



# National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

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## NAACP LEGAL DEFENSE FUND SUCCEEDS IN DEFENDING RIGHTS OF 6,000 AFRICAN-AMERICAN APPLICANTS FOR CHICAGO FIREFIGHTER JOBS. THE SUPREME COURT UNANIMOUSLY REJECTS CHICAGO'S ATTEMPT TO AVOID ACCOUNTABILITY FOR HIRING DISCRIMINATION

(New York, NY) – After years fighting for justice, qualified African-American job applicants will finally have a fair opportunity to land a job with the Chicago fire department. Today the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the City of Chicago can be held accountable for each and every time it used a hiring practice that arbitrarily blocked qualified minority applicants from employment.

“Today, the Supreme Court affirmed that job-seekers should not be denied justice based on a technicality,” said John Payton, President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., (LDF) who argued the case before the Court this past February. “This victory goes well beyond the immediate results in Chicago. It should ensure that no other fire department or employer uses a discriminatory test, and LDF will go the extra mile to make sure that they do not.”



The only issue in the case, *Lewis v. the City of Chicago*, was whether or not the plaintiffs filed their claims of discrimination within the time frame required by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 – the nation’s core equal employment law. Between 1996 and 2002, the City of Chicago hired more than 1,000 firefighters using the results of a test in a manner that unjustifiably excluded qualified African-American applicants. Although the City knew this from the outset, it used the test results for the next six years to hire eleven disproportionately white firefighter classes. After a federal district court found that the City’s hiring practice was discriminatory and violated Title VII, the City did not appeal. Instead, the City tried to escape liability for its illegal hiring practice by arguing that the plaintiffs’ claims were barred because they did not file their claims within 300 days after the City first announced its hiring plan. Vindicating LDF’s arguments, the Court held that the City discriminated each and every time it hired firefighters and, therefore, the plaintiffs’ claims were timely.

“I am happy to know that the thousands of qualified firefighters who were denied a fair shot at a job with our department will finally have an opportunity to join our ranks in service to the people of Chicago,” said Greg Boggs, President of the African American Firefighters & Paramedics League of Chicago.



LDF represents the Lewis plaintiffs with co-counsel from the Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law; Miner, Barnhill & Galland, P.C.; Hughes, Socol, Piers, Resnick & Dym Ltd.; the Law Office of Patrick O. Patterson, S.C.; Robinson, Curley & Clayton, P.C.; and solo practitioner Bridget Arimond.

[Read the Supreme Court’s decision. \(PDF\)](#)