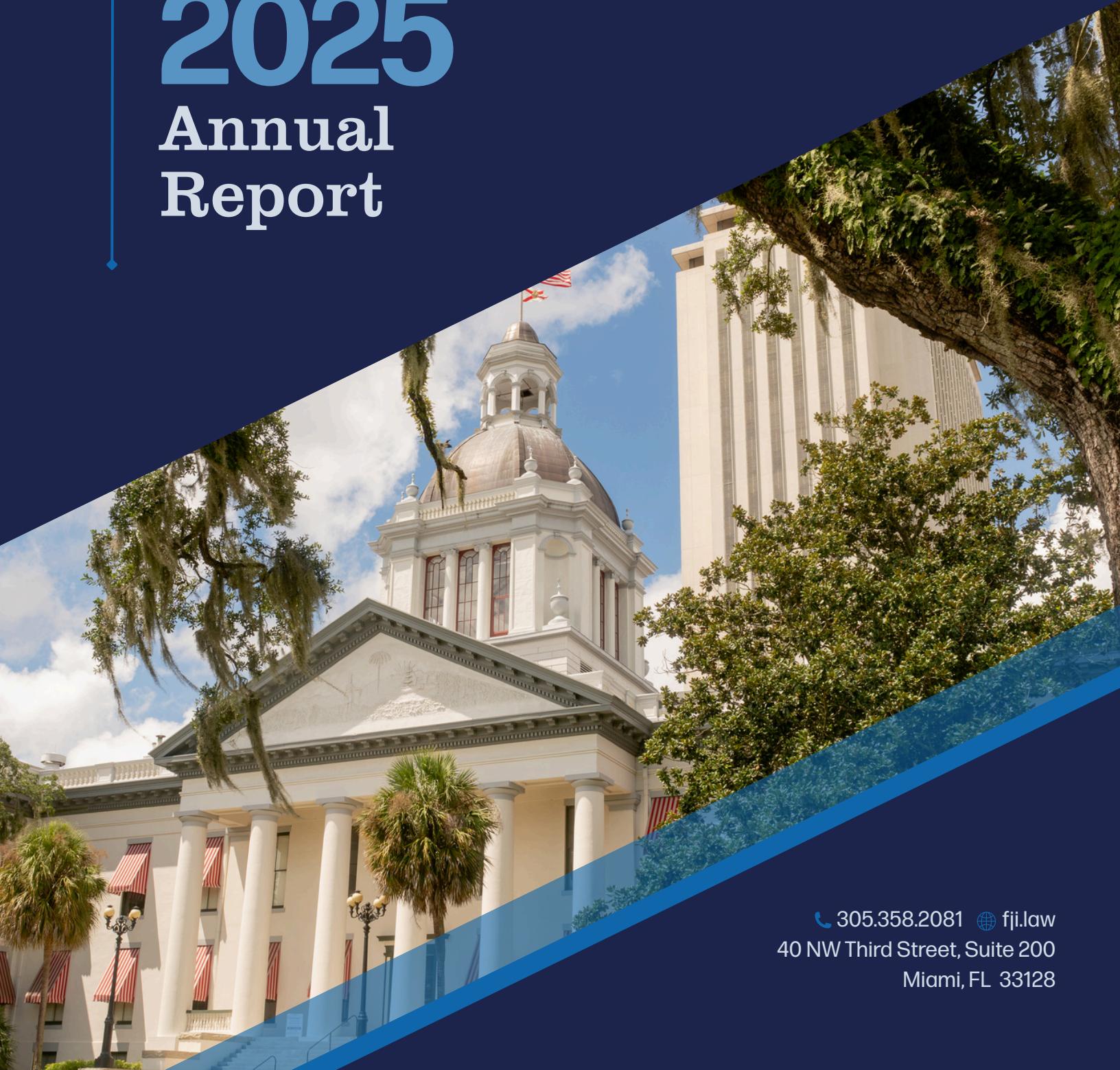




# 2025

## Annual Report



305.358.2081 [fji.law](http://fji.law)  
40 NW Third Street, Suite 200  
Miami, FL 33128

# About FJI

## Our Story

The Florida Justice Institute, Inc. (FJI), was founded in 1978 by Roderick "Rod" N. Petrey, who remains a leading figure in securing funding for public interest law programs across the country. Upon leaving the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation in New York to enter the private practice of law in Miami, Rod was given a start-up grant to establish FJI.

