

March 25, 2022

Submitted electronically

Government Administration and Elections Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 2200
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Support for Raised Senate Bill No. 471

Dear Chair Flexer, Chair Fox, Ranking Member Sampson, Ranking Member Mastrofrancesco, and Committee Members:

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (“LDF”) writes to convey our strong support for Raised Senate Bill No. 471, An Act Concerning Elections and State Voting Rights (“S.B. 471”).¹

Since its founding in 1940 by Thurgood Marshall, LDF has worked to secure and protect the right to vote for Black Americans. We commend you for considering this critical legislation, which would make Connecticut a national leader in protecting the right to vote for communities of color and other voters. S.B. 471 presents an important opportunity for this State to build on the success of similar statutes in California, Washington, Oregon, and Virginia,² and to join the momentum of current legislative efforts in New York, by establishing comprehensive state-level protections against racial discrimination in voting.³

¹ Conn. Gen. Ass., Raised Senate Bill No. 471 (Feb. Sess. 2022) (hereinafter “S.B. 471”).

² See Cal. Elec. Code, California Voting Rights Act of 2001, § 14027 (2002); Ore. Rev. Stat. § 255.400 et seq.; Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 29A.92.900 et seq.; Va. House Bill 1890 (2021 Session), <https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?211+sum+HB1890>; see also Testimony of Professor J. Morgan Kousser Before the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties of the U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary Legislative Proposals to Strengthen the Voting Rights Act (Oct. 17, 2019), at 2, available at <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20191017/110084/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-KousserJ-20191017.pdf> (noting the “striking success of minorities in using the state-level California Voting Rights Act” and the Act’s embodiment of the “continuing need of anti-discrimination laws”).

³ The New York State Legislature is currently considering the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York, which would implement a broad set of reforms to protect New York’s voters of color, including: (1) new private rights of action against voter suppression and vote dilution; (2) preclearance provisions, under which covered jurisdictions will be required to submit certain election law changes to the New York Attorney General or a court before they can be implemented; (3) expanded language assistance provisions that improve on the federal VRA’s requirements; (4) a statewide database of information on elections to improve transparency and assist election administrators; (5) a canon of judicial construction of election laws in factor of voter enfranchisement; and (6) new private right of action for voter intimidation, deception, and obstruction. See S.1046A (2021-2022 N.Y. State Leg.); A.6678A (2021-2022 N.Y. State Leg.).

As too many states are moving backwards, Connecticut has the opportunity to set a nationwide example.

S.B. 471 implements several critical measures to restore protections modeled on the federal VRA and expand the tools available for voting-rights protection. This includes strengthened causes of action against vote suppression, vote dilution, racial gerrymandering, and voter intimidation, obstruction, or interference, as well as expanded language access provisions and increased transparency of important election data. Our testimony will focus on the need for strong, state-level voting rights protections in Connecticut and the ways that S.B. 471’s critical measures—including efficient causes of action and preclearance—can augment federal law to better protect voters of color.

I. The Need for Strong Voter Protections in Connecticut

The importance of the right to vote cannot be overstated. The United States Supreme Court has long described it as a fundamental right, because it is preservative of all other rights.⁴ Voting is “the citizen’s link to his laws and government”⁵ and “the essence of a democratic society.”⁶ If the right to vote is undermined, the Court has cautioned, other rights “are illusory.”⁷ Thus, in a democracy, safeguarding the right to vote “is a fundamental matter.”⁸

Yet Connecticut long denied this fundamental right to its Black citizens. Prior to the passage of the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the people of Connecticut twice voted down proposed amendments to the state constitution to strike the word “white” from qualifications of electors.⁹ Connecticut was the first state in the country to enact a literacy test as a requirement for voting, and was one of only twelve states in which literacy tests were still in use as late as the 1950s.¹⁰ While nominally applying to everyone, literacy tests are widely regarded as racially discriminatory barriers to voting, because they have historically interacted with socioeconomic disparities, including unequal access to education along racial lines, to produce discriminatory results—and election officials in Connecticut and elsewhere administered them disproportionately against Black voters.¹¹

⁴ See *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*, 118 U.S. 356, 370 (1886).

