



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEDIA CONTACT

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Virginia NAACP Obtains Records Regarding Attorney General's "Election Integrity Unit" Statement of President Robert N. Barnette, Jr.

RICHMOND, VA – The Virginia State Conference of the NAACP is on record with its concerns about the "Election Integrity Unit" created by Attorney General Jason Miyares. Since its conception, very little has been publicly disclosed about the operations and functions of this unit or why in fact the Attorney General believes the unit was necessary. Attorney General Miyares stated that the unit will "work with law enforcement to ensure legality and purity in elections." But the Attorney General has offered little else about the development and scope of work for the Election Integrity Unit.

The Virginia State Conference of the NAACP submitted Freedom of Information Act requesting the public records related to this Unit and any evidence of voter fraud or "election cheating" it was created to combat. The Attorney General required the Virginia NAACP to pay a deposit of nearly \$20,000 to obtain these public records. We paid the \$2,000, however, we went on record questioning the seemingly exorbitant fees being levied on the NAACP as well as the projection of required worker hours to meet the our request.

Attorney General Jason Miyares did not provide the volumes of information that his heavy fee and projection of work hours suggested. And we were deeply disappointed in the scant amount of information related to a unit that the Attorney General touted as essential. A review of the documents revealed the following:

- The OAG has *no records* regarding the staffing of the Unit or the personnel are that are assigned to it;
 - The OAG has *no records* regarding the supervision of and within the Unit;
 - The OAG has *no records* regarding the reporting structure of the Unit;
 - The OAG has *no records* regarding the approval process for any investigation or activity conducted by the Unit;
 - The OAG has *no records* regarding guidelines, procedures, policies, practices, manuals, training materials, performance standards, or other records governing the Unit's operations; and
 - The OAG has *no records* regarding the statutes the Unit is tasked with enforcing.
- As to records identifying the number of convictions for crimes constituting voter fraud or "election cheating" in Virginia in each year since 2008, the OAG has none. *None.*

Two things are clear from these records, or the lack thereof. First, this "Election Integrity Unit" lacks both staff and substance. Second, there is no significant issue with voter fraud or "election cheating" in Virginia that warrants any special unit.

This Unit is plainly a paper tiger—a public-relations ploy to pander to the election deniers and conspiracy theorists who are the real force undermining public confidence in our elections.

Against the backdrop of the Commonwealth’s deplorable history of state and local officials using the power of their offices to disenfranchise Black Virginians, the Attorney General should not be using the authority of his office to lend legitimacy to the false claims of those who would seek to make it harder for Virginians, and particularly Virginians of color, to cast their legitimate ballots. Instead of helping spread the “Big Lie,” the Attorney General should be focused on reducing voter suppression, ending voter intimidation, increasing voter registration, and increasing voter participation.

We agree with the Attorney General that it should be easy to vote and hard to cheat in Virginia. This Unit doesn’t make it easier for anyone to vote, and there is no evidence of any significant election cheating in Virginia. So the Virginia NAACP again calls on Attorney General Jason Miyares to disband this so-called “Election Integrity Unit.”

We further note that, after having demanded a deposit of close to \$20,000 from the Virginia NAACP before producing these public records, the OAG has now billed the NAACP \$9,515.07 for more than two hundred hours of staff time spent “accessing, duplicating, supplying, and/or searching for the requested records.” This is a questionable amount of time and money given the complete lack of records regarding any actual staffing or operation of the Unit and the complete lack of records regarding any actual instances of voter fraud or election cheating. Indeed, as to 11 of the Virginia NAACP’s 17 records requests, the OAG’s response was: “This Office does not possess records ...” It appears that the OAG is trying to use these fees to dissuade the Virginia NAACP and others from shining a light on the lack of any actual operations or justification for this Unit.

The Virginia NAACP will not be dissuaded. We will not back down. We will hold the Attorney General accountable and continue to shine a light on this Election Integrity Unit.

We ask all Virginians to join and support us in our fight for transparency and free and fair elections.

To access the recording of the press conference <https://naacpva.us/VirginiaNAACPressConference11292022>

To access the documents <https://naacpva.us/ElectionIntegrityFOIA>

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ABOUT THE VIRGINIA NAACP

Founded in 1935, the Virginia State Conference of NAACP Branches (Virginia NAACP) is the oldest and largest nonpartisan civil rights organization in the Commonwealth, overseeing over 100 NAACP branches, youth councils, and college chapters. The Virginia NAACP is focused on being the preeminent voice of Black Virginians and advocating for policies and programs to benefit Blacks and people of color. You can read more about the Virginia NAACP’s work and our six “Game Changer” issue areas by visiting [NAACPVA.org](https://naacpva.org).