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LDF Issues Statement on Tarrant, Alabama, City Councilmember Tommy Bryant and the Ongoing Harassment of Public Officials of Color

Earlier this week, Tarrant, Alabama, city councilmember Tommy Bryant was caught on video shouting “Do we have a house n***er in here?” in the direction of fellow councilmember Veronica Freeman. This comes one month after reports emerged that Bryant called the city’s first Black major, Waymon Newton, “boy.”

In response, Janai Nelson, Associate Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), issued the following statement:

“The racist verbal abuse espoused by Tarrant, Alabama, city councilmember Tommy Bryant toward councilmember Veronica Freeman reflects the latest incident of harassment of public officials of color. Alarming, racially-tinged harassment constitutes an ongoing and rampant issue at the federal, state, and local levels.

“For example, death threats and other forms of harassment targeted at Congresswomen Rashida Tlaib, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, and Ayanna Pressley have been well documented. Earlier this year, Michigan state representative Cynthia Johnson received a deluge of racist death threats after a committee hearing related to the 2020 election. And, in Vermont, a state lawmaker and a town board member — both Black women — each left their roles because of harassment and threats. The state’s only Black legislator at the time, Kiah Morris, also resigned because of similar harassment.

“These are just a fraction of the many dangerous personal attacks directed at public officials on a regular basis. At times, as with Bryant, the harassment comes from fellow public officials, an especially reprehensible act and a grave threat to our democracy. Legislative bodies must step up and address this issue directly through the establishment of no-tolerance code of conduct policies that are strictly enforced to hold public officials accountable for their actions, including the use of racial slurs and hate speech. We also call on the Tarrant City Council to take immediate action to fully investigate Bryant’s misconduct, impose any and all discipline including removal from office, and protect council members from ongoing harassment.”

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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. 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. 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. Follow LDF on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).