Redistricting

- On February 16th, a Florida district court in *Glenn, et al. v. Jackson County School Board, et. al.* adopted school district maps created by the Jackson County Branch of the Florida NAACP. The Jackson County Branch supported by the ACLU of Florida and the Office of General Counsel filed a lawsuit to preserve the majority Black district in the county.

First Amendment

- On March 1st, the National NAACP and the New York State Conference of the NAACP filed an amicus brief in *Upsolve v. James*, federal court in the Southern District of New York. The case is a First Amendment challenge to New York’s Unauthorized Practice of Law rules as these rules apply to bar a program that would train nonlawyers to provide narrowly tailored and accurate legal advice to individuals facing debt collection actions. As the NAACP’s brief noted, the “case will have profound civil rights implications for NAACP members and for the NAACP’s institutional interest in redressing injustice and inequality. People of color are more likely to face debt collection actions; they are more likely to do so without adequate legal information or the assistance of an attorney; and they are more likely to default in these actions.” The brief argues that the program’s proposed activity—helping individuals to respond to debt collection actions—is protected by the First Amendment’s freedom of association, as established in the landmark NAACP case, *NAACP v Button*. OGC authored the brief alongside lawyers from the law firm Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe. The brief was featured in a Reuters news article here.

Military Justice

- On March 4th, President Derrick Johnson sent a letter to Christine Wormuth, Secretary of the Army and General James C. McConville, at the Office of the Chief of Staff, advocating that the Army upgrade discharges to honorable for 110 soldiers tried and convicted of mutiny arising from an event near Camp Logan in Houston, Texas in 1917. Following three mass trials where all defendants were represented by a single non-lawyer, a total of 110 Black soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 24th Infantry of the U.S. Army were found guilty, 19 were hanged, and 63 received life sentences. The soldiers deployed to Camp Logan faced threats that their unit would be lynched before leaving Houston. Earlier in the day on August 23, 1917, two members of Houston police shot at, beat, and arrested one of the battalion’s non-commissioned officers. Soldiers in the 3rd Battalion feared for their safety and believed a mob was on its way to attack their camp. The men took up arms to defend the camp. Believing they were under attack, a sergeant marched his unit toward town. The unit advanced, believing it was marching out to defend against a mob attack. That night, the violent encounter with members of the Houston police and civilians lasted approximately three hours before the unit attempted to return to camp. Members of the Office of General Counsel, working with the Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee, researched the historical events and drafted the letter for the President’s signature.
Navigator Program

- On March 3rd, the Housing Navigator Program’s Policy and Advocacy working group met with OGC attorneys and navigators to discuss potential advocacy efforts to strengthen the work of the Housing Navigator Program.

- OGC is delighted to announce that Evan Walker-Wells, a third-year law student at Yale Law School, will join OGC in September 2022, after he takes the bar. Evan received a Liman Fellowship, a year-long public interest fellowship, to work with OGC and the Navigator Program on housing litigation and policy. He will primarily be based out of the southeast.