## Initial Mission

### FJI's mission, as established by Rod:

- Improve the administration of justice for all Floridians
- Encourage better representation of citizens' interests
- Increase the ability of citizens to resolve disputes quickly and inexpensively

Rod and FJI set out to accomplish these goals by working with existing organizations to identify major, unmet needs in the community and address them through advocacy and litigation.

After incorporating the organization, establishing the Board, and obtaining section 501(c)(3) charitable status, FJI hired Randall C. "Randy" Berg, Jr., in 1978 to be its Executive Director, a position Randy held until his retirement at the end of 2018. Randy passed away in April of 2019.

## Current Mission

FJI uses impact litigation and advocacy to improve the lives of Florida's disenfranchised residents and underinvested communities while focusing on preserving human rights in the justice system, empowering vulnerable populations experiencing homelessness and poverty, and providing dignity for people with disabilities.

## Vision

A world without mass incarceration, and with racial and economic justice and human dignity for Florida's most vulnerable residents..



# Messages

## From our Executive Director:

Friends,

2025 is in the books, and 2026 is now upon us. Thank you to all who have supported our work!

2025 raised critical and, in some respects, unprecedented challenges for FJI and many other organizations within the legal aid ecosystem. As I told the Financial Times in April, “the legal system can create positive change in our communities but, in the wrong hands, can do more harm than good.”

As the saying goes, no one is above the law. At FJI, we believe that no one should be beneath it, either. That’s why the organization strives to deliver access to justice for Florida residents regardless of their identity, lifestyle, or circumstances. We remain steadfast in expanding that access to more communities around the state.

Our ability to do that depends on the availability of resources. Unfortunately, the organization is currently grappling with funding restrictions imposed in late 2024 by Funding Florida Legal Aid. Here are examples of these new restrictions:

- “Systematic advocacy for policy reform, legal reform, or civil rights initiatives unrelated to the representation of a specific low-income client”
- “Class actions where the government is a party”
- “Suits against state agencies and local government, other than matters seeking remedies for individual clients in eligible legal areas”
- “Facial challenges to existing laws or statutes”

This is why securing unrestricted funding from individuals, foundations, corporations, and other community organizations is crucial to providing relief to the most vulnerable among us in Florida. Your support enables FJI to increase its overall effectiveness.

In the midst of all the challenges, it’s still important to find ways to recognize and celebrate our successes. Even with all the heaviness, I’m proud of the colleagues and connections who helped positively shape these outcomes and so many more.

Unquestionably, our most impactful victory in 2025 was the passage of the Tristin Murphy Act, which officially became law in October. For those who may be unfamiliar, FJI represented the estate of the law’s namesake. This law unanimously passed through a combination of tireless advocacy by Tristin’s parents, Cindee and Dennis, and litigation brought by FJI.

You’ll see more highlights throughout this report, and we are confident we can make an even bigger impact in 2026. Your continued support enables FJI to be more resilient for the most vulnerable Floridians around the state. Access to justice requires that type of moral clarity.

We expect to keep making our supporters proud. Can we count on your contribution to help achieve new wins this year?

With immense gratitude,

*Michael J Langley*



# Messages

## From our Board Chair

Warm Wishes for 2026,

I hope this year is off to a productive and prosperous start for each of you.

2025 represented my last term of service as Chair of Florida Justice Institute's Board of Directors. As I wrap up my tenure, I want to express how proud I am of the accomplishments the organization saw over this period.

