



**For Immediate Release**  
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**LDF Statement on the Importance of Ensuring  
Polling Place Safety During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Today, Janai Nelson, Associate Director-Counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) issued the following statement regarding poll worker mask usage and polling place safety precautions following Louisiana’s primary election:

“During Louisiana’s primary election over the weekend, we witnessed many concerning issues that posed a threat to voters’ health and safety amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, many poll workers refused to wear masks — a dangerous and unacceptable lack of compliance with basic safety protocols.

“The events of this weekend underscore how the refusal to wear masks could serve as an instrument of voter suppression, as individuals who are rightfully concerned about COVID-19 exposure through interactions with unmasked poll workers may avoid voting altogether. To ensure safety and unfettered access to the ballot box — especially for voters of color, who are already disproportionately targeted by suppressive tactics and more susceptible to severe COVID-19 complications — LDF calls on election officials to enforce the highest standards of health and safety guidance among poll workers, including the wearing of masks.

“Ensuring poll worker adherence to pandemic safety standards must be of utmost priority as we approach upcoming primaries in other states — including Texas, where there has been a spike in COVID-19 transmissions and deaths — and the November general election. Poll workers play a critical role in safeguarding American democracy and guaranteeing that all votes are counted. It is their duty to ensure all voters have a safe environment in which to cast their ballots.

“It is also federal and state elected officials’ responsibility to ensure that local jurisdictions have sufficient funding to provide personal protective equipment to poll workers, make polling places safe and sanitary for voters, and carry out pandemic-related health and safety trainings for election workers. We strongly encourage Congress to pass necessary legislation, including the HEROES Act, that prioritizes funding for safe elections as soon as possible, so there is adequate time to implement these measures ahead of upcoming elections.”

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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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