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LDF Applauds the Establishment of a National Monument at the Site of the 1908 Springfield Race Riot

Today, President Joe Biden signed a proclamation to establish the site of the 1908 Springfield Race Riot as a national monument on the 116th anniversary of the brutal attack that galvanized members of the Black community and led to the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Legal Defense Fund (LDF).

In response, LDF President and Director-Counsel Janai Nelson issued the following statement:

“Today, President Biden affirmed the critical importance of telling the full truth of our nation’s history, including some of its most heinous chapters. The reprehensible attack on members of the Black community in Springfield, Illinois, involved thousands of white people targeting, lynching, and inflicting catastrophic violence that resulted in the tragic loss of life, the destruction of Black-owned businesses, and the displacement of dozens of families. The unconscionable nature of the attack stirred some of the foremost defenders of civil rights, including Ida B. Wells Barnett and W.E.B. Du Bois, to establish the NAACP in 1909, which led to the creation of LDF in 1940. LDF became a wholly separate organization in 1957.

“A national monument at the site of the Springfield Race Riot will allow people across the country, and indeed across the globe, to not only deepen their understanding of the brutality Black people have faced in the United States, but to also recognize their resilience in the face of horror and tragedy. This recognition is especially powerful at a time when there is a war on truth and ongoing attempts to suppress the voices, history, and political participation of Black Americans. LDF commends President Biden and the Biden-Harris Administration for taking this crucial step toward ensuring the atrocities of our past are neither forgotten nor repeated.”

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Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. 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 Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF 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.