

## **LDF Mourns the Loss of Longtime Board Member Jay Topkis**

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) mourns the passing of Jay Topkis, a former member of LDF's Board of Directors who advised LDF on more than 21 cases between 1967 and 1988. A generous LDF donor, Topkis was a longtime partner at the firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP. He was 94.

"For more than four decades, Jay Topkis generously shared his time, his brilliant legal mind, and his deep sense of compassion with LDF and its clients," said LDF President and Director-Counsel Sherrilyn Ifill. "As an informal advisor, a co-counsel, and a member of our Board, he gave countless hours to helping us make our country more just and equal. He leaves behind a shining example of service, and he will be deeply missed."

Topkis played a key role in several significant cases in LDF history. He assisted in LDF's litigation in *Keyes v. School District No. 1, Denver*, a desegregation case before the Supreme Court that established important evidentiary standards in determining whether a school district was liable for *de facto* segregation. He helped guide another major desegregation case, *Missouri v. Jenkins*, through the appeals process. He took a special interest in capital punishment cases, volunteering to represent more than a dozen defendants sentenced to death. Almost all the work Topkis performed for LDF was done *pro bono*.

Topkis was a graduate of Columbia University and Yale Law School, and he served in the U.S. Army from 1943 to 1946. After law school, he clerked for Judge Jerome Frank of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and then joined Paul, Weiss as an associate in 1950. He made partner at the firm in 1960, a position he held until 1995, when he became of counsel.

In 1981, Topkis was elected to the LDF Board of Directors, serving until he attained emeritus status in 2005. In addition to his work with LDF, he was a member of the executive committee of the board of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, from 1985 to 1997. In that capacity, he traveled to Russia as part of a group of lawyers and judges attempting to help that nation draft a constitution. He also taught for years a seminar on constitutional law at his alma mater, Columbia College, and a class on trial practice at Columbia Law School.