While there are many to list, here are a few noteworthy activities from just last year:

- Hosted FJI's inaugural Signature Event in April
- Provided Continuing Legal Education (CLE) training on advocacy for community stakeholders in July
- Secured the largest single individual donation of \$100,000 in organizational history in September
- Onboarded four new staff and four new board members
- Appeared in 23 media articles/podcasts about FJI's work

But, more importantly, the organization set a record for the number of cases it filed in a single year. That would not be possible without the investment from donors, clients, supporters, and other contributors to FJI's efforts. Thank you to all the individual and organizational stakeholders who partnered with FJI to engage in this work in 2025.

Additional thanks go out to my fellow board members who helped me provide guidance to the organization. It's been an honor serving with you.

Lastly, my gratitude to the dedicated staff at FJI for their consistent, compassionate, and courageous advocacy. It takes a special group of people to selflessly seek to protect those populations who are routinely disfavored and disenfranchised. The board and I appreciate your commitment to making Florida a better place where everyone can thrive.

Collectively, the board and staff remain grateful to all those who have believed in FJI since its inception in 1978. We hope this Impact Report illustrates where we've been over the course of the last year, where things currently stand, where we hope to go beyond this year, and how your support can help drive change.

Warm regards,

***Maria Fernanda Villalba***



# Our Team

## Staff

**Michael J. Langley**  
Executive Director

**Dante P. Trevisani**  
Litigation Director

**Jessica M. Pla**  
Director of Operations

**Ray Taseff**  
Senior Attorney

**Erica Downs**  
Senior Attorney

**A.J. Hernandez Anderson**  
Senior Attorney

**Michelle Llosa**  
Community  
Engagement Paralegal

**Bethell Forbes**  
Paralegal / Pro Bono  
Manager

**Carly Carrillo**  
Paralegal

**Olivia Joseph**  
Intake Coordinator

## Board Members

**Ché Scott**

**Charles W. Throckmorton**

**Sowmya Bharathi**

**Rayna Milfort**

**Tiffani G. Lee**

**Shiva Nahappan**

**Tara Del Toro**

**Shane Grannum**



# Community Engagement

FJI's staff, board, and community worked hard to advocate for our organization and the people we fight for. Here are some examples of the ways we engaged the community in 2025.

## Events

- Florida Legal Awards
- Heart of Giving
- Keep Hope Alive
- 10th Anniversary Reception
- Welcome to the Judiciary Luncheon
- Raise the Bar (Women's Fund of Miami-Dade)
- Hoeveler Ethics & Public Service Award
- Miami Homes for All 40th Anniversary Celebration
- Alvah Chapman Awards
- Desmond Meade Day Art of Impact

## Conferences

- Innovations and Solutions for Ending Unsheltered Homelessness
- Bench & Bar Conference
- Bank on 100 Million Hackathon
- Human Rights in the Americas Symposium

## Panels

- Miami-Dade Housing and Eviction Clinic
- Impact Programs and Direct Legal Service Provider Engagement
- HOPE Summer Fellows Class

## Trainings

- Intern Lunch & Learn
- From Outreach to Access

## Speaking Engagement

- HOPE Summer Fellows Class

# Our Year of Impact

## ● January

### PANEL

#### **Miami-Dade Housing and Eviction Clinic**

FJI participated in this clinic to support renters facing eviction by connecting them with legal information and on-site attorney assistance. The program centered on preventing housing instability and reducing harm caused by policies that criminalize poverty. FJI's ED Michael Langley contributed to a panel discussion focused on how advocacy and legal intervention can help keep vulnerable residents housed and protected.

## ● February

### CONFERENCE

#### **Innovations and Solutions for Ending Unsheltered Homelessness (NAEH)**

FJI joined national leaders, advocates, service providers, and people with lived experience to share best practices and emerging strategies to address unsheltered homelessness. Discussions focused on policy trends, system reform, and the growing criminalization of unhoused communities following recent court decisions. FJI engaged with peers to strengthen efforts pushing back against policies that further marginalize vulnerable Floridians.

