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LDF Media

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LDF Commemorates 60th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act Amid U.S. Democracy Crisis

Sixty years ago today, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) into law, enshrining protections for voters who were historically denied access to the ballot box. The VRA was one of the most significant achievements of the civil rights movement, ending discriminatory practices used to prevent Black voters from exercising their right to vote and establishing visionary “[preclearance](#)” requirements that stopped voting discrimination *before* it occurred.

On this historic anniversary, LDF President and Director-Counsel Janai Nelson issued the following statement:

“Our multi-racial democracy is only 60 years old — and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is its birth certificate. The history-making law was the result of tenacious and valiant advocacy, finally allowing Black people to engage in America’s political process as full citizens after enduring horrific violence and racist election practices for decades.

“Voting is our foundational right. When that right is infringed upon, our democracy is exponentially weakened. Today, we again find ourselves at a moment where Black people’s political power is under severe threat, and the legitimacy of our democracy is undermined as a result. In recent years, the legislative intent of the VRA was severely undercut by two Supreme Court decisions, rendering the law unable to fully protect those it was designed to empower. When coupled with the passage of regressive voting rights laws at the state level, it’s abundantly clear that American democracy is in crisis. States with a history of race discrimination in voting are continuing to suppress the votes of our country’s most marginalized groups in a concerted effort to consolidate power and further entrench white supremacy with sanction from a majority in Congress that refuses to act.

“On this important anniversary, we must be clear about the unbridled attacks on the right to vote and demand that Congress pass the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

“If we are to continue the pursuit of the multiracial democracy that the VRA set in motion 60 years ago and if we are to honor our republican form of government founded on representation by the people, we must be unwavering in our commitment to fulfill the promise of Selma, refuse to cede any further ground, and mobilize in support of equal voting rights and fair elections.”

For more information on voting in 2025, visit [our website](#).

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Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation's first civil rights law organization. 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 Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been 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.