Civil Rights Leaders Meet with Attorney General Jeff Sessions

NAACP Legal Defense Fund Continues Charge to Protect Right to Vote and Support Policing Reform

In a meeting today with United States Attorney General Jeff Sessions and the leaders of five other national civil rights organizations, NAACP Legal Defense and Education (LDF) Fund President and Director-Counsel Sherrilyn Ifill laid out LDF’s position on the Department of Justice’s obligations on voting rights and policing.

Ifill presented a range of concerns to the Attorney General, including the decision to abandon a key claim in the challenge to Texas’ Voter ID law, the need for vigorous voting rights enforcement by the Department and opposition to the creation of a voter fraud task force. Regarding the task force, Ifill encouraged Sessions to "counsel the President away from undertaking such an effort," citing President Trump's comments suggesting a plan to target minority voters in the proposed investigation.

Ifill also talked about the need for the DOJ to stand by efforts to complete a policing reform consent decree in Baltimore. She reminded the AG that his proposed Deputy, U.S. Attorney Rod Rosenstein indicted seven police officers from an elite gun unit in Baltimore racketeering last week.

"We had a candid discussion," said Ifill. "We went in with no expectations of commitments from the AG and we received none. But we communicated clearly our expectations and our intention to resist with our collective power any efforts to undermine the civil rights of Americans."

Other issues covered in the meeting included the department’s broad responsibility to enforce civil rights, the increase in hate violence across the country, the protection of LGBTQ individuals, and the Administration’s recently announced Muslim ban executive order.

The civil rights leaders who participated in the meeting also included:

Wade Henderson, president and CEO, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Kristen Clarke, president & executive director, Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Rev. Al Sharpton, founder and president, National Action Network
Melanie L. Campbell, president and CEO, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation and convener, Black Women’s Roundtable.
Marc Morial, president and CEO, National Urban League

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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.*