### PANEL

#### **Impact Programs and Direct Legal Service Provider Engagement (FIU Law)**

FJI participated in this panel to discuss how legal organizations coordinate services, identify gaps in capacity, and improve referral systems for people seeking help. The conversation emphasized access to justice through community-based education, collaboration, and advocacy. FJI shared insights from its work while engaging with legal partners committed to expanding meaningful legal support.

## ● April

### EVENT

#### **Florida Legal Awards**

FJI attended this statewide event recognizing leadership and impact within Florida's legal community. The gathering highlighted individuals whose work strengthens the legal ecosystem and advances justice across the state. FJI engaged with peers and partners to celebrate collaboration as a critical driver of community impact.



# Our Year of Impact

## PANEL

### **Creating Opportunity for Returning Citizen Entrepreneurs (AEO)**

FJI participated in this panel series examining entrepreneurship as a pathway to economic stability for returning citizens. The discussion explored how business ownership can reduce recidivism and expand opportunity when traditional employment barriers persist. FJI contributed to conversations on building trust, access to capital, and policy frameworks that support second chances.

## May

### EVENT

### **Innovations and Solutions for Ending Unsheltered Homelessness (NAEH)**

FJI joined members of the legal, business, and civic community to celebrate efforts advancing equity and justice across South Florida. The evening highlighted leadership within the legal services community and recognized individuals driving meaningful change, including board member Tiffani Lee, who received the 2025 Equal Justice Leadership Award. FJI celebrated the contributions of its board leadership and reaffirmed its commitment to equal justice.

### EVENT

### **Keep Hope Alive (Hosted by Americans for Immigrant Justice)**

FJI attended this event honoring the resilience of immigrant communities and the organizations defending their rights. The gathering underscored the importance of due process and the rule of law amid increasing threats to vulnerable residents. FJI stands in solidarity with legal advocates working to protect immigrant families across Florida.

## June

### TRAINING

### **Intern Lunch & Learn: FJI Lunch and Learn**

FJI hosted an educational session for interns and aspiring advocates interested in civil rights litigation. Participants learned about FJI's work, heard real-world examples of systemic injustice, and discussed pathways for building careers in public interest law. The session emphasized the ongoing need for legal advocacy and community engagement.



# Our Year of Impact

## PANEL

### **Malcolm X Juneteenth Panel + Screening (Hosted by O Cinema)**

FJI participated in this two-part event examining the state of civil rights and the work required to preserve them. The panel discussion connected historical movements with present-day challenges facing marginalized communities. FJI contributed to conversations centered on accountability, resistance, and the continued fight for equity.

## SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT

### **HOPE Summer Fellows Class (Hosted by UM Law)**

FJI partnered with the University of Miami School of Law to speak with students pursuing public interest careers. The session focused on building sustainable advocacy careers and working alongside communities impacted by the criminal legal system. FJI shared lessons from its work and encouraged students to pursue impact-driven legal pathways.

## July

### TRAINING

#### **From Outreach to Access**

FJI supported this community training focused on equipping advocates with tools to assist people experiencing homelessness. The session brought together local organizations to share practical strategies for outreach, navigation, and legal access. FJI contributed to efforts aimed at strengthening frontline advocacy and service coordination.

## September

### EVENT

#### **10th Anniversary Reception (South Florida People of Color)**

Event Description: This event marked a decade of South Florida People of Color by honoring authentic storytelling, leadership development, and community connection. FJI leadership attended alongside state Sen. Shevrin Jones, who received the 2025 Political Leadership Award during the reception. Senator Jones was recognized for his legislative leadership, including co-introducing the Tristin Murphy Act during the 2025 Florida legislative session.

### EVENT

#### **Welcome to the Judiciary Luncheon (Hosted by ACS South Florida)**

FJI participated in this luncheon welcoming new members of the judiciary and fostering dialogue between legal professionals and constitutional advocates. The event emphasized relationship-building and civic education within the legal community. FJI engaged in conversations reinforcing its commitment to access to justice.



