

LDF 2026 POLICY PRIORITIES

The Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is using all of its legal, legislative, and advocacy expertise to respond to the new challenges that 2026 presents. Our Policy Team is working nonstop to fight for equal protection, access, and representation for Black people in America in critical areas of life.

Through targeted and thoughtful advocacy, LDF will take on systemic discrimination within harmful legislative agendas while advancing legislation designed to empower Black individuals, families, and communities, with a particular emphasis on LDF's targeted southern states.

Criminal Justice Priorities

- 1. Abolish the death penalty.** For decades, LDF has been a pioneering voice in the fight to abolish the death penalty. Whether administered by federal or state government, the death penalty is infected with fundamental flaws, including persistent racial discrimination, and human error.
- 2. Address criminal sentencing and harsh statutes that disproportionately impact Black people.** For too long, Black people have faced lengthy, unjust, and disproportionate prison sentences that fuel mass incarceration. LDF's fight for relief is necessary to correct unjust sentences that would not be imposed under today's laws and that disproportionately affect the Black community.
- 3. Tackle the adultification of Black children in the criminal legal system.** Black youth should be treated like youth. LDF will tackle the pervasive adultification of Black children that has deprived them of their rehabilitative potential by subjecting them to the adult court system, for certain offenses, where Black children are overrepresented and endure disproportionate, racially disparate sentences.

Political Participation Priorities

- 1. Safeguard Black voters from racial discrimination in redistricting.** We work with state legislators, advocacy groups, and organizers to fight for fair maps that do not racially gerrymander Black people into contorted districts. We fight to secure fair representation that drastically affects Black communities across the country.
- 2. Combat oppressive requirements for voter registration.** We vigorously oppose methods that increase the difficulty of registering to vote, such as legislation that requires documentary proof of citizenship or other restrictive methods that predominantly target voters of color.
- 3. Protect Black voters from voting discrimination by championing State Voting Rights Acts (SVRAs).** We provide essential protections to promote fair participation and build a democracy that works for all by passing and enacting SVRAs. As federal voting rights remain under attack, these bills prevent and guard against discriminatory voting practices and policies.

Economic Justice Priorities

- 1. Expand access to safe, affordable housing in well-resourced neighborhoods.** Our communities are stronger when everyone has safe, stable housing — whether they have a criminal conviction, need a helping hand with their rent, or just struggle to make ends meet. We will work with state legislators and partners to increase housing choice and ensure Black households can rent an apartment or buy a home in neighborhoods of their choice where they can thrive.
- 2. Dismantle unfair barriers that prevent Black people from accessing economic opportunity.** Too often, discrimination keeps Black people locked out of living-wage jobs, job advancement, and the opportunity to start and grow their business. LDF will support legislation and government programs that address discrimination and defend our legal tools to address unfair discriminatory barriers and expand equal opportunity.
- 3. Ensure access to clean, affordable water.** Water is a human right. LDF will work with local governments to ensure sky-high prices or other barriers don't block Black communities from water access — and that unaffordable water bills don't cause Black people to lose their homes.

Learn more
about LDF's
2026 Policy
Priorities



Education Protection Priorities

- 1. Protect public education.** We will continue to defend against efforts to dismantle the Department of Education, including inter-agency agreements and reductions in force, and promote access to high-quality educational opportunities for Black students across the country.
- 2. Ensure the enforcement of civil rights laws.** We aim to protect every student's right to equal and fair access to public education guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. Our federal civil rights laws protect Black students against discrimination in the classroom, and we will work to ensure that those laws are enforced.
- 3. Expand access and affordability for higher education.** LDF will strive to increase access and affordability for higher education by increasing financial aid (especially grant aid) to students, equitably funding HBCUs, and broadening borrower protections for Black applicants.

Justice in Public Safety Priorities

- 1. Implement LDF's Framework for Public Safety.** We will work to expand public safety alternatives to law enforcement and increase investments in communities to promote safety.
- 2. Deter and redress racially discriminatory policing.** We will strive to deter and redress racial discrimination and abuse by law enforcement, including through their uses of advanced technologies and algorithmic systems.
- 3. Prevent public safety threats.** We aim to prevent public safety threats to the foundations of our multi-racial democracy, such as the criminalization and suppression of racial justice protest activity.