

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 6, 2024

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Kristen Clarke
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland and Assistant Attorney General Clarke:

We write to you with urgent concerns over recent actions undertaken at the direction of Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton to raid the homes of activists, volunteers, and political operatives in South Texas and the San Antonio area and Texas Governor Greg Abbott's efforts to remove thousands of individuals from voter rolls with little transparency. We are concerned that these actions are intended to intimidate American citizens, in particular Latinos and members of minority communities, from exercising their right to vote through political persecution or deny them that right altogether. We request that the Department investigate these actions, including for violations of the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act, and take any necessary action to prevent further interference with the rights of voters in the state of Texas.

Under the guise of conducting an election integrity investigation, AG Paxton recently authorized raids at the homes of primarily Latino activists, volunteers, and political operatives in South Texas and the San Antonio area. The raids were conducted by the Election Integrity Unit within the Texas AG's office, which AG Paxton created following the 2020 Presidential election amidst false claims of voter fraud from the losing candidate¹. Agents were reportedly instructed to seize all election-related material and confiscate devices including computers, tablets, and cell phones².

While states' Attorneys General have the right to investigate unlawful behavior and those suspected of it within their states, AG Paxton's targeting of Latino activists, volunteers, and operatives raises concerns about potential ulterior motives behind these actions, particularly in a state like Texas, where state legislators and leaders like Governor Greg Abbott and AG Paxton have worked to actively undermine minority voices at the ballot box. In 2022, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals ruled that AG Paxton does not have the authority to unilaterally prosecute election cases and must first receive permission from local county prosecutors to pursue cases such as voter fraud.³

¹ [Latino Civil Rights Group Demands Inquiry Into Texas Voter Fraud Raids - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/06/us/politics/latino-civil-rights-group-demands-inquiry-into-texas-voter-fraud-raids)

² [Latino voting rights group calls for investigation after Texas authorities search homes | AP News](https://www.apnews.com/story/latino-voting-rights-group-calls-for-investigation-after-texas-authorities-search-homes/2024/09/06)

³ [Texas court confirms the AG can't unilaterally prosecute election cases | The Texas Tribune](https://www.texastribune.org/2022/09/22/criminal-appeals-court-rules-against-ag-paxton/)

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Furthermore, AG Paxton has a well-established pattern of using the power of the Attorney General’s office to target companies, organizations, and communities that do not align with his personal or political views⁴. Earlier this year, AG Paxton attempted to shut down Annunciation House, a decades-old nonprofit in El Paso, by falsely accusing the Director and staff of operating a stash house; in Houston, AG Paxton attempted to shut down local immigrant rights group Immigrant Families and Students in the Fight (FIEL) for allegedly violating nonprofit rules⁵. Given the Attorney General’s history of misusing his power, we believe it is imperative that the Department investigate these raids as potential civil rights violations and potential interference with Latinos’ right to vote fairly and freely.

At the same time as these concerning actions by AG Paxton, Governor Abbott has pursued the removal of thousands of individuals from voter rolls in Texas, including over 6,500 purported “noncitizens.” There is little to no transparency in how Governor Abbott has assessed these individuals to be “potential noncitizens,” and we fear these decisions may be made on the basis of those individuals’ perceived race or ethnicity and may deny American citizens their right to vote.

Sincerely,



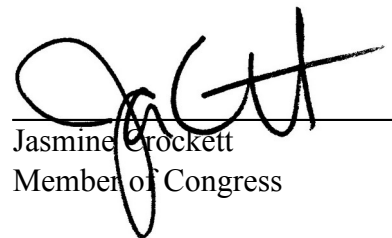
Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



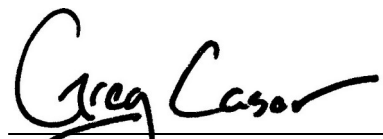
Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress

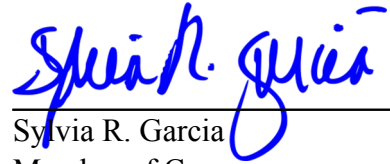
⁴ [Ken Paxton Has Used Consumer Protection Law to Target These Organizations — ProPublica](#)

⁵ [Texas judge rejects lawsuit to close Houston immigrant group | The Texas Tribune](#)

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