

SHEILA JACKSON LEE
18TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2160 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-3816

DISTRICT OFFICE:
1919 SMITH STREET, SUITE 1180
THE GEORGE "MICKEY" LELAND FEDERAL BUILDING
HOUSTON, TX 77002
(713) 655-0050

ACRES HOME OFFICE:
6719 WEST MONTGOMERY, SUITE 204
HOUSTON, TX 77019
(713) 691-4882

HEIGHTS OFFICE:
420 WEST 19TH STREET
HOUSTON, TX 77008
(713) 861-4070

FIFTH WARD OFFICE:
4300 LYONS AVENUE, SUITE 200
HOUSTON, TX 77020
(713) 227-7740

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

October 28, 2010

The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr.
United States Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
Robert F. Kennedy Building
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

RE: Voter intimidation in Houston, Texas and request for DOJ poll monitors to be sent

Dear Attorney General Holder:

First and foremost, thank you for your dedicated service to safeguarding the Constitution and commitment to upholding citizens' right to vote freely.

I write to bring to your attention several disturbing instances of voter intimidation that have taken place in Houston, Texas, and in the 18th Congressional district which I represent. This week alone, there have been at least fifteen reports of abuse of voter rights throughout the city of Houston. As a senior Member of the House Judiciary Committee, I urge you to order an immediate investigation into these incidents, and call for the Department of Justice to send poll monitors to Harris County immediately to ensure a safe and neutral voting environment during the November 2 election.

Although there are usually a few isolated occurrences of voter intimidation during the election season, the incidents that took place at polling stations earlier this week appeared to be both organized and systematic. Poll watchers have been reportedly over-stepping the boundaries between observing and interacting in the democratic process by hovering directly behind voters as they entered their votes. The group thought to be behind these acts is known as the King Street Patriots, reportedly tied to some Tea Party activists. The King Street Patriots have deployed poll watchers around the city as they implement their "True the Vote" campaign.

Many of these incidents of voter intimidation have been occurring in predominately minority neighborhoods and have been directed at African-Americans and Latinos. It is unconscionable to think that anyone would deliberately employ the use of such forceful and intimidating tactics in 2010 to undermine the fundamental, Constitutional right to vote. However, such conduct has regrettably occurred in Houston, and I urge you to take appropriate action to ensure that it does not recur.

As the Nation's chief law enforcement officer, I know you are as concerned as I am about this troubling situation. I know you will give this matter your immediate attention and ensure that action is taken promptly to prevent any further abuses of voter rights. I eagerly await your response.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Sheila Jackson Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sheila" being the most prominent.

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress
Member, House Committee on the Judiciary