# Our Year of Impact

## CONFERENCE

### **Bench & Bar Conference**

FJI attended this conference to engage with members of the Southern District of Florida judiciary and legal practitioners. Sessions focused on legal trends, professional development, and strengthening the connection between courts and communities. FJI gained insights to inform its advocacy and community-focused legal work.

## October

### EVENT

#### **Raise the Bar (Women's Fund of Miami-Dade)**

FJI joined legal, civic, and community leaders in support of women and girls across Miami-Dade County. The event highlighted leadership, survivor advocacy, and cross-sector collaboration. FJI participated in recognition of women's contributions within the legal profession and beyond.

### EVENT

#### **Hoeveler Ethics & Public Service Award (UM Law)**

FJI attended this ceremony honoring excellence in ethics, leadership, and public service within the legal field. The event brought together legal advocates and institutions committed to integrity and accountability. FJI engaged with partners working to uphold public service values across Florida's legal system.

### EVENT

#### **Miami Homes for All 40th Anniversary Celebration**

FJI attended this gathering to reflect on the history of housing advocacy in Miami and to engage with partners working to address the region's ongoing affordability crisis. The event brought together leaders from government, business, social enterprise, and faith communities to discuss solutions that ensure stable housing for all. FJI ED Michael Langley participated in conversations focused on reducing housing insecurity and strengthening cross-sector collaboration.



# Our Year of Impact

## ● November

### EVENT

#### **Alvah Chapman Awards (GMCC)**

FJI joined business and civic leaders to recognize individuals whose leadership has shaped Miami's economic and community development. During the event, FJI connected with long-standing partners committed to addressing unsheltered homelessness and advancing alternatives to incarceration. The evening underscored the role of sustained leadership and public-private collaboration in driving meaningful local change.

### CONFERENCE

#### **Bank on 100 Million Hackathon (Hosted by Mission Launch)**

FJI participated in this national convening focused on developing practical reentry solutions for people with records. The hackathon brought together directly impacted individuals, technologists, employers, and government leaders to co-create tools that reduce barriers to employment and economic stability. FJI engaged with partners from across the country to advance strategies aligned with long-term criminal justice reform.

### CONFERENCE

#### **Human Rights in the Americas Symposium (Hosted by UM Law)**

FJI staff attended a series of panels examining the intersection of human rights, democracy, and public policy across the Americas. Sessions focused on issues including the criminalization of homelessness, racial justice, and accountability within democratic institutions. The symposium provided FJI with updated legal and advocacy insights to strengthen its work on behalf of Florida's most vulnerable residents.

## ● December

### EVENT

#### **Desmond Meade Day Art of Impact**

FJI participated in a celebration highlighting the power of second chances through art and storytelling. Held during Art Basel weekend, the event featured formerly incarcerated artists whose work reflects resilience, transformation, and civic impact. FJI joined community members and artists to honor Desmond Meade Day and the broader movement for dignity, restoration, and opportunity.



# FJI in the Media

MAR 27, 2025

## Reuters

FJI joined a bipartisan coalition of thousands of legal professionals in a formal letter urging U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi to defend the independence of the legal profession against "lawfare" and political retaliation. [Link](#)

APR 6, 2025

## Financial Times

Executive Director Michael Langley warns of a "devastating" impact on civil rights litigation as executive-led political pressure forces major law firms to reconsider their pro bono commitments to advocacy organizations. Langley emphasizes that these targeted attacks on the legal profession threaten the groundwork necessary to hold the government accountable and protect marginalized communities from systemic harm. [Link](#)

MAY 28, 2025

## WLRN

In the face of our lawsuit challenging Miami's panhandling ordinance, city commissioners voted to repeal the law to avoid further litigation over its constitutionality. [Link](#)

MAY 29, 2025

## Miami Herald

FJI secured a significant victory when a federal judge allowed our lawsuit against the Dade Correctional Institution to proceed, challenging the state's failure to address life-threatening heat and inadequate ventilation. [Link](#)

MAR 27, 2025

## Just Economy Podcast

FJI's Executive Director, Michael Langley, commented on the barriers standing in the way of justice for Floridians today. [Link](#)

