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LDF Launches Voter Empowerment Project “Black Voters on the Rise” as the Country Commemorates the Signing of the Voting Rights Act

Today, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) announced Black Voters on the Rise – an interdisciplinary initiative that works to defend and advance the rights of Black voters and the promise of a free and fair democracy throughout the full life cycle of the democratic process. The launch comes as the country recognizes the anniversary of the signing of the Voting Rights Act and just ahead of an election that will have a profound impact on our democracy.

Black Voters on the Rise serves to combine and rebrand LDF’s prior complementary projects, Prepared to Vote (PTV) and Voting Rights Defender (VRD). This renewed initiative will use a year-round, multi-tactical approach to build Black political power, working collaboratively across LDF departments and with strategic partners at the national, state, and local levels.

“It is crucial that our younger voters understand their vote has the power not only to select the president, but also to determine who sets national policies and laws addressing key issues – like reproductive rights, criminal justice, student loans, housing, and health care – and who will serve their interests at the state and local levels. Black Voters on the Rise is a recognition of that power and of the full potential of the Black vote,” said Janai Nelson, LDF’s President and Director-Counsel.

Black Voters on the Rise is a cross-generational initiative that builds on the legacy of Black voters organizing for our democracy to leverage the potential of the rising generation of Black voters. Young people will make up nearly half of voters in the 2024 election. And, since 2020, one in five new eligible voters in the South are Black and members of Gen Z.

As part of this initiative, LDF staff in southern communities work together with trusted organizations, including local non-profit organizations, HBCUs, churches, and others, to engage with community members and empower them to participate in the political process. By monitoring and responding to voter suppression tactics on the ground, proactively correcting and – when needed – challenging anti-voter activities, LDF’s Black Voters on the Rise project is helping Black communities defend themselves against the coordinated attacks on their rights.

“The work of defending democracy and voting rights is a year-round effort, especially as deceptive practices like misinformation and disinformation collide with racial polarization,” said

Amir Badat, Manager, Black Voters on the Rise. “The aggressive efforts to suppress the vote are using increasingly novel tactics, and we must meet those efforts with creativity and innovation. Black Voters on the Rise represents the resilience, strength, and dedication of the Black community’s pursuit to retain hard-fought wins and advance the rights they are entitled to.”

In the months ahead, the efforts of Black Voters on the Rise will involve combating discriminatory election administration practices and advocating for election officials to expand access to the ballot box. Black Voters on the Rise will also educate voters on election laws and their voting rights and mobilize communities to exercise their right to vote. Through Black Voters on the Rise, LDF has committed to reaching millions of voters through direct mail, SMS, and other forms of targeted communication this year.

With partners, Black Voters on the Rise will monitor the November 2024 election and future elections to identify voter suppression and protect Black voters through rapid response advocacy. This mobilization work will extend to include a concerted effort to encourage communities to leave no power on the table by participating in public meetings and learning about their local elected officials and their roles in shaping community policies and initiatives.

Protecting the voting rights of Black people has been a critical piece of LDF’s work since its founding in 1940 when Justice Thurgood Marshall filed *Smith v. Allwright*, which led to the defeat of all-white primaries. Justice Marshall called it his most consequential case. Today, LDF carries on that work in communities where a history of racist and discriminatory anti-voter, anti-democracy practices continue. Congress’s inaction on passing the John Lewis Voting Rights Act has also guided LDF to work in states across the country to pass state Voting Rights Acts and advance other proactive election administration policies.

LDF offers resources to voters on how to participate in the democratic process, including providing information on how to vote in person, secure an absentee ballot, research candidates and ballot initiatives, and become a volunteer. This information is available on LDF's election resource website, www.ldf.vote.

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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.