**Sacramento: Urban League’s Legislative Advocacy Day Highlights Justice Reform Bill**

Antonio Ray Harvey | California Black Media

On March 13, advocates for criminal justice reform rallied at the California State Capitol to urge lawmakers to enact the SMART Act, legislation aimed at eliminating incidents of racial profiling.

The acronym in the name of the SMART Act, authored by Sen. Steve Bradford (D-Inglewood), stands for “Stopping Malevolent Altercations Regarding Traffic Stops.”

The rally was a part of the Urban League’s [**21 Pillars Legislative Advocacy Day**](https://nul.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/21%20Pillars%20Toolkit%20v3.pdf) organized to demand justice reforms related to race, law enforcement and public safety.

National Urban League members and officers attended the day of activities at the State Capitol, including Jerika Richardson, National Urban League Senior Vice President for Equitable Justice and Strategic Initiatives.

“We need to change divisive policing policies. These low-level traffic stops can result in deadly consequences for Black and Brown people in our communities,” said Richardson, who was one of the rally’s speakers.

“They’re disproportionately harming us,” Richardson added. “We also want to focus on prevention and SB 50 does that.”

The event at the State Capitol followed a Los Angeles Urban League Young Professionals networking reception held at the Embassy Suites by Hilton hotel near the Capitol on March 12.

In addition to the political activities, Caliph Assagai, Esq., California Policy Solutions Chief Strategist, and Jamal Burns, National Urban League Equitable Justice Legal Fellow and Weil Legal Innovator, led an advocacy training workshop.

The rally was organized by members from multiple Urban League affiliates across the state. Other notable attendees included Cynthia Mitchell-Heard of the Los Angeles Urban League, Dwayne Crenshaw of the Greater Sacramento Urban League, Al Abdallah of the Urban League of San Diego County, and Ken Maxey of the Urban League of the Greater San Francisco Bay Area.

California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC)Vice Chair Sen. Steven Bradford (D-Inglewood) also attended the rally. He is the author of the SMART Act.

SB 50 would limit law enforcement’s ability to use minor, non-safety-related traffic infractions to conduct racially biased, pretextual stops. The bill provides technical clarification to ensure that cities and counties in California have sufficient flexibility to explore non-law enforcement approaches to traffic safety.

“We hope our colleagues in the Assembly understand the importance of moving forward with this legislation,” said Bradford. “Cities like San Francisco have already implemented these policies or reduced the numbers of interactions with law enforcement. Again, it’s going to make us safer and free up our law enforcement to do the real work of going after criminals.”

Founded in 1910 and headquartered in New York City, the [National Urban League](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nul.org_mission-2Dand-2Dhistory&d=DwMFaQ&c=euGZstcaTDllvimEN8b7jXrwqOf-v5A_CdpgnVfiiMM&r=C0bOnd207F99SFw-0e0P-_0YoovOIF4XJSA414HHrZ8&m=k1W7QBp44ipQECQCx6JvqVUtlGUX1HCtMzNPFO-YpmY5e6lGOevKCMINsgYtkn8N&s=yd3v4rzZqU6ms5HDEOMDHUh7z3lVNeotlgMY6ojZ8qk&e=)is a historic civil rights organization dedicated to economic empowerment, equality, and social justice. It collaborates with national and local community leaders, policymakers, and corporate partners to improve the conditions of Black people.

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), led by California State Director Jacob Sandoval and California State Capitol Liaison Maria Gutierrez, also support the bill.

Ignacio Hernandez, from the [**Center for Policing Equity**](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__policingequity.org_about_who-2Dwe-2Dare&d=DwMFaQ&c=euGZstcaTDllvimEN8b7jXrwqOf-v5A_CdpgnVfiiMM&r=C0bOnd207F99SFw-0e0P-_0YoovOIF4XJSA414HHrZ8&m=k1W7QBp44ipQECQCx6JvqVUtlGUX1HCtMzNPFO-YpmY5e6lGOevKCMINsgYtkn8N&s=DiBzfU3XtTX9em6IFPsqFq37tkjACATr69azTCuk8NM&e=)**(CPE),** told the crowd at the State Capitol that SB 50 is more than a law that would protect citizens’ rights. CPE collects and analyzes data on behaviors within public safety systems and uses the information data to help communities achieve safer policing results.

“This is a life and death issue,” said Hernandez. “This is not just about changing the law. It’s about saving lives.”

The California Racial and Identity Profiling Advisory Board (Board) [**released a study**](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__oag.ca.gov_news_press-2Dreleases_california-2Dracial-2Dand-2Didentity-2Dprofiling-2Dadvisory-2Dboard-2Dreleases-2Dreport-2D2022&d=DwMFaQ&c=euGZstcaTDllvimEN8b7jXrwqOf-v5A_CdpgnVfiiMM&r=C0bOnd207F99SFw-0e0P-_0YoovOIF4XJSA414HHrZ8&m=k1W7QBp44ipQECQCx6JvqVUtlGUX1HCtMzNPFO-YpmY5e6lGOevKCMINsgYtkn8N&s=ZTTt0TWQmeiOKS_kmbYyg4aPOGNn31ZOVlbPVhiGO3Q&e=) on Jan. 2 revealing that a total of 4,575,725 stops were conducted by 560 agencies from Jan. 1, 2022, to Dec. 31, 2022.

The study identified disparities between the number of stops and the proportion per ethnic groups. Black individuals were stopped 131.5 % more frequently “than expected.” Black individuals were also searched at a rate 1.66 times the rate of White individuals.

“Routine traffic stops can be frustrating for most Americans, but for Black and Brown communities, it can be a matter of life and death,” Urban League Nation President and CEO March Morial [**said in a March 15 statement**](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nul.org_news_smart-2Dact&d=DwMFaQ&c=euGZstcaTDllvimEN8b7jXrwqOf-v5A_CdpgnVfiiMM&r=C0bOnd207F99SFw-0e0P-_0YoovOIF4XJSA414HHrZ8&m=k1W7QBp44ipQECQCx6JvqVUtlGUX1HCtMzNPFO-YpmY5e6lGOevKCMINsgYtkn8N&s=7yXNf0jOP8oRfJZZck_GNLg1cNG-9b_CAUCTc6eOiHs&e=)**.** Morial noted information provided by the report that Black drivers are about 20% more likely to be stopped and 1.5 to 2 times more likely to be searched than White drivers.

“The discrepancy of stops drops by up to 10% at night when it’s more difficult for officers to determine a driver’s race, suggesting that law enforcement is using race as a motivating factor,” Morial stated.

In 2021, the National Urban League issued 21 Pillars for Redefining Public Safety and Restoring Community Trust, a framework for advocacy that redefines public safety and restores community trust – paving a way beyond the status quo.

Each of the 21 Pillars centers on five key goals: Collaboration between law enforcement and communities to build a restorative system, Accountability, Changing divisive policing policies, Transparency, reporting, and data collection; and Improved hiring standards and training.

“This is why the National Urban League established this Equitable Justice and Strategic Initiatives division post these traffic deaths,” Richardson said. “It’s why we created our 21 pillars for redefining public safety and restoring community trust.”