

# Persistence and a Lean, Long-Term Strategy Made the Difference in Opening the Way for Charter Schools in New Orleans

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**Where we started:** When Hurricane Katrina devastated the City of New Orleans, it destroyed most of the city's public-school buildings. The planned rebuilding of the city's education system included a prominent role for charter schools – a watershed moment for primary and secondary education in Louisiana. Teachers' unions opposed the plan because charter schools replaced many of the Orleans Parish-run schools, and the charter schools were not unionized. The unions brought a class-action lawsuit on behalf of teachers seeking billions (yes billions) of dollars for wrongful termination. Knowing that this suit attacked the very foundation of legislation designed to turn around the fortunes of failing schools statewide, the State of Louisiana and Louisiana Department of Education hired McGlinchey to defend the case.

**Upshot:** With claims, counterclaims, and appeals, the suit took nine years to litigate. The case ended up in the Louisiana Supreme Court. Although the trial court and the intermediate appellate court had ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and against the State and the Department of Education, the McGlinchey team kept to its long-term strategy. Due to our appellate team's indefatigable efforts, persuasive briefing, and oral argument, the Louisiana Supreme Court ultimately reversed the decisions below and ruled in favor of the firm's clients. The plaintiffs recovered nothing.