⁵ *Evans v. Cornman*, 398 U.S. 419, 422 (1970).

⁶ *Harman v. Forssenius*, 380 U.S. 528, 537 (1965).

⁷ *Wesberry v. Sanders*, 376 U.S. 1, 17 (1964).

⁸ *Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U.S. 533, 561–62 (1964).

⁹ Rebecca Furer, *Who Gets to Vote? History of Voting Rights in Connecticut and the United States*, Connecticut Humanities, <https://teachitct.org/lessons/who-gets-to-vote-history-of-voting-rights-in-connecticut-and-the-united-states/>.

¹⁰ Steve Thornton, *Literacy Tests and the Right to Vote*, Connecticut Humanities (Nov. 2, 2020), <https://connecticuthistory.org/literacy-tests-and-the-right-to-vote/>.

¹¹ See *id.*

A. Connecticut’s Voters of Color Face Continued Obstacles and Discrimination.

Even today, as this Committee is aware, there remain serious gaps in Connecticut’s protection of the rights of Black voters and other voters of color. With long lines that disproportionately affect Black and Latino voters, no access to early voting, and no permanent, widespread access to absentee voting, Connecticut is “home to some of the most restrictive voting laws in the country.”¹² These restrictions impose disproportionate barriers to the franchise on voters of color.¹³ There is no private right of action in Connecticut state courts for voters who face intimidation or obstruction at the polls. And the prevalence of at-large election structures for many of Connecticut’s local government bodies—a form of election which can “operate to minimize or cancel out the voting strength of racial minorities in the voting population”—raises questions about potential racial vote dilution that may be going unchallenged under the federal VRA.¹⁴

B. Current Limitations of the Federal Voting Rights Act

The individual and collective provisions of the federal VRA have been effective at combatting a wide range of barriers and burdens that have excluded voters of color from the political process.¹⁵ However, in the decades since its passage, federal courts have eliminated or weakened some of the federal VRA’s protections, making it increasingly complex and burdensome for litigants to vindicate their rights under the law. As a result, despite the federal VRA’s importance, voters of color often still lack an equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect candidates of their choice.

For nearly 50 years, Section 5 of the federal VRA, the core provision of the legislation, protected millions of voters of color from racial discrimination in voting by requiring certain states and localities to obtain approval from the federal government *before* implementing a voting change.¹⁶ However, in *Shelby*

¹² Matt DeRienzo, *In Connecticut, Voters Face some of the Biggest Obstacles Outside the South*, Center for Public Integrity (Oct. 7, 2020), <https://publicintegrity.org/politics/elections/us-polling-places/connecticut-voters-face-some-of-the-biggest-obstacles-outside-the-south/>; *see also* *Preparing Your State for an Election Under Pandemic Conditions*, Brennan Center For Justice (Feb. 1, 2021), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/preparing-your-state-election-under-pandemic-conditions>.

¹³ For example, studies show that Black voters are more likely to vote early than non-Black voters. Sarah Smith, *Which Voters Show Up When States Allow Early Voting?*, ProPublica (Sept. 22, 2016), <https://www.propublica.org/article/which-voters-show-up-when-states-allow-early-voting>.

¹⁴ *Thornburg v. Gingles*, 478 U.S. 30, 47 (1986) (internal quotations and brackets omitted).

¹⁵ Myrna Pérez, *Voting Rights Act: The Legacy of the 15th Amendment*, Brennan Center For Justice (June 30, 2009), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/voting-rights-act-legacy-15th-amendment>.

¹⁶ 52 U.S.C. § 10304.

County, Alabama v. Holder, the United States Supreme Court rendered Section 5 inoperable by striking down Section 4(b) of the VRA, which identified the places in our country where Section 5 applied.¹⁷ The *Shelby County* decision unleashed a wave of voter suppression in states that were previously covered under Section 4(b).¹⁸ In 2021 alone, state lawmakers introduced more than 440 bills with provisions that restrict voting access in 49 states, and 34 such laws were enacted.¹⁹ This wave of restrictive voting changes shows no signs of abating in 2022.²⁰ *Shelby County* is also having profound ramifications for redistricting because, for the first time in six decades of map drawing, people of color in covered jurisdictions are not protected by Section 5.

