



For Immediate Release
Tuesday, November 12, 2019

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LDF Files Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals Brief to Defend Black Louisiana Voters

Today, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), the law firm of Cozen O'Connor, and Ronald L. Wilson, a veteran Louisiana civil rights attorney, filed a brief with the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals to defend a voting rights victory in Louisiana meant to ensure that Black voters have a fair opportunity to elect their preferred judicial candidates in Terrebonne Parish. In 2017, a federal district court [ruled](#) that Louisiana's use of at-large voting for electing five members to the 32nd Judicial District Court (32nd JDC), the state court encompassing Terrebonne, violated the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the U.S. Constitution.

"The fight for Black Terrebonne voters to have a voice in their judicial elections continues," said LDF's Deputy Director of Litigation Leah Aden. "Under this electoral system, no Black candidate has ever won a contested election for this state court, established in 1968. In fact, there is a well-documented pattern of Louisiana using at-large voting since the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act to deny Black voters fair electoral opportunity."

Plaintiffs — the Terrebonne NAACP, Rev. Vincent Fusilier, Sr., Lionel Myers, Daniel Turner, and Wendell Desmond Shelby, Jr. — filed the lawsuit to achieve the establishment of an opportunity district, in which Black voters are afforded a chance to have a say in who serves them on the 32nd JDC. That is the remedy the federal court has ordered, aligning Terrebonne with many other state courts in Louisiana's judicial system, including its highest court, the Louisiana Supreme Court, which uses district-based voting. The next 32nd JDC election is in 2020.

While Louisiana's Attorney General is appealing the trial court's ruling, LDF, Cozen O'Connor, and Ron Wilson are committed to defending the 2017 ruling — a transformative win for voting rights.

Read the full brief [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. Follow LDF on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).