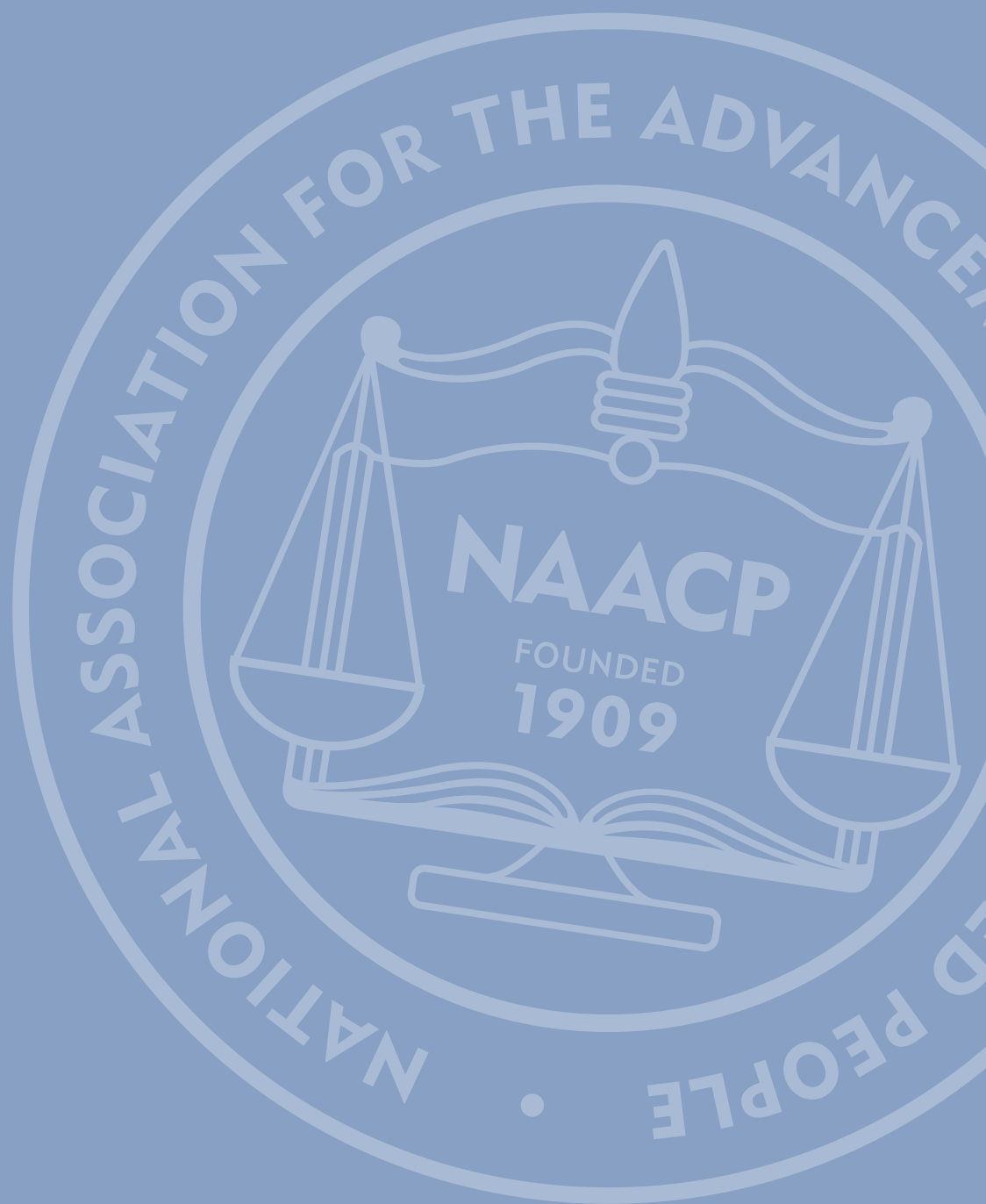


NAACP



THE CASE FOR A NATIONAL ADVISOR TO THE PRESIDENT ON RACIAL JUSTICE, EQUITY AND ADVANCEMENT

Our nation is undergoing a racial justice crisis unparalleled in the modern era. Three powerful forces have elevated the necessity of eliminating systemic inequity to the highest level: a pandemic that has hit communities of color the hardest, an escalation of police violence against Black people, and a presidency rooted in white supremacy and bigotry. How the incoming administration responds will determine whether Black and Brown people move forward in our journey toward achieving full equality, whether we simply tread water for the next decades, or whether we slide backward toward our former status as second-class citizens. At this critical time, we cannot afford a siloed or piecemeal approach to racial justice. To fully address the significance and impact of this national crisis, we must look beyond traditional governmental structures and tools to fulfill this mandate. This requires designating a leader to exclusively focus on racial justice at the highest level of government.

The NAACP calls on the Biden administration to create a new position—National Advisor on Racial Justice, Equity and Advancement. Modeled after the Climate Envoy for National Security, the National Advisor on Racial Justice, Equity and Advancement would be charged with centralizing bold, visionary thinking and strategy on racial justice within the White House and fostering the development of holistic measures throughout government to tackle the pervasive problem of systemic racism as never before. The Advisor would report directly to President Biden with an office fully resourced and staffed to accomplish its mission.

The United States faces four existential crises: a global pandemic, a resulting economic downturn, climate change, and an urgent need to address racism and the legacy of white supremacy. The Biden-Harris Transition has provided clear leadership and action plans to address three of these issues. Achieving racial justice will be perhaps the most vexing of these challenges because it necessarily means addressing historical truths and present-day disparities that call out for bold action. It will not be sufficient to rely on federal agencies to tackle these issues on their own. Frankly, as the future of our nation depends upon solutions to COVID-19, the economic and climate, so it does with respect to racial justice and healing the “soul of our nation.”

We affirm President-Elect Biden’s belief that, “we cannot build back better without a major mobilization of effort and resources to address these challenges and to advance racial equity across the American economy.” Building back better in this context will require a herculean effort by the Biden administration to set a new standard for using the full measure of the federal government to achieve racial justice, including ensuring Constitutionally guaranteed civil rights protections, leveling the playing field of economic opportunity, and engaging each federal agency in doing its part to end discrimination and injustice.

The strong and early commitment by the Biden administration to elevating racial justice as a top priority has sent a powerful message about its importance and centrality within this administration. As the nation calls for an end to structural disparities, the federal government has a duty to examine its own house to determine how it still perpetuates and fosters institutional racism. We can no longer afford to address systemic inequity through the exclusive province of the civil rights offices of each agency. Our structural inequality goes much deeper than that, and now is the time for bold solutions. The National Advisor on Racial Justice, Equity and Advancement will lead this charge. The Advisor will possess the stature, gravitas, and visibility to signify the prominence of the post, the bold thinking it will produce, and the structural change that will be undertaken by this administration to fully utilize the power of the federal government to transform our nation into a more just, equal society in which all Americans can succeed and thrive.