



May 7, 2012

The Honorable Darrell Issa  
Chairman  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Issa:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, we write in response to a May 4, 2012 report in *The Washington Post* that you are preparing a citation of contempt against Attorney General Eric Holder for failing to provide information related to the “Fast and Furious” program. We are deeply troubled by the prospect that the Attorney General will be cited for contempt by your committee, and believe that such action is unwarranted. We urge you to reconsider that decision.

While we believe that a review of the Fast and Furious program is a legitimate exercise of congressional authority, we are concerned that the tenor and approach you are taking does a disservice to Congress, the Attorney General’s office, and the public, and may also be a partisan attempt to discredit the Attorney General. We are concerned that the contempt threat is intended to create a hostile environment aimed at pressuring the Attorney General to resign.

The Attorney General has acknowledged problems and flaws in the Fast and Furious program. According to reports, the Attorney General and the Department of Justice have submitted more than 7000 pages of document to Congress, and the Attorney General has appeared before your committee a reported seven times. The Department has also reportedly made several senior officials available for testimony, interviews, and briefings.

In addition, the Attorney General has ordered the Inspector General to investigate and has provided him with tens of thousands of additional documents—documents that would be inappropriate to turn over to Congress, because they reportedly include law enforcement information, grand jury transcripts, and other information that would compromise ongoing investigations and prosecutions.

To put it simply, the attempt to cite General Holder for contempt seems to be a rush to judgment intended to create a stain on the office of the Attorney General. It is contributing to an environment of accusatory vitriol and malignant suspicion that is both unwarranted and a significant distraction at a time when the Attorney General needs to focus on the nation’s core problems. The harshness of the attacks themselves is misplaced, and to the extent these attacks are intended to divert the Attorney General from the vigorous enforcement of the nation's laws—including

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those protecting civil rights, voting rights, the environment, and other core concerns—we are deeply troubled. This development is particularly disturbing because of the exemplary job the Attorney General has done in enforcing the nation’s civil rights laws.

The constituencies that we represent are eager to see our leaders focus on job creation, the continued reinvigoration of our economy, and the rooting out of waste, fraud and abuse. We urge you to reconsider this course of action. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Senior Counsel Lisa Bornstein at (202) 263-2856 or Policy Associate Sakira Cook at (202) 263-2894.

Sincerely,



Wade Henderson  
President & CEO



Nancy Zirkin  
Executive Vice President



Judith L. Lichtman  
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Cc: The Honorable Elijah Cummings, Ranking Member