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LDF Opposes Justice Hector LaSalle’s Elevation to New York’s Highest Court

Today, the [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF) announced its opposition to Justice Hector LaSalle’s confirmation as Chief Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals, in advance of a committee hearing scheduled for Wednesday morning.

LDF’s opposition is based on a review of Justice LaSalle’s record on New York’s intermediate appellate court, including judicial decisions he has signed in cases limiting the rights of people of color, women, workers, people who are accused of crimes, people who are incarcerated, and people who are immigrants.

“New York’s highest court plays a critical role in interpreting the laws that affect the fundamental rights of everyone in the state,” said Janai Nelson, LDF’s President and Director-Counsel. “As we have [said previously](#), we believe that the court requires a chief judge whose record clearly demonstrates a commitment to civil rights and racial justice; and whose appointment will contribute meaningfully to the court’s professional, experiential, and demographic diversity.”

“While LDF congratulates Justice LaSalle for being the first Latinx person to be nominated for chief judge of this court,” Nelson continued, “we have concluded, after a thorough review of his available record, that we cannot endorse his nomination.”

“Justice LaSalle’s record fails to demonstrate a commitment to civil rights and racial, gender, and economic justice,” said LDF Director of Policy Lisa Cylar Barrett, “and includes decisions to [deny constitutional protection](#) to claims of jury discrimination on the basis of skin color, [shield so-called pregnancy crisis centers](#) from full legal scrutiny, and [approve the questionable interrogation](#) of a 15-year-old who had ‘fundamental problems’ understanding his due-process rights.”

“In addition,” Cylar Barrett continued, “Justice LaSalle’s confirmation to the court would entrench a longstanding imbalance by installing a majority of four judges on the Court of Appeals who are former prosecutors.”

LDF urges the committee to reject Justice LaSalle’s nomination as chief judge and encourages Governor Kathleen Hochul to nominate a candidate for chief judge who represents the racial, ethnic, professional, and ideological diversity of the state; and who

will bring the commitment to protecting civil rights and other fundamental freedoms that this moment demands.

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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.