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LDF Issues Statement Endorsing The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York

Today, the [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF) released a statement reiterating its previously expressed support of the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York (NYVRA), a bill aimed at rooting out racial discrimination in voting and one that will distinguish New York State as a national leader in the movement to defend and expand voting rights in America.

“As the late John Lewis himself once said, the right to vote is ‘almost sacred.’ That profound truth, as well as the current national context in which the right to vote is under siege, is why it is imperative that the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York become law,” said LDF President and Director-Counsel Janai S. Nelson. “The NYVRA would lead to increased access to the vote for millions of New Yorkers, set a new standard for empowering Black and Brown voters, and model pro-voting rights legislation for the rest of the country. We commend Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Carl Heastie, Senator Zellnor Myrie, and Assemblymember Latrice Walker for their leadership in shepherding the bill through the legislature. LDF stands ready to continue to work with these leaders to advance this critical legislation before the session ends.”

As Congress struggles to pass federal legislation to enact a new preclearance mechanism, it is essential that policymakers in Albany create a state-level preclearance system and implement additional robust protections to ensure that voters of color do not experience discrimination when attempting to exercise their right to vote in New York.

“This act builds on the best parts of the federal Voting Rights Act and state voting rights acts in California, Washington, Oregon, and Virginia,” said LDF Senior Policy Counsel Adam Lioz. “With a strong preclearance program, new tools to fight voting discrimination in court, expanded language assistance for voters with limited English proficiency, robust protections against voter intimidation, and more, this bill will help root out systemic voting discrimination in New York and empower those communities whose fundamental right to participate in democracy have been threatened.”

We call upon the New York legislature to protect the voting rights of all New Yorkers and pass the NYVRA before the end of the legislative session.

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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.