

October 5, 2011

Mr. John Sebert
Executive Director
Uniform Law Commission
111 North Wabash Avenue, Suite 1010
Chicago, IL 60602

Re: Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act

Dear Mr. Sebert:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) to urge you to prioritize legislative passage of NCCUSL's Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act, a uniform law that helps to protect the interests and needs of vulnerable heirs' property landowners.

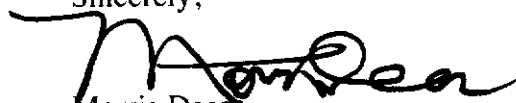
In 2006, SPLC was involved in the ABA's development of a proposal to the ULC for this uniform act, and SPLC has provided both research support for the proposal and financial support for the Observers to travel to and participate in the drafting sessions.

A critical portion of SPLC's mission since 1971 has been "seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society," particularly in the southern United States. Indigent landowners in partition sales actions typically cannot afford representation (whereas the petitioner nearly always has counsel), and frequently have no assets other than the land itself, heightening the need for procedural protections so as to ensure that the proceedings are equitable and justice is done.

Our research reveals that a) indigent landowners in the South are dispossessed of property in partition sales at a particularly high rate, owing to the greater overall rate of heirs' property; and b) current statutory law and jurisprudence frequently favors the interests of those desiring to sell over those that seek to maintain their ancestral connection to the land. The uniform act, with its multifaceted approach to providing more balanced partition sales proceedings, has the potential to stem the tide of lost heirship property, particularly in rural and minority communities across the South.

We encourage you to strongly support the Uniform Act and advocate for its adoption.

Sincerely,



Morris Dees
Founder