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October 14, 2004

JOHN CONYERS, JR., Michigan
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The Honorable John Ashcroft
Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Ashcroft:

We are extremely disturbed by the reports of recent events that have taken place in Nevada, Oregon, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania regarding voting registrations. We are concerned that these actions are part of an orchestrated plan to deny citizens, registered as members of non-Republican parties, their right to vote. It both shocks and saddens us that four decades after the adoption of the Voting Rights Act, these patterns of discrimination and voter suppression continue. This behavior is intolerable in the 21st Century. We request that you immediately investigate these serious charges, take all steps necessary to ensure that these activities cease, that any individual whose right to vote has been in any way compromised by these unlawful activities is restored, and that the Department of Justice takes any and all actions necessary to prevent any further such abuses. We also urge you to pursue criminal and civil actions against the perpetrators where appropriate.

It has been reported that the Voters Outreach of America, a Republican National Committee-funded organization, has collected hundreds of completed voter registration forms per day in Las Vegas, Nevada, and destroyed any forms completed by citizens who opted to register as Democrats. It has also been reported that some out-of-state groups have submitted fraudulent voter registration forms and have refused to register anyone other than Republicans. This interference with the voter registration process is a clear violation of federal law, and a threat to the constitutional right to vote which remains the core of our democratic system of government.

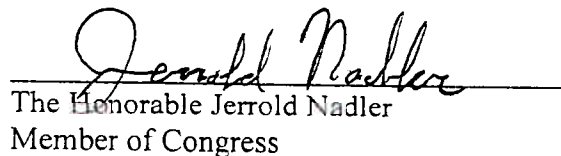
The Honorable John Ashcroft
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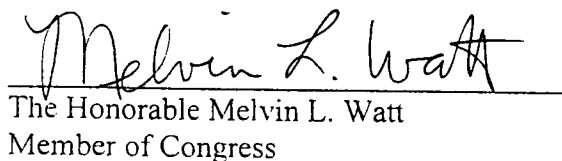
Section 245 of Title 18, makes it a crime for any person who "by force or threat of force willfully injures, intimidates or interferes with, or attempts to injure, intimidate or interfere with any person because he is or has been, or in order to intimidate such person or any other person or any class of persons from voting or qualifying to vote...." Additionally, Section 1974a of Title 42 makes it a crime for any person to willfully steal, destroy, conceal, mutilate, or alter any voting records, including those having to do with voter registration. Finally, a person who knowingly and willfully deprives, defrauds, or attempts to deprive or defraud the residents of a State of a fair and impartially conducted election process, by the procurement or submission of voter registration applications that are known by the person to be materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent is guilty of a crime under Section 1973gg-10 of Title 42. The act of engaging in fraudulent voter registration practices, destroying voter registration forms, or otherwise interfering with the ability of qualified voters to register as prescribed by law are clearly covered by these statutes and demand prompt action by the Department of Justice.

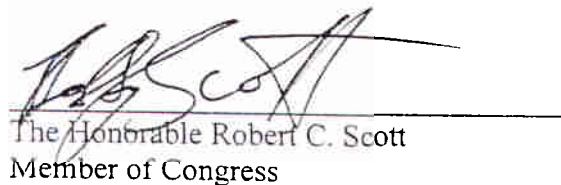
We bring these matters to your attention and ask that the Department of Justice investigate them and act immediately. Given the importance of these issues, and the very short time in which to restore the right to vote to anyone who might have been the victim of these despicable acts, we ask for your response no later than Monday, October 18, 2004. Please reply through Perry Apelbaum of the House Judiciary Committee staff, B351C Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515 (202-225-6906).

Sincerely,


The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress


The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress


The Honorable Melvin L. Watt
Member of Congress


The Honorable Robert C. Scott
Member of Congress