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LDF Media
212-965-2200 / media@naacpldf.org

LDF Issues Statement on Inauguration of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, Calls for Prioritization of Civil Rights

Today, Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), issued the following statement regarding the inauguration of the Biden-Harris administration:

“Today, we witnessed the completion of a most critical rite of our democracy — the formal transition of power to the leaders chosen by the American people to shepherd this nation for the next four years. Congratulations to President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, who are taking on this sacred duty during a trying time — one in which thousands continue to die each day from COVID-19. And during which we continue to confront the rise of white supremacist violence and unprecedented challenges to our democratic institutions.

“While this is a challenging moment in our country’s history, today also marks a historic occasion for our country that we must acknowledge and commemorate. Vice President Harris’ inauguration makes her the first Black person, the first South Asian, and the first woman to hold the role of second-in-command. Ms. Harris, who was sworn in by the first Latina Supreme Court Justice, Sonia Sotomayor, on a bible that once belonged to Thurgood Marshall — LDF’s founder and the nation’s first Black Supreme Court Justice — is also the first graduate of a Historically Black College or University to serve as vice president.

“Now, the work begins. We are encouraged by the Biden-Harris administration’s ambitious day one plan, which includes a spate of urgently-needed executive actions to advance racial equity and support underserved communities, as well as those that will foster a robust COVID-19 health and humanitarian response. We are hopeful that the new administration’s rapid action on these important initiatives is reflective of how it will continue to address the most critical issues facing our country — with nuance, urgency, and an unwavering commitment to democratic values.

“Indeed, this commitment is needed now more than ever. The Capitol insurrection just two weeks ago not only underscored the deep damage done to our society’s highest ideals, but also reflected the culmination of relentless attacks on our institutions by the previous administration.

“The last four years of systemic rollbacks of protections for Black people and other marginalized communities demand nothing less than a robust response from the Biden-Harris administration that reverses this erosion of civil rights, goes further in defending these rights, and systematically addresses racial injustice and inequality in voting, housing, education, and criminal justice. Today’s executive actions are a promising step in the right direction — and this trajectory must continue.

“There is plenty of work ahead. The Department of Justice must return to its role in enforcing civil rights protections for those who are most vulnerable in our country. All

federal agencies must actively work to systemically address the ever-growing inequities which exist throughout society. There must be movement on passing critical voting rights and election protection legislation, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, and legislation addressing many other crucial issues.

“LDF will remain steadfast in our efforts to ensure the new administration focuses on the urgent needs of our communities, and we look forward to opening up robust dialogues with officials to make this a reality. This collaboration will be crucial to moving our country toward a more perfect union with equality and justice at its center.”

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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](#).