



League of United Latin American Citizens

August 26, 2024

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(v. 29)

The Honorable Kristen Clarke
Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Re: Latino Voter Intimidation Efforts in the State of Texas – Request for Department of Justice Investigation of the Actions of Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton

Assistant Attorney General Clarke,

I am writing on behalf of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the nation's oldest and largest Latino civil rights organization. Founded in 1929, LULAC has long championed the rights of Latinos across the United States, advocating for equality, justice, and full participation in the democratic process. With 535 councils and 264,000 members nationwide, our mission has always been to ensure that Latino voices are heard and respected.

I am reaching out to express our deep concern regarding the recent actions of Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, which we believe constitute a serious violation of the civil rights of Latino citizens in Texas. These actions echo a troubling history of voter suppression and intimidation that has long targeted both Black and Latino communities, particularly in states like Texas, where demographic changes have increasingly shifted the political landscape.

The Case of Lydia Martinez

On August 20, 2024, Lydia Martinez, an 87-year-old grandmother, great-grandmother, and a dedicated LULAC member of 35 years, was subjected to a distressing raid on her home. At 6:00 AM, Lydia was awoken by 7-8 armed officers executing a search warrant authorized by Attorney General Ken Paxton. Despite Lydia's full cooperation, she was interrogated for over three hours, during which her home was thoroughly searched, her personal belongings were seized, and she was subjected to humiliating treatment, including being forced to stand outside her home in her nightgown, in full view of her neighbors.

Lydia's devices, personal calendar, and voter registration materials were confiscated, and she was coerced into providing her passwords under the threat of delayed return of her property. This unwarranted intrusion has left Lydia and her family deeply traumatized, with her family now urging her to cease her civic engagement work out of fear for her safety.

Historical Context of Voter Suppression

The Latino community has a long history of facing voter suppression, a legacy that dates back to the early 20th century. In Texas, tactics such as literacy tests, poll taxes, and outright intimidation were used to disenfranchise Latino voters. The infamous "white primary" system excluded Latino and Black citizens from participating in primary elections, which were effectively the only meaningful elections in the one-party South. Despite being U.S. citizens, many Latinos were systematically denied the right to vote through these discriminatory practices.

In more recent history, efforts to suppress the Latino vote have evolved but remain pervasive. Voter ID laws, purging of voter rolls, and aggressive gerrymandering have disproportionately affected Latino communities. These modern tactics are often justified under the guise of preventing voter fraud, yet they



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primarily serve to disenfranchise Latino voters, particularly in states like Texas, where Latinos now comprise 39.78% of the population.

This history of voter suppression is not unique to Latinos; it intersects with the experiences of African Americans, who have faced similar and often more violent forms of disenfranchisement. From Jim Crow laws to the violent suppression of the Civil Rights Movement, Black voters have long been targeted by those seeking to maintain political power through racial exclusion. The experiences of Black and Latino voters in the United States are deeply intertwined, with both communities historically subjected to efforts to silence their voices and deny them their rights.

Intersection of Voter Intimidation

The targeting of Lydia Martinez is part of a broader pattern of voter intimidation that affects both Latino and Black communities. Attorney General Paxton's actions are not isolated incidents but are part of a concerted effort to suppress the growing political power of minority communities in Texas. These actions are reminiscent of past attempts to intimidate and disenfranchise voters through fear and coercion. The fact that Lydia Martinez, a law-abiding citizen and respected community leader, was treated as a criminal for her voter registration efforts is a clear indicator that these tactics are designed to create a chilling effect on civic participation.

Attorney General Paxton has a documented history of targeting Latino organizations, as evidenced by his recent actions against Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley and Annunciation House. These actions appear to be motivated not by legitimate legal concerns but by a desire to suppress the Latino vote, which is becoming increasingly influential in Texas and across the nation.

Request for Investigation

In light of these disturbing events, we urgently request that the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice initiate a thorough investigation into Attorney General Paxton's actions. We believe that his conduct constitutes a direct attempt to suppress the Latino vote through intimidation and harassment, in violation of the Voting Rights Act and other federal civil rights laws.

The right to vote is fundamental to our democracy, and LULAC stands firm in its commitment to defending that right for all Americans, regardless of race or ethnicity. We respectfully urge the Department of Justice to take immediate action to protect the civil rights of Latino voters in Texas and to hold accountable those who seek to undermine our democratic process.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We look forward to your response and are available to provide any additional information or support needed for this investigation.

Sincerely,


Roman Palomares
National President


Juan Proaño
CEO

cc: Ms. Gloria Leal LULAC General Counsel