Section 2 of the federal VRA offers a private right of action—which means that a person is legally entitled to file a lawsuit—against any voting practice or procedure that “results in a denial or abridgment of the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race.”²¹ But, for all its power, Section 2 litigation imposes a high bar for plaintiffs as it is expensive and can take years to reach resolution. Section 2 lawsuits generally require multiple expert witnesses for both plaintiffs and defendants.²² Plaintiffs and their lawyers risk at least six- or seven-figure expenditures in Section 2 litigations, often over multiple years.²³ Individual plaintiffs, even when supported by civil rights organizations or private lawyers, often lack the resources and expertise to effectively prosecute Section 2 claims.²⁴ Moreover, even when voters ultimately win

¹⁷ See *Shelby Cty, Ala. v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 529, 557 (2013).

¹⁸ See NAACP Legal Def. and Educ. Fund, Inc., Thurgood Marshall Inst., *Democracy Defended* (Sept. 2, 2021), https://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/LDF_2020_DemocracyDefended-1-3.pdf; see also NAACP Legal Def. and Educ. Fund, Inc., *A Primer on Sections 2 and 3(c) of the Voting Rights Act 1* (Jan. 5, 2021), <https://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/LDF-Sections-2-and-3c-VRA-primer-1.5.21.pdf>.

¹⁹ Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, *Voting Laws Roundup: December 2021* (Jan. 12, 2022), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voting-laws-roundup-december-2021>.

²⁰ Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, *Voting Laws Roundup: February 2022* (Feb. 9, 2022), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voting-laws-roundup-february-2022>.

²¹ 52 U.S.C. § 10301.

²² NAACP Legal Def. and Educ. Fund, Inc., *The Cost (in Time, Money, and Burden) of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act Litigation 2* (Feb. 2021), <https://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/Section-2-costs-2.19.21.pdf>; see also, e.g., Mike Faulk, *Big Costs, Heavy Hitters in ACLU Suit Against Yakima*, *Yakima Herald* (Aug. 10, 2014), https://www.yakimaherald.com/special_projects/aclu/big-costs-heavy-hitters-in-aclu-suit-against-yakima/article_3cbccce20-ee9d-11e4-bfba-f3e05bd949ca.html.

²³ NAACP Legal Def. and Educ. Fund, Inc., *The Cost (in Time, Money, and Burden) of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act Litigation*, *supra* note 22, at 2; Voting Rights Act: Section 5 of the Act – History, Scope, and Purpose: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on the Constitution of the H. Comm. on the Judiciary, 109th Cong. 92 (2005) (“Two to five years is a rough average” for the length of Section 2 lawsuits).

²⁴ Voting Rights and Election Administration in the Dakotas: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Elections, 116th Cong. 64 (2019).

lawsuits, several unfair elections may be held while the litigation is pending, subjecting voters to irreparable harm.²⁵ Due to these challenges, some potential Section 2 violations go unchallenged and are never resolved or litigated in court.²⁶

Section 2 claims are also expensive for jurisdictions to defend, regularly costing states and localities considerable amounts of taxpayer money. The City of Bridgeport, Connecticut, experienced these costs first-hand in 1994 when Black and Latino residents challenged Bridgeport’s redistricting plan under Section 2.²⁷ As part of a settlement agreement, Bridgeport agreed to pay plaintiffs \$175,000 for legal expenses and court costs.²⁸ Since then, the costs of such litigation have risen. In a more recent example, the East Ramapo Central School District in New York State paid its lawyers more than \$7 million for unsuccessfully defending a Section 2 lawsuit brought by the local NAACP branch—and was ordered to pay over \$4 million in plaintiffs’ attorneys’ fees and costs as well.²⁹ In *Veasey v. Perry*, in which LDF challenged the State of Texas’s Voter ID law alongside other civil rights groups and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), the district court and an appellate court recently affirmed an order that requires Texas to pay more than \$6.7 million toward the (non-DOJ) plaintiffs’ documented costs.³⁰

II. S.B. 471’s Strong Causes of Action Against Voter Suppression and Vote Dilution

S.B. 471 provides voters of color, as well as private organizations that represent or serve voters of color, with a private right of action against municipalities that adopt policies or practices that result in the denial or abridgment of minority votes or the dilution of minority voting strength. The bill also provides for additional enforcement of these measures by the Secretary of State.

