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LDF Denounces Proposed Rule Shielding DOJ Lawyers From Accountability and Ethics Enforcement

Last week, the Department of Justice (DOJ) [published a proposed rule](#) in the Federal Register that would allow the Attorney General to intervene in state bar disciplinary investigations and demand that those investigations be suspended while the DOJ conducts its own internal review. The proposal threatens to undermine independent oversight by state ethics committees, fails to protect the public from unethical acts, and risks shielding DOJ attorneys from meaningful accountability.

Legal Defense Fund (LDF) President and Director-Counsel Janai S. Nelson issued the following statement.

“This proposal is a brazen attempt to place DOJ lawyers above the law – and above the ethical standards that every attorney in America is bound to uphold. State courts and their disciplinary authorities serve a critical role in ensuring that lawyers, regardless of who their employer may be, are held accountable when they violate rules of professional conduct. This proposal renders that role meaningless and exposes the public to increased misconduct and malfeasance by taxpayer-funded lawyers.

“An Administration that has already dismantled its own internal ethics safeguards – removing independent oversight officials and filling the Justice Department with political loyalists – cannot credibly claim the right to investigate itself.

“The lawyers working at DOJ, particularly appointees who carry out the Administration’s agenda, should be subject to the same accountability measures as every other member of the bar. If they aren’t, unethical attorney behavior will go unchecked – unleashing even more harm on Black communities and others while further eroding confidence in the administration of justice.”

The Office of the Attorney General’s proposed rule may be found [here](#). Comments about the proposed rule are open to the public through April 6, 2026 at 11:59 p.m ET. To learn how to participate in the public comment process visit, <https://www.regulations.gov/commenting-guidance>.

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Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) is the nation's first civil rights legal organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957, though it was founded under the leadership of Thurgood Marshall while he was at the NAACP. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute (TMI) is a division of LDF that undertakes innovative research and houses LDF's archive. In all media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF (do not include NAACP) and refer to the Institute as LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute or TMI.