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LDF Responds to Alabama’s Record-Breaking Number of Absentee Ballot Requests and Low Voter Turnout during Primary Election

Janai Nelson, the Associate Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) issued the following statement regarding the record-breaking number of absentee ballot requests, low voter turnout, and poll worker shortages during today’s Alabama primary and runoff election:

“Alabama received more than 43,000 absentee ballot requests – an unprecedented amount – in advance of today’s election. Even so, there have been reports that many voters experienced setbacks in trying to obtain an absentee ballot. Access to voting by mail is crucial during every election, but especially now as we remain in the throes of a global pandemic that has seen Alabama set new records for the amount of deaths in the state from COVID-19 and disproportionately impacted Black communities.

“Today’s election also highlighted another major concern as we move toward the general election in November. As seen in Alabama, an increasing number of poll workers are choosing not to work their usual shifts because of COVID-19 fears. These poll worker shortages have a direct impact on the voting experience as they cause longer than expected lines at polling locations, which may prevent some voters from casting ballots.

“LDF is committed to ensuring safe and fair elections. In May, we filed a federal lawsuit challenging Alabama’s lack of safe and accessible voting, which temporarily resulted in the waiving of onerous absentee ballot requirements in at least three major counties and lifted the statewide prohibition on curbside voting. However, these major advances were blocked by the Supreme Court, leaving voters vulnerable and forced to choose between their health and their right to vote.

“LDF will continue to push for policies that protect the right to vote. We call on elected officials in Alabama to keep voters and poll workers safe by issuing personal protective equipment to poll workers and providing access to absentee ballots without draconian voter ID and witness requirements that put voters’ health at risk. Additionally, we urge Congress to pass legislation that will provide funding for safer upcoming elections and ensure the well-being of all voters.”

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation's first civil and human rights law organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.

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