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Civil Rights Leaders Call on Congress To Pass George Floyd Justice In Policing Act

Today, civil rights leaders called on the U.S. House of Representatives to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act – a critical step to holding law enforcement accountable for unconstitutional and unethical conduct. The 2020 killing of George Floyd sparked a year of national protests in all 50 states calling for an end to police brutality against Black and Brown communities and a demand for accountability in every sector of law enforcement.

Addressing this nation's history of violent, discriminatory policing requires passing legislation that advances systemic reforms rooted in transparency and accountability. It is the responsibility of the federal government to set standards on justice, policing, and safety. A vital step in this process is the passage of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, which recognizes the importance of stripping law enforcement of qualified immunity; creating a national registry of police misconduct complaints; declaring prohibitions for law enforcement profiling; limiting the transfer of military-grade equipment to state and local law enforcement; and restricting funds from law enforcement agencies that do not prohibit the use of chokeholds.

"The killing of George Floyd held a mirror up to a truth about the American legal system. It showed us in the most stark and irrefutable way, that there are deep, fundamental problems with how this country allows law enforcement to intimidate, abuse, torture, and kill unarmed Black people. Among the powerful reasons Americans were moved to action in the wake of the killing of George Floyd was watching Derek Chauvin's reaction to being recorded. He stared at us with his hand in his pocket, believing that nothing was going to happen to him, that he would face neither criminal penalty nor civil liability," said **Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF)**. "The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act is focused, first and foremost, on addressing the regime of impunity that has allowed police officers for decades to kill innocent Black men, women, and children without accountability. If Congress fails to act to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, it will prove Derek Chauvin right. It will reinforce that in encounters with Black people, law enforcement officers are above the law. When Officer Chauvin looks into the camera as he kills George Floyd, he is looking at us. He is daring us to prove him wrong. We're calling on Congress to prove him wrong and move forward the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act."

"Excessive, deadly force against Black Americans runs deeper than the tragic death of George Floyd. The United States' use of brutal police force to control Black Americans can be traced back to slave patrols of the 1700s and the Black codes of the 1860s-1870s. Now it's time for Congress to pass the Justice in Policing Act to ensure that no person under color of law can act unilaterally as cop, judge, jury, and executioner in

this country. The previous Congress failed to do its job. This Congress must meet the challenge of today and send this important piece of legislation to the President's desk," said **Marc H. Morial, President & CEO, National Urban League.**

"The lynching by knee of a law enforcement officer of George Floyd is to this generation of civil rights what the lynching of Emmitt Till was to the generation of our grandparents. Therefore, the passing of the George Floyd Justice and Policing Act is as important in this time as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was in the era of the civil rights movement of the '50's and '60's. The Senate must act now as the Senate acted in that time. A vote against that is a vote against civil rights and the passage of this will send a message that police lynchings will not be tolerated and the accountability on all policing must be the law of the land," said **Rev. Al Sharpton, Founder and President of National Action Network.**

"Congress must understand the urgency in immediately passing The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. Our Black Women's Roundtable/Essence 2020 Poll and our NCBCP Unity 2020 Election Exit Poll revealed that criminal justice/policing reform was one of the top-three issues that Black voters – especially Black women and young voters – wanted the next President and Congress to address. (The poll also revealed that eradicating systemic racism was the #1 issue, while ending COVID-19 was number #3). The voters have spoken and now is the time for the Congress to deliver what the people voted for and pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act," said **Melanie L. Campbell, President and CEO of National Coalition on Black Civic Participation.** "Further, as our nation deals with multiple crises during a deadly pandemic, it is important to also understand that these issues are a matter of life and death to millions of people of color and impoverished communities that are unfairly treated by too many in law enforcement in our nation."

"For many of us, the searing pain on display in Minneapolis and across the country last summer has not gone away – and those who have lost their lives to state violence deserve more," said **Wade Henderson, interim president and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.** "Yet, for too long, our nation has met the cycle of police brutality and racism with tinkering at the edges instead of real change. To be clear, we cannot and will not accept an incremental approach to justice nor go through this cycle over and over again. Now is the time to take this meaningful step to reimagine what kind of America we want to build — an America where all people can live safely and freely. We urge members of the House to support passage of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, and for Senate leadership to take it up in short order and work to strengthen it."

