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LDF Media

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Court Vindicates Right of Madison County Black Voters to Have Their Day in Court in Districting Challenge

On Feb. 23, a federal judge denied a motion to dismiss the Legal Defense Fund (LDF)'s [lawsuit](#) alleging that the Madison County, Alabama, County Commission currently does not provide Black voters fair opportunities to elect candidates of choice in violation of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. LDF was successful in its argument that the case should proceed as usual through the district court.

The current commission voting system uses one at-large seat and six single-member districts, resulting in a 6-1 system where Black residents are only able to elect one out of seven seats while comprising 25% of the voting age population. Redrawing the districts would provide Black voters the long-overdue opportunity to elect a second preferred candidate to the Commission.

“The voters of Madison County, particularly the Black voters that have been denied their foundational right to free participation and fair representation, deserve their day in court,” said **Brittany Carter, Assistant Counsel at LDF**. “We commend the district court for denying the motion to dismiss and for acknowledging that individual voters have the ability to bring their own claims under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. Without it, the voters of Madison County would have no recourse to pursue their rights guaranteed by our Constitution and federal voting laws.”

The case, *Curtis-Richie v. Madison County*, was filed with co-counsel Wiggins, Childs, Pantazis, Fisher & Goldfarb on behalf of the Alabama State Conference of the NAACP and two Black voters in Madison County, Veronica Curtis-Richie and Angela Curry.

“Black voters in Madison County deserve the same chance at fair representation as everyone else,” said **individual voter Veronica Curtis-Richie**. “This freedom to equally access elections is the bedrock of our democracy. If cases like ours aren’t allowed to move forward as intended through the judicial system, we cannot profess to be a just

democratic society. I am so happy that the court saw reason and allowed our case to proceed.”

“When Black voters challenge a system that consistently blocks their neighborhoods from a fair opportunity to influence local elections just because of their race, federal law requires that challenge to be heard,” **said Benard Simelton of Alabama NAACP.** “This is a case about fair representation — about a voter’s right to be able to freely choose the people that represent them, their families, their neighbors, their communities. This case deserves to move forward so that the court can hear exactly how Black voters have been denied their foundational voting rights in Alabama, and I am relieved that the court agreed.”

“Madison County’s voting system denies one out of every four voters a chance to make their voices heard equally,” **said individual voter Angela Curry.** “That’s not how our elections are supposed to work. We cannot allow race to continue to be a barrier to free access to elections in Alabama, as it has been throughout much of our history. We must work to create an Alabama that values each of its voters equally. And thanks to this ruling, our challenge to this discriminatory system will be heard, as it should, in court.”

“Elections should be equally accessible to all voters, not just a privileged few,” **said Sidney Jackson, Partner at Wiggins, Childs, Pantazis, Fisher & Goldfarb.** “Fair representation should be a reality in Madison County and we’re very glad that the court agreed to let our case proceed. We look forward to continuing to working with our partners to create a system that allows everyone to have the opportunity to elect a candidate of choice to the County Commission.”

[Read the complaint here.](#)

[To learn more about LDF’s redistricting work, visit here.](#)

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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.