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NAACP Legal Defense Fund Urges California Lawmakers to Change Police Use-of-Deadly-Force Standard

LDF sends letter calling for passage of AB 931, which would allow police to use lethal force only to prevent imminent bodily injury or death

Following the tragic police killing of Stephon Clark in March, a bill was introduced in the California State Assembly that would change the rules governing when law enforcement can use deadly force. Ahead of the California State Senate Public Safety Committee [hearing](#) on the bill today, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) sent a [letter](#) to lawmakers urging the swift passage of AB 931, which has the potential to save lives and improve accountability for officer misconduct.

Not only would AB 931 change California’s law governing police use of force to allow lethal force only to prevent imminent bodily injury or death, but the bill also would create an affirmative legal obligation for officers to consider and use less lethal options before using deadly force. LDF’s letter makes clear that, “current law in California is far too permissive, authorizing police to use deadly force to make arrests, prevent escape, or overcome resistance.”

LDF’s letter also highlights the clear racial impact of fatal police shootings in California. Between 2006 and 2015, Black Californians were shot and killed by police at almost five times the rate of their white counterparts and three times the rate of their Latino peers.

As LDF’s letter notes, “One of the Legislature’s primary goals is to protect public safety, and safeguarding Californians’ right to be safe from unnecessary deaths by law enforcement—and to demand accountability when the police harm those they are charged to serve—is a critical step in that direction.”

Read the full letter [here](#).

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation’s first civil and human rights law organization and 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. 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 NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.