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LDF President and Director-Counsel Sherrilyn Ifill Testifies on Voter Suppression and Continuing Threats to Democracy

This morning, Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), testified before the U.S. House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties on the present crisis for voting rights and our democracy, and the urgency of enacting federal legislation that fully restores the Voting Rights Act of 1965, sets minimum standards for access to the ballot, protects election workers, and combats the subversion of free and fair elections.

In her written testimony, Ifill noted the fierce urgency of the current moment. A time in which the fate of American democracy hangs in the balance:

“Black and Brown Americans face the greatest assault on our voting rights since the Jim Crow Black Codes rolled back the progress made during Reconstruction. And the threat of our democracy breaking apart at the seams and sliding irreversibly into authoritarianism—ceasing to exist as everyone alive today has known it—has not been as acute since the Civil War.”

Ifill continued, “In 2021, we saw a repeat of history—a steady drip of old poison in new bottles. Whereas in a bygone era, discriminatory intent in voting restrictions was dressed up in ideals such as securing a more informed and invested electorate, the new justification is fighting imaginary voter fraud, a phantom conjured only to attack. Fueled by the false assertions of voter fraud and a stolen election, [state] lawmakers sought to ensure that 2020’s robust turnout among voters of color could not be repeated. Legislators introduced more than 400 bills in nearly every state aiming to restrict the franchise. Nineteen states enacted a total of 37 laws that roll back voting rights and erect new barriers to the ballot.

“The backlash to 2020 and lack of federal response has brought us to a fraught moment in 2022. The accumulation of aggressive gerrymandering, critical midterm elections approaching without federal protections, additional state laws making it harder to vote and easier to subvert the will of the people, and constant threats to poll workers marks a clear and present danger for our democracy.

“With no pushback from Congress, those intent on subverting the next election by continuing to raise doubts about 2020 are becoming more brazen, not less. Secretary of State races formerly about election mechanics or perhaps how much to expand voting opportunities are now being driven by inaccurate claims regarding election legitimacy. In about half of this year’s 27 Secretary of State contests there is at least one candidate who claims the 2020 election was stolen or otherwise questions its legitimacy. The explicit strategy is clear – sow distrust in the electoral process.

“The purpose of the raft of 2021 voter suppression laws, the discriminatory redistricting process, and the efforts to sabotage election results is to prevent people of color from ever

again asserting their full voice and power. We need Congress to step up to its responsibility to ensure that we can achieve full and fair representation.”

Read Sherrilyn Ifill’s full written testimony [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. LDF has been 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](#).