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**Statement on Impeachment Inquiry From
LDF President and Director-Counsel, Sherrilyn Ifill**

The opening of an impeachment inquiry to examine the conduct of President Trump is a grave moment for country and our democracy.

Many may question whether civil rights organizations should be concerned about this impeachment inquiry. In the broadest sense, the demand for civil rights is premised on the guarantees in our Constitution that protect marginalized and vulnerable populations against the abuses and excesses by those in power. Highest among these is the guarantee in the Fourteenth Amendment that we are entitled to equal protection under the laws. We embrace the rule of law as a pillar of our democracy. We have relied and continued to depend upon laws to guarantee our full citizenship, to protect ourselves against violence, and to ensure our right to equal education, employment, and housing. For this reason, egregious affronts to the rule of law are always our concern. When those affronts are undertaken by our highest political leaders, the implications for our civil and political rights are profound.

Our history is weighted down with the experiences of our forebears, who were subject to the will, caprice and cruelty of those in power. We are ever mindful that abuses of power have grave implications for our rights as full citizens in this country. If the rule of law is to be more than words on paper, our democratic institutions must curb such abuses by performing the functions assigned to them under our Constitution.

Moreover, the specific revelations related to this impeachment inquiry have particular implications for the voting rights of African Americans. The ability to have one's vote count depends on an election system that is free from illegality and manipulation or intervention by domestic or foreign powers. African Americans – who have fought, marched, bled and died to exercise the right to vote and to have our votes count – are especially sensitive to the need to protect our election system from any intervention designed to improperly and illegally influence electoral outcomes. Whether it is the improper purging of registered voters in parts of the United States and other violations of federal voting laws; targeted online Russian interference in the 2016 elections which deliberately used race as wedge issue to manipulate voters; or the effort to use a foreign power to investigate a political

candidate in a U.S. election, these domestic and transnational interventions in our election system are a threat to the sanctity of our vote.

Therefore, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) will be closely monitoring the impeachment inquiry as it unfolds. We hope that this inquiry will be part of a broader effort to ensure the protection of our election system and to uphold the rule of law. The safeguarding of our elections is a national security issue and a civil rights issue that demands the urgent attention of our Congress and all Americans.

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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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