



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Civil Rights Groups Call for Congressional Action on Fatal Police Shootings**

The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc. (LDF), The American Civil Liberties Union, and The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights [called on](#) Congress today to take action in response to the national crisis of fatal police shootings. The leading civil rights groups voice their concern in the wake of the killing of three Black men—Stephon Clark, Danny Ray Thomas, and Saheed Vassell—killed by police in recent weeks, as well as the more than 1,000 people killed by police in 2017 alone, and the 300 people shot and killed by police thus far in 2018. In many of these cases, victims were unarmed or experiencing mental health crises.

Advocates submitted a [letter](#) to the congressional Working Group on Policing Strategies, which was formed in 2016, noting that “our nation’s conscience has been rocked by a series of tragic events that has resulted in the loss of too many lives.” And yet in the two years since—let alone in the four years since Michael Brown was killed by police in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014—little progress has been made towards the Working Group’s reported goals of “end[ing] excessive force” and “strengthen[ing] police accountability.” While the current Congress fails to advance or even consider any meaningful police reform legislation, the public continues to rely on open sources to provide a national census of fatal police shootings. According to these sources, Black people are still three times more likely than White people to be killed by police. People of color represent more than 50% of those unarmed during fatal encounters with police. The data we have indicates police violence and racial bias to be a systemic problem, not simply the result of “a few bad actors.”

“The deaths of Stephon Clark, Danny Ray Thomas, and Saheed Vassell underscore the urgent need for Congress to pass life-saving policing reform legislation,” said [Todd A. Cox](#), LDF’s Policy Director. “Our nation’s lawmakers must finally take action to require national

data collection on police use of force and deescalation training rather than advancing unnecessary punitive measures that threaten to put Black and Brown lives at greater risk.”

“One thousand people are killed by police every year, many of them of color, and many of them of unarmed,” said Kanya Bennett, legislative counsel at the American Civil Liberties Union. “We cannot accept fatal police shootings of this magnitude as business as usual. The crisis we find ourselves in means everyone has new work to do, and this includes Members of Congress. We are calling upon our federal lawmakers to provide the necessary oversight, resources, and policy to end this epidemic of police violence.”

“Our justice system should be fair and impartial, but the sad reality is that it is still rife with systemic racial discrimination,” said Kristine Lucius, executive vice president of policy for The Leadership Conference. “Recent police killings of unarmed Black people and other people of color make it clear why it is imperative for Congress to act to restore the trust between law enforcement and the communities they are sworn to protect and serve.”

Read the letter [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.*

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*The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights is a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States. The Leadership Conference works toward an America as good as its ideals. For more information on The Leadership Conference and its member organizations, visit [www.civilrights.org](http://www.civilrights.org).*