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NAACP Legal Defense Fund Statement on Attorney General Sessions Charging and Sentencing Directive

Attorney General Jeff Sessions circulated a [memo](#) late Thursday night that directs federal prosecutors to charge nonviolent, low-level drug offenders with long, mandatory-minimum sentences. NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) President and Director-Counsel [Sherrilyn Ifill](#) issued the following statement in response:

“When President Trump asked Black Americans what we have to lose by electing him, the answer is all the gains we've made in advancing justice and fairness. By reinstating a long-discredited policy of harshly punishing individuals who commit low-level, nonviolent drug offenses, Attorney General Sessions has turned back the clock on our criminal justice system, ensuring it will continue to disproportionately punish Black people, harming our communities and widening painful divides in our society. For years, we've seen bipartisan agreement that these regressive policies drive racial inequality, destroy lives and unnecessarily drain tax payer dollars. I urge lawmakers and law enforcement at the state and local level to continue efforts to enact humane solutions that are smart on crime and learn from prior policy mistakes.”

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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 and 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.