AUG 20, 2025

## Miami New Times

Our extreme heat case against the Florida Department of Corrections, Wilson V. Dixon, alleging the deadly heat inside non-air-conditioned facilities like the Dade Correctional Institution constitutes a violation of the Eighth Amendment. This case highlights a systemic failure to protect an aging and vulnerable prison population from heat indexes that have been recorded as high as 119 degrees fahrenheit. [Link](#)

MAY 23, 2024

## WFTS-TV

FJI has been a leading critic of Florida's "pay-to-stay" law, which a judge condemned as a retaliatory tool used by the state to target incarcerated people who file civil rights lawsuits. Our Litigation Director, Dante Tevisani, highlighted how these \$50-a-day incarceration liens are selectively enforced as a tactic to discourage litigation and seize settlement awards from those who challenged prison abuse or neglect. [Link](#)

SEP 29, 2024

## Bloomberg Law

Our extreme heat case was featured in this article once we got the news it had been granted class status. That means we are now collectively challenging the inhumane conditions inside prisons on behalf of over 1,500 people. [Link](#)

SEP 15, 2025

## CNBC

FJI joined more than 250 other organizations in urging the Department of Education to protect PSLF, the loan forgiveness program that many public interest legal professionals rely on. [Link](#)

SEP 24, 2025

## South Florida Sun Sentinel

We got media attention for challenging a proposed Florida Department of Corrections rule that would significantly restrict "legal mail" by requiring attorneys to use a third-party website to obtain codes for every piece of correspondence. [Link](#)

OCT 16, 2025

## Race to Social Justice Podcast

FJI's Michael Langley was asked about FJI's mission and future, promoting the organization and using real stories to point out injustices both past and present. [Link](#)

OCT 17, 2025

## Law360

In co-counsel with Winston & Strawn LLP, FJI filed a class-action lawsuit against the Florida Department of Corrections and its medical provider, Centurion, over the systemic denial of necessary cataract surgeries. The suit alleges that a backlog of over 1,000 patients has resulted in preventable blindness for hundreds of people. [Link](#)

OCT 17, 2025

## Funding Florida Legal Aid

Pro bono work is a big part of our service to the community and this video helped promote that practice as well recruit law professionals to volunteer their time with FJI. [Link](#)

NOV 23, 2025

## Jacksonville Today

As FJI continues to fight the criminalization of poverty throughout the state, our ongoing litigation against St. Johns County's panhandling ordinance prompted the City of St. Augustine to suspend enforcement of its own rules. [Link](#)

NOV 24, 2025

## American Bar Association

One of the pillars of our work is advocating for access to justice for people of all abilities. This piece in the American Bar Association's journal reported the real barriers deaf individuals face when interacting with the courts and other parts of the system. [Link](#)

DEC 1, 2025

## The Miami Herald & Reason

In our extreme heat case, Wilson v. Dixon, continued to make headlines and inspire advocates and journalists to look into and press this issue throughout the year. [Link](#)

DEC 12, 2025

## Tampa Bay Times

After our case against the FDC and Centurion began, this article reignited attention on the backlog of eye surgeries leaving people blind for years after they were supposed to get this medically necessary surgery. [Link](#)

DEC 17, 2025

## WFTS-TV interview

FJI joined a bipartisan coalition of thousands of legal professionals in a formal letter urging U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi to defend the independence of the legal profession against "lawfare" and political retaliation. [Link](#)



# Accomplishments

JUNE 2025



## Awarded 2-Year Community Grant [\$60,000] from Miami Foundation

Receiving a two-year Community Grant from The Miami Foundation affirms FJI's commitment to its work in Greater Miami and positions the organization to capitalize on that momentum to achieve additional successes in the years ahead.



## Earned \$888,971.91 in fees since last FY

Receiving a two-year Community Grant from The Miami Foundation affirms FJI's commitment to its work in Greater Miami and positions the organization to capitalize on that momentum to achieve additional successes in the years ahead.

