



**For Immediate Release  
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**LDF Media  
212-965-2200 / [media@naacpldf.org](mailto:media@naacpldf.org)**

**LDF Celebrates Historic Victory for Black Voters as Governor Kathy Hochul Signs the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York into Law**

Today, New York Governor Kathy Hochul signed into law the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York. The new law builds on the strongest parts of the landmark federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 and prior state voting rights acts to protect New York voters against discrimination and empower New Yorkers and state government officials to address problems such as persistent racial gaps in turnout, discriminatory redistricting, inadequate assistance to voters whose first language is not English, the location of polling places inaccessible to communities of color, and outright voter intimidation.

In response to this landmark moment in the history of voting rights for both New York State and the nation more generally, [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF) President and Director-Counsel Janai S. Nelson released the following statement:

“The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York is historic legislation that will help prevent discrimination against voters of color in New York and set a new gold standard for state legislators across the U.S. who are concerned about the severe and growing threats to voting rights in America. As the late John Lewis noted, few rights are more ‘precious, almost sacred’ than the right to vote, a sentiment that this law embodies through strong protections that empower every New Yorker.

“Further, during a moment of crisis for our democracy, when the white supremacist backlash against Black and Brown voting power has led to a violent insurrection and driven far too many state-level policymakers to make it harder for their constituents to vote, Governor Hochul, Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Carl Heastie, Senator Zellnor Myrie, and Assemblymember Latrice Walker provided a necessary contrast by shepherding this bill into law.

“Not so long ago, New York was among the least voter-friendly states in the country; now, it can proudly count itself among the leading lights that have responded to inaction in Washington, D.C., by seizing the initiative to protect and expand the right to vote.

“While a federal response to our voting rights crisis remains necessary, we look forward to building upon this landmark victory for democracy and working with leaders elsewhere in the U.S. to enact strong state-level voting rights acts. New York has shown the way forward, and this is a moment in which all New Yorkers should take pride. It is a strong sign that a broader movement to strengthen U.S. democracy is on the horizon.”

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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.*