



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **NALEO Educational Fund Statement on U.S. Supreme Court Decision in *Merrill v. Milligan***

*5–4 ruling upholds voters’ constitutional right to elect  
representatives of their choice without racial discrimination*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund released the following statement from CEO Arturo Vargas following the Supreme Court’s decision today in *Merrill v. Milligan*:

“Today’s U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Merrill v. Milligan* helps preserve the strength of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) that protects voters of color from discrimination while exercising their right to vote. By safeguarding voters against discriminatory redistricting, the case helps ensure that under-represented communities have fair opportunities to elect responsive and accountable leaders.

“Efforts to dilute the voices of voters of color are antithetical to who we are as a nation — and with this ruling, were affirmed to be a violation of the law. Racial gerrymandering is one of the most un-democratic practices that continues to take place in our country. Candidates and parties should do the work to engage all voters and win their support with ideas and sustained relationships. Any attempt to subvert the law and dilute the power of these voters — like racial gerrymandering — is a cheap and illegal way of amassing power.

“We are glad that Chief Justice John Roberts acknowledged the realities of racial discrimination in the redistricting process, and we are encouraged by the precedent the Court has set when viewing these cases. As this decision is a major victory for Black voters in Alabama, it also has major implications for other segments of the electorate who are protected by the VRA, including the Latino community. It comes at a time when there has been an escalation of efforts throughout the nation to attack Latino voting rights and deprive our community of fair opportunities to make our voices heard in the electoral process.

“Since Congress passed the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed it, it has served as a firewall against attempts to diminish voting rights and political power for millions of under-represented voters. The VRA has been under attack for years, and in 2013, the Supreme Court significantly weakened one of its key provisions. However, Latinos, Blacks, and other groups have benefited from its protections, which should be preserved and restored to their full strength. In this case, the Supreme Court’s decision is a fortification of the intent of those protections.

“Despite this victory, much work remains to be done to ensure every American’s vote counts fairly. This decision is a clear reminder that we are long overdue for Congress to modernize the VRA and ensure that our democracy can thrive by realizing the full protections it should confer for participation in the political process.”

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**About NALEO Educational Fund**

*NALEO Educational Fund is the nation’s leading non-partisan, non-profit organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.*