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LDF Issues Statement on the Voting Rights Act of Virginia

Governor Ralph Northam has approved the Voting Rights Act of Virginia, a critical move to protect the right to vote for voters of color even as other states move to enact racially discriminatory voting legislation. Virginia's adoption of this bill will make it the first state in the South to enact a state voting rights act. Following the Governor's announcement, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) Deputy Director of Litigation Leah Aden said:

"As we confront the worst attacks on voting rights in decades, Virginia's decision to approve comprehensive legislation to protect the right to vote is one we applaud. The Supreme Court's 2013 decision in *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder* has unleashed a wave of voter suppression in the United States. For example, earlier this week LDF and other civil rights groups filed a federal lawsuit against Georgia's sweeping law that is designed to create barriers to voting for Black voters and other voters of color. Even as some states such as Georgia force through discriminatory voting laws, creating barriers to the ballot that disproportionately affect voters of color, Virginia sets an example for the important role that states can play in bolstering existing federal protections for the right to vote. Virginia's legacy of voter suppression cannot be ignored, and its Voting Rights Act is an important step toward reconciling that history."

LDF Redistricting Counsel Michael Pernick added:

"The Voting Rights Act of Virginia gives voters of color critical tools to address voter suppression and vote dilution by providing streamlined and straightforward legal standards to evaluate claims. It provides robust new protections against voter intimidation. And it creates mechanisms to prevent localities from making discriminatory voting changes, by requiring local election officials to obtain public feedback or permission from the attorney general before altering voting rules. Virginia joins California, Washington, and Oregon in enacting a state voting rights act, and sets an important precedent for other states, including New York and Connecticut where efforts to enact state voting rights are ongoing. We urge other elected state officials to follow Virginia's example and pass legislation that protects its most vulnerable voters – as this is not a democracy unless every eligible voter can participate."

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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

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