"There is a very long history of systemic racism against Black women, men and children by individual white supremacists and by state-sanctioned acts that began during the years of enslavement and continued during the period of reconstruction and Jim Crowism. Such violence continues to plague our communities. Today there are clear and irrefutable acts of police violence that are exemplified by the killing of George Floyd," said **Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole, National Chair and President of the National Council of Negro Women, Inc.** "The passage of the George Floyd Act is an urgent and necessary action to end unjustified police killings of Black women, men and children."

"The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act seeks to hold our system of justice accountable at a time when transparency and liability are lacking," said **Derrick Johnson, President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.** "We've witnessed far too many deaths at

the hands of law enforcement with little to no recourse. It is long overdue that we reimagine public safety in our communities and rethink policing; this piece of legislation aims to do just that. “

“In order to make meaningful progress on the urgent need for transparency and accountability for police misconduct, we need the Justice in Policing Act now more than ever. America is still confronted with a national crisis of unchecked police violence. Police are still killing unarmed Black people at alarming rates. Time and time again we see these inexplicable tragedies and atrocities, followed by predictable outrage and condemnation, but little else. Some things seem to have changed in this country in terms of public discourse and consciousness about the problem. Yet, our federal laws have not changed accordingly. Passing this legislation will force our nation to finally acknowledge and begin to address this potent form of systemic discrimination faced by Black communities nationwide,” said **Damon Hewitt, Executive Vice President, Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law.**

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National Council of Negro Women, Inc. (NCNW) is a Washington, D.C.-based charitable organization making a difference in the lives of women, children, and families through a four-pronged strategy that emphasizes entrepreneurship, health equity, STEAM education, and civic engagement. Founded 85 years ago, NCNW has 300 community and campus-based sections and thirty-two national affiliates representing more than Two Million women and men. NCNW’s programs are grounded on a foundation of critical concerns known as Four for the Future. NCNW promotes education with a particular focus on science, technology, engineering, and math; encourages entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and economic stability; educates women about good health and HIV/AIDS; promotes civic engagement and advocates for sound public policy and social justice. NCNW is known for its work to educate college age women about HIV/AIDS and for producing the Black Family Reunion. Current programs include GirlTech, HBCU College Fair, Millennial Entrepreneurs and Adulting 101. Johnnetta Betsch Cole, Ph.D., is the National Chair and Seventh President of NCNW. NCNW has campaigned for clean water for Flint, MI, voting rights, and SNAP benefits. For more information please visit www.ncnw.org or NCNW’s social channels via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

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](#).

The National Urban League is a historic civil rights organization dedicated to economic empowerment in order to elevate the standard of living in historically underserved urban communities. The National Urban League spearheads the efforts of its 90 local affiliates through the development of programs, public policy research and advocacy, providing direct services that impact and improve the lives of more than 2 million people annually nationwide. Visit www.nul.org and follow us on Twitter and Instagram: @NatUrbanLeague.

National Action Network is one of the leading civil rights organizations in the Nation with chapters throughout the entire United States. Founded in 1991 by Reverend Al Sharpton, NAN works within the spirit and tradition of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to promote a modern civil rights agenda that includes the fight for one standard of justice, decency and equal opportunities for all people regardless of race, religion, nationality or gender. For more information go to www.nationalactionnetwork.net.

The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (NCBCP), founded in 1976, is one of the most active civil rights and social justice organizations in the nation “dedicated to increasing civic engagement, economic and voter empowerment in Black America.” The Black Women’s Roundtable (BWR) is the women and girls empowerment arm of the NCBCP. At the forefront of championing just and equitable public policy on behalf of Black women, BWR promotes their health and wellness, economic security & prosperity, education and global empowerment as key elements for success. Visit www.ncbcp.org and follow us on Twitter @ncbcp and Instagram @thenationalcoalition.

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights is a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 220 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States. The Leadership Conference works toward an America as good as its ideals. For more information on The Leadership Conference and its member organizations, visit www.civilrights.org.

Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation’s largest and foremost grassroots civil rights organization. The mission of the NAACP is to secure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons. Members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights and social justice in their communities. You can read more about the NAACP’s work by visiting www.naacp.org.

The Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, was formed in 1963 at the request of President John F. Kennedy to involve the private bar in providing legal services to address racial discrimination. Now in its 57th year, the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law is continuing its quest to “Move America Toward Justice.” The principal mission of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law is to secure, through the rule of law, equal justice for all, particularly in the areas of criminal justice, fair housing and community development, economic justice, educational opportunities.