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LDF Calls on Congress to Restrict DHS Funding

The [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF) sent a [letter](#) to Congress urging Members to exercise their oversight power and prevent further abuse by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) by imposing vital restrictions on the billions of public funds appropriated to that agency.

Across the country, DHS agents are targeting Black and Brown immigrants and those who speak up for their rights. In recent weeks, DHS agents have escalated their abusive and unlawful tactics while targeting the Somali community in Minneapolis, Minnesota and killing an observer, Renee Good, as she was driving away from DHS officers without posing any threat to them. Federal officers openly admit to committing racial profiling and have fired tear gas and rubber bullets on peaceful protestors and journalists and detained at least 170 American citizens. In the last year, at least 32 people died in immigration custody.

Last year, Congress gave DHS \$170 billion for immigration operations and infrastructure—on top of its annual appropriation. That funding alone exceeds more than the combined annual expenditures of state and local police in all fifty states and the District of Columbia. LDF's letter calls on Congress to limit DHS funding and prohibit the following harmful practices:

- Profiling based on protected traits like race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality
- Aggressive deployment of militarized DHS agents in our streets
- Domestic intelligence activities that facilitate unlawful targeting of immigrants and protesters
- Flawed joint task force models between federal and state/local law enforcement that have a history of abuse
- Intrusive data sharing practices between federal agencies of private and sensitive data collected from individuals, to be used by federal law enforcement
- Unchecked, secretive acquisition of private industry surveillance tools

“Federal immigration agents are explicitly profiling people on the basis of their race, ethnicity, or national origin in violation of constitutional and civil rights protections, causing harm and spreading fear among countless communities of color and immigrant communities across the country. At the same time, taxpayer dollars—up to \$170

billion—are currently being funneled to DHS to fund these unlawful and violent enforcement activities. Congress can and must act to hold this administration accountable for this wanton misuse of public funds,” said **Jin Hee Lee, Director of Strategic Initiatives at LDF**. “Congress’s authority over the funds appropriated to federal agencies is a critical means to prevent further violence. We call on Congress to exercise its constitutional power and prohibit DHS funding for programs that are harming immigrants and people of color across the country.”

Finally, the letter outlines how, despite the horrific acts of violence and abuse that are occurring nationwide, DHS agents remain largely unaccountable. Congress must pass the Bivens Act, which provides legal recourse for individuals whose rights are violated by federal officials; eliminate qualified immunity, a doctrine that unduly shields officials engaged in unlawful conduct; and condition any DHS funding on federal agencies’ agreement to independent, transparent investigations of suspected violations of federal law, including cooperation with investigations conducted by state and local agencies.

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Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) is the nation’s first civil rights legal organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957, though it was founded under the leadership of Thurgood Marshall while he was at the NAACP. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute (TMI) is a division of LDF that undertakes innovative research and houses LDF’s archive. In all media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF (do not include NAACP) and refer to the Institute as LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute or TMI.