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**Oral Arguments Conclude in U.S. Supreme Court Case
Challenging Alabama Congressional Map**

Washington, D.C. — October 4, 2022 — Plaintiffs and attorneys in [Merrill v. Milligan](#), a case challenging Alabama’s new congressional map for diluting the ability of Black voters to elect candidates of their choice, held a [press conference](#) at the conclusion of oral arguments where they highlighted what’s at stake in this critical voting rights case. The plaintiffs – Evan Milligan, Khadidah Stone, Letetia Jackson, Shalela Dowdy, Greater Birmingham Ministries, and the Alabama State Conference of the NAACP – are represented by the Legal Defense Fund (LDF), American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU of Alabama, Hogan Lovells LLP, and Wiggins, Childs, Pantazis, Fisher & Goldfarb.

Video from today’s press conference is available via this link,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UX-FXPwmVq4>.

Plaintiff comments:

Evan Milligan, Plaintiff:

“One of the things that we’ve tried to say as plaintiffs... is I wish folks could have a real good sense of who these plaintiffs are standing behind me... We model the type of diversity that we’re very proud of in our state. We model connections and leadership development traditions, to advocacy traditions where we don’t always think the same. It’s really important to affirm that diversity because it actually gives us something to be hopeful for now as we look at our country, we see this drum beat around how too much diversity, or having too many opinions, makes a society that is somehow less manageable. And as advocates for democracy and multicultural democracy, we really believe that is actually even more possible to have a more equitable society when we have different people. It’s really just developing a sort of process we need to listen to each other... To have lawyers that can stand up and put on the record the history of the state – it’s affirming for us in a way that’s beyond words.”

Shalela Dowdy, Plaintiff:

“Medgar Evers, Jimmie Lee Jackson, Vernon Dahmer, James Reeb, Viola Gregg Liuzzo, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and so many more are all civil rights activists whose deaths can be attributed to the fact that they chose to fight for voting rights specifically on behalf of Black Americans. They stood ten toes down and still, fearing some and pissed others off, all while

remaining brave and having the courage to fight to make sure that Black people had a voice in this democracy that we call America... Throughout the years there have been obstacles and voter suppression tactics put in our way to prevent us from voting such as the fear of being lynched, having to pass literacy tests, having to recite the preamble from the Constitution... and so much more. Today, the voter suppression continues but in disguise through voter ID requirements, lack of language access, voting roll purges, polling place closures and consolidations, no early voting in some states – such as Alabama, reduced early voting in others... and the list goes on... But now we are faced... with the voter suppression tactic of gerrymandering... This case will determine whether Black Alabamians will be heard or silenced. The case will determine whether Black communities will get the proper support and funding that is needed concerning healthcare, education, and infrastructure. The voice and livelihood of Black Alabamians are at stake... and because of that, we fight.”

Co-Counsel comments:

Deuel Ross, Senior Counsel & Director of Professional Development, Legal Defense Fund:

“We are here because of the incredible work that our clients have been doing for many decades, fighting for fair maps and fighting for opportunities to ensure that the Voting Rights Act remains strong. As we know, the Supreme Court over the course of the last several decades has issued a number of rulings that have made it more difficult for Black voters to bring these claims and to have their rights protected. But we feel confident that the facts here are so egregious in Alabama – the fact that it splits this Black community that has existed in the state for 200 years [but] has egregious conditions – a lack of working water, a lack of adequate sewage – all things that having more representation – *responsive* representation – would really help... We’re not looking for any kind of guarantee... what our clients are looking for looking for is a fair chance, an equal chance.”

Davin Rosborough, Senior Staff Attorney, ACLU Voting Rights Project

"It is essential that the Supreme Court uphold and affirm the purpose of the Voting Rights Act by requiring Alabama to redraw these discriminatory maps, and reject their arguments to ignore deep-seated racial discrimination in the state’s political processes. Black voters deserve to be heard in the electoral process, not to be packed into one district or diluted into several districts by a congressional map that attacks their political power."

Tish Gotell Faulks, Legal Director, ACLU-AL

“The right to self-determination should be absolute, but in Alabama, most Black voters cannot select a candidate that reflects their values and experiences. Despite being presented with Census data calling for two minority-majority congressional districts, Alabama lawmakers chose to dilute the voice of Black voters by packing a majority of them into one district and dividing the

Black Belt across four. This egregious act of gerrymandering is exactly the type of situation the authors of the Voting Rights Act were trying to avoid. The law is clear. Alabama’s Congressional maps are unconstitutional.”

In November 2021, LDF and co-counsel filed a [lawsuit](#) against the state of Alabama for its discriminatory map that unnecessarily “packs” and “cracks” Black communities into voting districts that dilute their voting power. The map allows for Black voters to elect a candidate of their choice in only one out of seven districts despite making up nearly 27% of the state population.

In five of the six redistricting cycles since 1960, the U.S. Department of Justice or federal courts have found that Alabama’s legislative districts — congressional, state, or both — violated the rights of voters under the U.S. Constitution or the Voting Rights Act. Alabama’s steadfast refusal to address the rights of its Black residents is directly linked to its historical and present conditions of racial discrimination against Black people.

A decision in the case is expected in 2023.

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About LDF

Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multidisciplinary 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.