²⁵ *Shelby County*, 570 U.S. at 572 (Ginsburg, J., dissenting) (“An illegal scheme might be in place for several election cycles before a Section 2 plaintiff can gather sufficient evidence to challenge it.”).

²⁶ Congressional Authority to Protect Voting Rights After *Shelby County v. Holder*: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties of the H. Comm. on Judiciary, 116th Cong. 14 (Sept. 24, 2019) (Written Testimony of Professor Justin Levitt).

²⁷ *Bridgeport Coal. for Fair Representation v. City of Bridgeport*, No. CIV. 3:93-1476(PCD), 1993 WL 742750, at *6 (D. Conn. Oct. 27, 1993).

²⁸ Edmund Mahoney, *Bridgeport’s Redistricting Suit Settled*, Hartford Courant (Mar. 10, 1995), <https://www.courant.com/news/connecticut/hc-xpm-1995-03-10-9503100390-story.html>.

²⁹ Jennifer Korn, *ERCSD Threatens to Fire Teachers if Legal Fees Not Cut to \$1: NAACP Leaders Respond*, Rockland County Times (Jan. 21, 2020), <https://www.rocklandtimes.com/2021/01/21/ercsd-threatens-to-fire-teachers-if-legal-fees-not-cut-to-1-naacp-leaders-respond/>; Report and Recommendation, *NAACP, Spring Valley Branch v. East Ramapo Central School Dist.*, No. 7:17-08943-CS-JCM (S.D.N.Y. Dec. 29, 2020).

³⁰ See Mike Scarcella, *5th Circuit upholds \$6.7 mln in fees for plaintiffs in voting rights case*, Reuters (Sept. 4, 2021), <https://reut.rs/3tN14L7>.

Voter suppression. S.B. 471 provides an efficient and predictable framework for prosecuting voter suppression claims. S.B. 471 allows voters of color to address practices that create barriers to people of colors’ access to the ballot, including, among other things, inconvenient or insufficient polling locations; wrongful voter purges; lack of availability of drop boxes; or improper election administration decisions that leads to longer lines for communities of color.³¹ These provisions are especially important in Connecticut, where voters of color have routinely been affected by long lines at polling places.³²

Vote dilution. S.B. 471 provides an effective means of prosecuting racial vote dilution claims. Modeled on the success of the California Voting Rights Act, S.B. 471 will create a clear and straightforward framework for contesting at-large municipal elections that dilute minority voting strength.³³ The bill also provides a clear framework for contesting unfair district-based and alternative methods of election that result in the dilution of minority voting strength when they interact with the presence of racially polarized voting or other elements of the totality of circumstances to impair equal voting rights and create a situation in which “the candidates or electoral choices preferred by protected class electors would usually be defeated.”³⁴ Enacting S.B. 471 will make this type of litigation less time-intensive and costly—not only for plaintiffs, but for all parties—as compared to the federal VRA.

Notification and safe harbor. S.B. 471 contains important “safe harbor” provisions that provide protection for municipalities who wish to prevent discrimination and resolve potential violations without litigation.³⁵ Prospective plaintiffs under S.B. 471’s measures are required to notify municipalities in writing of any alleged violation *before* commencing any action in court. Municipalities are then afforded a “safe harbor” period during which they may take steps to cure the alleged violation without exposure to litigation. These provisions incentivize municipalities to resolve violations amicably and practically outside of court. Indeed, in California, the notification and safe harbor procedure has proven highly successful at accomplishing precisely this goal—one study identified 140 California jurisdictions that voluntarily resolved potential voting rights violations after the California Voting Rights Act was enacted.³⁶

³¹ S.B. 471 § 2(a).

