



The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) filed a suit in federal court today against election officials in Waller County, Texas, who have refused to provide any early voting location on the campus of Prairie View A&M University, a historically black university, during the first week of voting that starts today. In general, the County has provided fewer early voting opportunities to PVAMU students who are one of the highest users of this opportunity as compared to other voters in Waller. The suit was brought on behalf of five Prairie View A&M students, all registered voters and residents of Waller County.

“Since at least the early 1970s, Waller County has consistently tried to limit the political power of Black voters in the City of Prairie View and at Prairie View A&M specifically by undermining their right to vote,” said LDF Deputy Director of Litigation Leah Aden. “In keeping with this troubling pattern, Waller County officials have refused to come close to providing the same number of early-voting opportunities as they have to non-Black and non-student voters before next month’s election. LDF is hopeful that the court will order Waller County to fulfill its obligation to protect every voter’s rights under the Voting Rights Act and the U.S. Constitution.”

Before 1971, Waller County had almost no Black voters. But with the ratification of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment in 1971, which gave the vote to all Americans eighteen years or older, the mostly Black student population at Prairie View A&M became and remains a significant political force in Waller County. Almost immediately, county officials began deploying various unconstitutional and illegal tactics to limit students’ voting rights, including restrictive registration requirements, arbitrary voter challenges, and, just in the last few years, baseless changes in Black students’ access to early voting and polling locations.

LDF’s suit notes that during the first week of early voting, no polling sites are available anywhere in the City of Prairie View or on campus; in the second week, while Prairie View, where PVAMU is located, is providing five early voting days, two of those are off-campus at a site that is not accessible to many PVAMU students who lack transportation. By contrast, in the majority-white city of Waller, voters have two locations to vote during the first week and overall 11 days of early voting. During the second week of early voting, two voting sites are open in Prairie View, but for considerably fewer hours than voting sites in Waller.

The international law firm of Norton, Rose Fulbright joins LDF as co-counsel in support of this voting rights challenge.

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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 and 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.*