NAACP Legal Defense Fund Statement on Special Counsel’s Allegations of Russian Efforts to Suppress Black Votes

Today, Special Counsel Robert Mueller charged 13 Russian nationals and three Russian entities for their efforts to interfere with the 2016 presidential election. In particular, the indictment alleges that part of the defendants’ “information warfare” scheme included efforts to suppress Black votes. Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), issued the following statement:

“For more than a year, we’ve raised serious concerns about the integrity of our elections. The Trump Administration, however, decided to devote their efforts to stoking bigoted fears and chasing baseless allegations of voter fraud through the flawed ‘Election Integrity Commission.’ They chose to focus on a nonexistent threat, rather than the actual threat posed by voter suppression and interference tactics, both domestically and abroad. The Special Counsel’s indictment only confirms that African-American voters are now subject to threats from domestic voter suppression efforts and from foreign manipulation and interference. It is particularly disturbing to note that foreign operatives attempted to sow race-based dissension and conflict among voters in the electorate. This is a very serious matter that demands a forceful response. The President must not only condemn these acts of ‘information warfare,’ but he must finally marshal the resources of our government to protect the sanctity of the ballot box. With the midterm elections fast approaching, it is essential that our leadership ensures every eligible American has easy access to the voting booth and knows that their vote is counted.

“A foreign country sought to stir up racial and religious tension as part of a coordinated campaign to suppress minority votes. Such flagrantly illegal activity must have consequences. Congress voted overwhelmingly, and on a bipartisan basis, for sanctions to punish and deter this action in the future. President Trump has unilaterally chosen to ignore the legislative will of Congress and to date has refused to offer even the most tepid condemnation of Russia’s activities. It’s time for the President to take action.”

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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.