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Contact: Phoebe Plagens
212-965-2235/pplagens@naacpldf.org

NAACP Legal Defense Fund Statement on Voter ID Bill in Texas

This week, Texas's Governor signed into law Senate Bill 5, a modified version of Senate Bill 14, the strictest voter ID law in the United States. The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and its co-counsel have successfully challenged SB 14 five times in federal courts: once under the now-dormant Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act; twice before a federal district court that found both times that the law was intended to discriminate based on race; and twice before the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which ruled that the law has a disproportionate impact on Black and Latino voters (who represent a growing proportion of the Texas electorate). SB 5 does nothing to alleviate the discriminatory intent that was the heart of SB 14. One key provision of SB 5 is significantly more draconian than SB 14 because it criminalizes certain voters who may find it difficult to navigate the complexities of this law. LDF President and Director-Counsel Sherrilyn Ifill issued the following statement in response:

“Make no mistake: this bill is old poison in a new bottle. Its name has changed, but its purpose remains the same: the disenfranchisement of Black and Latino voters in the State of Texas. Federal courts have repeatedly found SB 14 to be discriminatory, and yet the State has responded with a law that does not remove the core of the law's discriminatory intent, namely the inclusion of photo IDs that Black and Latino voters are less likely to possess. This bill is rooted in the racism of its predecessor and threatens to extract exacting penalties from well-intentioned voters. Since 2012, we have challenged SB 14 root and branch, and we will continue to vigorously fight any laws that seek to revive its discriminatory intent and effects.”

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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.