JUNE 2025



## Tristin Murphy Act became law

Receiving a two-year Community Grant from The Miami Foundation affirms FJI's commitment to its work in Greater Miami and positions the organization to capitalize on that momentum to achieve additional successes in the years ahead.



## City of Miami Repeals its anti-panhandling law:

In the face of our case, the City of Miami repealed its law that was being used to target people peacefully asking for donations. This marked one victory among many this year as cities adopt more and more punitive measures against unhoused people.



## Record number of cases filed

Thanks to the support of our community and the hard work of our team, we put five new cases into active litigation in 2025. That's more than any year before, and these cases are already positively impacting people's lives and raising awareness about civil rights and criminal justice reform.



AXIOS Tampa Bay

SEP 20, 2025

## Tristin Murphy Act goes into effect Oct. 1



Miami Herald

JUN 18, 2025

## Weeks after being sued, city of Miami repeals anti-panhandling law



# Hiring

## Hiring Events

Every year, the Florida Justice Institute participates in the public interest internship and career fairs at local law schools. This year, our staff attended fairs at Florida State University, Florida International University College of Law, NSU Sheppard Broad College of Law, and the University of Miami School of Law. It is refreshing and inspiring to meet the next generation of advocates and lawyers!



## Bethell + Erica onboarding

In March of this year we welcomed back Bethell Forbes to FJI as our Pro Bono Manager, and we onboarded Erica Downs as senior attorney.



## Olivia + A.J. onboarding

In May, Olivia Joseph joined the team as intake coordinator, and we gained another senior attorney when A.J. Hernandez Andersoin joined.



# Fundraising

APR 2025

## 2025 Signature Event

Our Inaugural Signature Event raised funds for our work for the year as well as honoring the people in the community making positive change around social justice revenue.

**\$22,220.75**



SEP 2025

## Individual Donations

Secured largest single individual donation in organizational history.

**\$100,000**

Received Community Continuity Grant from Macquarie Group Foundation.

**\$10,000**



NOV 2025

## Give Miami Day

Increased GMD proceeds [\$33,907 + TBD match] and number of individual donors [154] YoY.

**\$33,907**



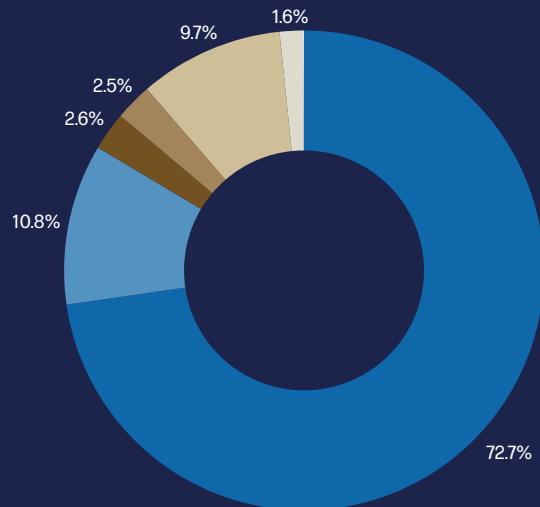
for your support on  
**Give Miami Day!**



