



**For Immediate Release**

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**Contact:** David Jacobs, [djacobs@naacpldf.org](mailto:djacobs@naacpldf.org), 212.965.2255, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc  
Gabriela Meléndez Olivera, [gmelendez@aclu.org](mailto:gmelendez@aclu.org), 202.715.0826, ACLU  
Shin Inouye, [inouye@civilrights.org](mailto:inouye@civilrights.org), 202.869.0398, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

### **Civil Rights Organizations File FOIA Requests with Justice Department for Materials Related to Policing Reform Efforts**

Three civil rights organizations today filed Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests with the U.S. Department of Justice for records relating to the enforcement of laws that protect individuals and communities from unconstitutional policing. The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and The Leadership Conference Education Fund, and the American Civil Liberties Union and American Civil Liberties Union Foundation filed FOIA requests with the [Civil Rights Division](#) and the [Office of Community Oriented Policing Services](#) (COPS Office) seeking information on technical assistance provided to law enforcement agencies and enforcement activities against unlawful policing since January 1, 2016. Additionally, the civil rights groups sent a FOIA request seeking an update on the department's efforts to implement the [Deaths in Custody Reporting Act of 2013](#) (DICRA), which requires state and federal law enforcement agencies to collect and report deaths of civilians who are in police custody.

“This Department of Justice has consistently discarded critical tools to help struggling police departments reform their illegal policies and practices, pulling the rug out from under community members and law enforcement agencies who rely on the department's expertise to create real change,” said [Sherrilyn Ifill](#), LDF's President and Director-Counsel. “Our FOIA requests demand that the Justice Department simply provide information to the public on the technical assistance and enforcement activities it is undertaking so that local communities can get on with the hard and necessary work of policing reform that the department has chosen to abandon.”

The FOIA request filed with the Civil Rights Division asks for all information on investigations into, as well as any existing or contemplated consent decrees with, law enforcement agencies. The FOIA also seeks materials related to the department's work in enforcing a federal criminal law that prohibits police officers from violating an individual's civil rights. This request to the Civil Rights Division follows a March 31st [memo](#) from Attorney General Jeff Sessions ordering a review of all policing investigations and reform agreements.

In mid-September, Attorney General Sessions announced that the COPS Office will no longer focus on working with police departments to conduct comprehensive assessments of problematic police

practices embedded at certain agencies, such as excessive use-of-force and racial bias. These assessments were requested by several cities and law enforcement agencies to improve policing outcomes as well as relationships with communities. Instead, the COPS Office recently [announced](#) a new \$7 million grant to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) on December 20, 2017. IACP, along with other law enforcement associations, will create a Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center, which will provide subject matter expertise and training materials to law enforcement, though it is unclear what, if any, role civil rights experts will play in developing the Center.

Given Attorney General Sessions' announcement, the FOIA request of the COPS Office seeks records relating to changes to the procedures and policies governing the Collaborative Reform Initiative and other technical assistance programs. The request also seeks all COPS Office correspondence with police departments that had agreements for technical assistance, as well as any communications with representatives of police labor organizations, membership-based police organizations, or any other professional associations or organizations representing police officers.

“President Trump and Attorney General Sessions have a responsibility to ensure that our law enforcement conducts itself properly and consistently with the Constitution,” said Kristine Lucius, Executive Vice President of The Leadership Conference Education Fund and The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. “When there are reasonable concerns about a police department, the DOJ has an obligation to investigate any potential civil rights violations and take affirmative steps to address and prevent unconstitutional policing. These documents will shed needed light on whether the federal government is meeting its obligations.”

“We've heard a lot about President Trump and Attorney General Sessions' misguided 'law and order' philosophy but we're in the dark about what it entails. That's why we're filing the FOIA requests today, to expose their covert actions and safeguard our constitutional rights,” said Jesselyn McCurdy, deputy director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Washington Legislative Office.

The third FOIA request asks for all documents and correspondence related to federal, state, and local law enforcement's compliance with the data collection and reporting requirements of DICRA. That includes DOJ's enforcement of the law, all relevant data on arrest-related deaths and deaths in custody required by DICRA, as well as identifying any law enforcement agency that has failed to comply, either partially or entirely, with DICRA.

Read the Civil Rights Division FOIA request [here](#).

Read the COPS Office FOIA request [here](#).

Read the DICRA FOIA request [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 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.*

*The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights is a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States. The Leadership Conference works toward an America as good as its ideals. For more information on The Leadership Conference and its member organizations, visit [www.civilrights.org](http://www.civilrights.org).*

*The Leadership Conference Education Fund builds public will for federal policies that promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States. The Education Fund's campaigns empower and mobilize advocates around the country to push for progressive change in the United States. It was founded in 1969 as the education and research arm of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. For more information on The Education Fund, visit <http://leadershipconferenceedfund.org/>.*

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