³² DeRienzo, *supra* note 12.

³³ S.B. 471 § 2(b)(A)(i).

³⁴ *Id.* § 2(b)(A)(ii).

³⁵ *Id.* § 2(g).

³⁶ Lawyers’ Comm. for Civil Rights of the S.F. Bay Area, *Voting Rights Barriers & Discrimination In Twenty-First Century California: 2000-2013* 7 (2014), <https://www.reimagine-erpe.org/files/Voting-Rights-Barriers-In-21st-Century-Cal-Update.pdf>.

III. S.B. 471’s Preclearance Program

S.B. 471 establishes a preclearance program that requires certain municipalities with a history of civil rights abuses or other indicators of historical racial discrimination to obtain approval from the Secretary of State or a state court before making changes to certain election rules or practices. S.B. 471 requires these municipalities to demonstrate that the proposed changes will not diminish the ability of minority groups to participate in the political process *before* the changes can be implemented.³⁷ Unlike the federal VRA, which required covered jurisdictions to obtain preclearance for all voting-related changes, S.B. 471 only requires preclearance for an enumerated set of changes.³⁸ While preclearance would impose a small compliance requirement on covered municipalities, it would save covered municipalities significant time and money by identifying discriminatory policies before they are enacted, thereby avoiding subsequent litigation. Moreover, it would serve as a powerful prophylactic to prevent voting discrimination and promote fairness and equal access to the fundamental right to vote for Connecticut citizens.

IV. S.B. 471’s Additional Positive Reforms

In addition to S.B. 471’s causes of action for voter suppression and vote dilution and preclearance, the bill makes several additional reforms that would advance the goal of equal access to the political process in Connecticut. These include expanded language-assistance provisions, a statewide database making election data public and transparent, and new legal tools to combat voter intimidation, obstruction, or interference.

A. Language assistance requirements

Providing adequate election assistance to language minority voters has also been a problem in Connecticut—a state that enjoys significant language diversity. Federal law “covers those localities where there are more than 10,000 or over 5 percent of the total voting age citizens in a single political subdivision . . . who are members of a single language minority group, have depressed literacy rates, and do not speak English very well.”³⁹ Currently, only ten municipalities in Connecticut meet the federal criteria and thus must provide assistance to Spanish-speaking voters.⁴⁰ As other states and localities (including California

³⁷ S.B. 471 § 5.

³⁸ *Id.* § 5(b).

³⁹ *Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act*, U.S. Dept. of Justice, <https://www.justice.gov/crt/language-minority-citizens> (last updated Mar. 11, 2020).

⁴⁰ Voting Rights Act Amendments of 2006, Determinations Under Section 203, 86 Fed. Reg. 69,613 (Dec. 8, 2021), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2021-12-08/pdf/2021-26547.pdf>. The ten municipalities are Bridgeport, East Hartford, Hartford, Meriden, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Waterbury, and Windham.

and New York City)⁴¹ have done, Connecticut could provide language assistance well above the federal law minimum. S.B. 471 lowers the statutory threshold to cover a broader set of municipalities and enhances language assistance to better enfranchise language-minority voters.⁴²

B. Private rights of action against voter intimidation, deception, or obstruction

S.B. 471 also provides Connecticut voters with a civil cause of action in state court against voter intimidation, deception, or obstruction.⁴³ The 2020 election demonstrated once again that voter intimidation is re-emerging as a significant problem across the country. Recent elections have seen extremists showing up at polling places heavily armed; truck caravans driving into Black or Latino neighborhoods to intimidate voters; and police presence at several polling places in communities where the relationship with law enforcement is historically fraught.⁴⁴ In Michigan cities of Detroit and Flint, Black voters received robocalls with deceptive information about when and where to vote.⁴⁵

