

WASHINGTON, D.C. (October 28, 2021) — The leaders of the nation’s top historic civil rights organizations released the following joint readout on their meeting today with Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia:

“Citing the deteriorating crisis of democracy that continues to overtake the country, national civil rights leaders urged Sen. Manchin to commit to the protection of voting rights using every means at the Senate’s disposal, including overriding the filibuster.

“Since the leaders last met with Sen. Manchin in June, some states have continued to enact discriminatory restrictions on voting and have begun approving racially-gerrymandered political maps. Conscientious election officials are being driven from office and replaced with partisan extremists intent on subverting the voters’ will.

“This not only hurts democracy overall, but the communities we represent, who have been historically disenfranchised throughout our nation’s history. We have fought too hard for our voting rights to see them eroded.

“Every Senator must grasp the urgency of this critical moment in history and take immediate action to protect voting rights.

“The leaders noted that, despite Sen. Manchin’s efforts to assemble a bipartisan coalition to pass voting rights legislation, not a single Republican Senator has been willing to cooperate in the defense of democracy. It’s time to dispense with the filibuster.

“Over the last half-century, the Senate has carved out 161 exemptions from the filibuster, many of which are in common use, on matters involving trade, foreign policy, defense, budget reconciliation, judicial confirmations, and health care.

“The leaders impressed upon Sen. Manchin that nothing is more crucial to a functioning democracy than the right to vote, the most enshrined right in the Constitution. Conversely, the filibuster, primarily used in the 20th Century to block civil rights legislation, never was part of Framers’ vision for the Senate and is not enshrined in any law.”

Civil rights leaders in attendance included:

- National Urban League President and CEO **Marc H. Morial**
- NAACP President and CEO **Derrick Johnson**
- The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights Interim President and CEO **Wade Henderson**
- National Action Network, (NAN) President & Founder **Reverend Al Sharpton**
- Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law President and Executive Director **Damon Hewitt**

- National Coalition on Black Civic Participation/Black Women's Roundtable
President and CEO **Melanie Campbell**
- National Council of Negro Women Executive Director **Janice Mathis**
- NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) President and Director-Counsel **Sherrilyn Ifill**

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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. 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. 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. Follow LDF on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).