



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **LDF and Co-Counsel File Lawsuit on Behalf of Pepper-Sprayed Voters in North Carolina**

Today, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), co-counsel Covington & Burling, LLP and veteran civil rights lawyer, Geraldine Sumter of Ferguson Chambers & Sumter, P.A., filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of marchers and prospective voters in Alamance County who encountered police violence, including pepper spray, on a march to the polls during North Carolina's Early Voting period. The lawsuit challenges the use of force and intimidation by the City of Graham and Alamance County — through their law enforcement departments — in response to peaceful marchers and voters in violation of various civil rights statutes and the U.S. Constitution.

On October 31, the last day of early voting in North Carolina, voters peacefully marched from a local church to Court Square, a block from their polling location. On at least two separate occasions, law enforcement deployed pepper spray into the marchers that included young children, elderly individuals, and those with disabilities, with no warning or justification. One of those times was just seconds after the marchers kneeled in a moment of silence for eight minutes, 46 seconds in remembrance of the police killing of George Floyd.

“Voter intimidation is voter suppression,” said Leah Aden, LDF’s Deputy Director of Litigation. “The right to vote free from violence or intimidation of any kind is one of the most sacred guarantees of a constitutional democracy. No one should be pepper sprayed or met with any type of police violence on their way to vote. It is shameful that in 2020, we have to look to the Civil Rights Act on 1871 – otherwise known as the KKK Act – to reign in behavior that should be from a bygone era.”

“The police officers’ actions directly interfered with the march attendees’ attempt to vote and assemble,” said LDF Senior Counsel Natasha Merle. “Instead of heading to the polls, marchers were forced to flee the area to protect themselves and their families. It should not be overlooked that in seeking to participate politically and end police violence against Black citizens, marchers were met with police violence near a confederate monument. Alamance County has a long history of discrimination and interference with political participation that must be addressed.”

After a summer filled with protests against police violence that were met with additional police violence, this fall’s election season has been witness to countless incidents of voter intimidation and suppression. Americans looking to exercise their right to vote are being confronted by armed observers at polls; robocalls claiming that voters’ personal information will be shared with law enforcement, creditors, and others; threatening emails; and even hidden surveillance of ballot drop boxes.

Read the complaint [here](#).

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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. Follow LDF on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).*