Connecticut is not immune from this concerning national trend—and, as the Secretary of State has cautioned, must remain vigilant.⁴⁶ Black voters and other voters of color are particularly vulnerable and bore the brunt of voter intimidation in the 2020 election cycle.⁴⁷ Accordingly, S.B. 471 will provide voters with tools to protect themselves against these critical and growing threats. The bill gives any voter the right to sue a person or group engaging in “acts of intimidation, deception or obstruction that affect the right of voters to exercise their electoral privileges.”⁴⁸ This expands upon the criminal-law protections in the federal VRA and existing state law and provides a state-court, civil cause of

⁴¹ See generally Ca. Sec’y of State, *Language Requirements for Election Materials*, <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/language-requirements>; NYC Civic Engagement Commission, *Language Access Plan*, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/civicingagement/about/language-access-plan.page>.

⁴² S.B. 471 § 4. Under the bill’s language-assistance provisions, a Connecticut municipality is covered if more than 4,000 or more than 2% of its total voting age citizens are members of a single language minority group and have limited English proficiency.

⁴³ *Id.* § 6.

⁴⁴ NAACP Legal Def. and Educ. Fund, Inc., *Democracy Defended* 12-14, 21-22 (Sept. 2, 2021), https://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/LDF_2020_DemocracyDefended-1-3.pdf.

⁴⁵ Sam Gringlas, *Far-Right Activists Charged Over Robocalls That Allegedly Targeted Minority Voters*, Nat’l Pub. Radio (October 1, 2020), <https://n.pr/3sdlk9D>; Ron Fonger, *Attorney general warns of false robocalls targeting Flint voters*, Michigan Live (Nov. 3, 2020), <https://www.mlive.com/politics/2020/11/attorney-general-warns-of-false-robo-calls-targeting-flint-voters.html>.

⁴⁶ Susan Haigh, *Connecticut officials urge vigilance for voter intimidation*, The Journal Inquirer (Oct. 16, 2020), https://www.journalinquirer.com/connecticut-officials-urge-vigilance-for-voter-intimidation/article_47ad0358-0fa9-11eb-bb34-7f64329e6b3c.html.

⁴⁷ See NAACP Legal Def. and Educ. Fund, Inc., *Democracy Defended* 75-76 (Sept. 2, 2021), https://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/LDF_2020_DemocracyDefended-1-3.pdf.

⁴⁸ S.B. 471 § 6.

action—enabling courts to “order appropriate remedies that are tailored to address [the] violation” and resolve the harms thus caused—that is not currently available under Connecticut law.⁴⁹

C. Statewide database of election data

Finally, S.B. 471 establishes a statewide database containing election and demographic information to be available for election administration and voting rights enforcement.⁵⁰ The database would provide voters with access to redistricting maps in electronic format, Census data that can otherwise be difficult to access for non-professionals, information on the racial demographics of their communities, and district-level election results.⁵¹ This central repository of election data will encourage the state and municipalities to enact evidence-backed policies, enable voters, community groups, and academics to evaluate the presence of potentially discriminatory election structures or practices, and assist election officials in evaluating the extent to which current practices favor expansive access to the franchise. Such data should be publicly available to improve transparency and allow voters to detect inequitable policies and racial discrimination. This will help the Secretary of State and the public alike enforce the key provisions of S.B. 471, the federal VRA, and other voter protections.

* * *

LDF, the nation’s oldest and premier civil rights law firm, is dedicated to the full and equal participation of all people in our democracy, and fully supports S.B. 471. Please feel free to contact Steven Lance at (347) 947-0522 or slance@naacpldf.org with any questions or to discuss these issues in more detail.

Sincerely,

/s/ Steven Lance

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⁴⁹ *Id.* § 6(1).

⁵⁰ *Id.* § 3.

⁵¹ *Id.*

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (“LDF”)

Since its founding in 1940, LDF has used litigation, policy advocacy, public education, and community organizing strategies to achieve racial justice and equity in education, economic justice, political participation, and criminal justice. Throughout its history, LDF has worked to enforce and promote laws and policies that increase access to the electoral process and prohibit voter discrimination, intimidation, and suppression. LDF has been fully separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (“NAACP”) since 1957, though LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.