# Financials

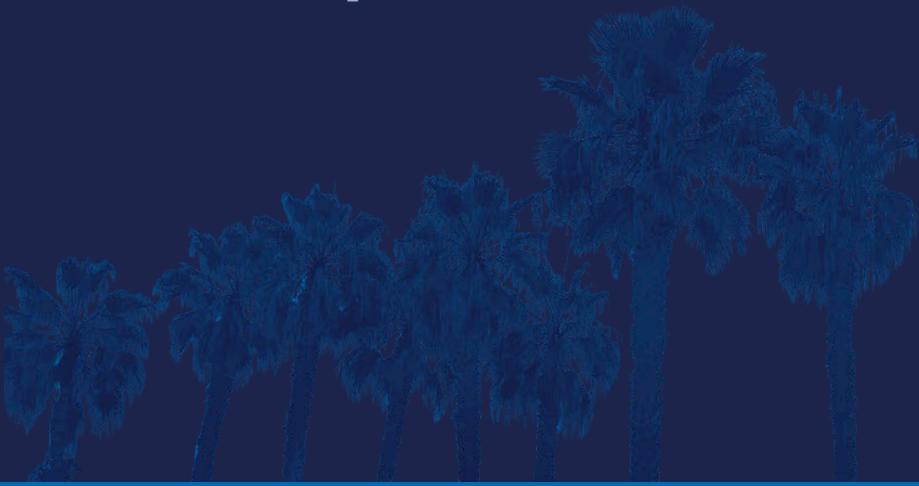
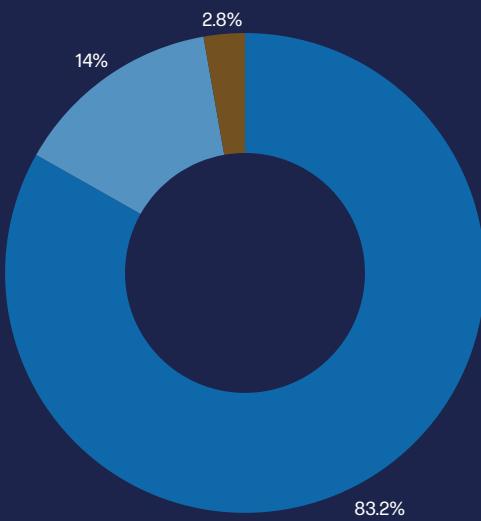
## Revenue

<b>Grants</b>	\$1,026,353.00
<b>Contributions</b>	\$152,949.71
<b>Program Services</b>	\$36,478.41
<b>Interest &amp; Dividends</b>	\$35,251.52
<b>Unrealized Gains</b>	\$137,376.09
<b>Special Events</b>	\$22,220.75
<b>Other Income</b>	\$865.27
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,411,494.75</b>



## Expenses

<b>Program</b>	\$1,025,151.54
<b>General &amp; Administrative</b>	\$172,952
<b>Development</b>	\$34,089.97
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,232,194.24</b>



# Ways to Support

Florida Justice Institute's work depends on a broad community of supporters who believe in accountability, fairness, and the rule of law. **Here are the ways to support that work:**

## Support Professionally

FJI's work is powered by people. That includes staff, interns, volunteers, and pro bono partners who bring their skills into this effort. Visit us online to explore current job openings, internships, and fellowship opportunities. You can also learn how to contribute through pro bono legal services or by volunteering your time and expertise. There are meaningful ways to get involved at every stage of your legal or advocacy career.



[Work with FJI](#)

## Support Monetarily

Donations directly support investigations, litigation, and enforcement efforts across Florida. Individuals can donate online, set up recurring gifts, or join the Randall C. Berg, Jr. Legacy Society. Organizations can use the same QR code to find options for donating by mail, organizing employee giving campaigns, or becoming a corporate sponsor. FJI also hosts an annual Signature Event recognizing local leaders and organizations advancing justice.



[Donate](#)

The next Signature Event will take place on April 16, 2026, with sponsorship opportunities that raise both funds and visibility for this work.

## Support Personally

Public attention and community support help extend the impact of FJI's work beyond the courtroom. Supporters play an important role by attending public events, sharing information about active cases, and staying connected online. Follow FJI on Instagram, Facebook, Threads, and Bluesky for updates on cases, upcoming events, and key issues around criminal justice, poverty, homelessness, and disability access in Florida.



[Newsletter](#)

FJI's social channels and newsletter also highlight opportunities to take action, respond to time-sensitive issues, and participate in community events.





 [bluesky.com/@fji.law](https://bluesky.com/@fji.law)

 [facebook.com/floridajusticeinstitute](https://facebook.com/floridajusticeinstitute)

 [instagram.com/fji.law/](https://instagram.com/fji.law/)

 [linkedin.com/company/fji-law/](https://linkedin.com/company/fji-law/)

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