

LONE STAR PROJECT

Fighting Back... with Facts



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BREAKING NEWS: Texas AG Abbott Settles Vote Suppression Case *Terms favor Plaintiffs*

Events unfolded in dramatic fashion today in Marshall, TX. As the case was set to go to trial, the Plaintiffs, including the Texas Democratic Party and Democratic activists, were approached by lawyers for the State of Texas offering a settlement agreement. After negotiations, a settlement was reached that included the following terms:

- The Texas Attorney General has agreed to rewrite prosecution guidelines to reflect that voters who merely possess the ballot of another voter with that voter's consent will **not** be investigated or prosecuted unless there's evidence of actual fraud. Prosecutions will be limited to cases exists such as when a person illegally votes a ballot for another person or causes a person to vote for a different candidate than they wish.
- By agreeing to this settlement, the Texas Attorney General has essentially acknowledged that those who have been prosecuted to date for hypertechnical violations of failing to sign a mail ballot envelope did not commit any fraud, as he has falsely claimed for years.
- The Attorney General's filings in the case also revealed that two of the plaintiffs, Gloria Meeks and Rebecca Minneweather, were no longer under investigation, a point the Attorney General had failed to tell these voters.
- The Attorney General also agreed that the Secretary of State would change instructions to voters who vote by mail in 2008. The Secretary of State had already made changes to the ballot envelope and instructions to voters, acknowledging that such changes were made as a result of the lawsuit. The Attorney General and Secretary of State also agreed to consider additional revisions to voter instruction language that make it clear to voters, and those who assist them, the proper procedures for voting by mail. The Plaintiff will also help the Secretary of State's office create training materials and guidelines so those who help their neighbors vote will do so in accordance with the law.
- Plaintiffs agreed to drop all pending claims except for the pending challenge to

the State's restriction on a person's acting as a witness on only one mail ballot application."

Quotes From Lone Star Project Director Matt Angle

- *"Voter suppression and intimidation are tools in the Republican political arsenal. Greg Abbott used them enthusiastically in prosecuting these citizens. Citizens fought back, and by agreeing to change his prosecution policies, Greg Abbott has acknowledged that he was wrong. Like any typical bully, he backed down."*
- *"This is an important victory. Texans can now assist elderly or disabled neighbors participate in elections without fear of improper prosecution."*
- *"By agreeing to this settlement, Greg Abbott is acknowledging that his office was engaging in improper prosecutions. He felt the political heat from citizens willing to fight back."*
- *"It is not surprising that Greg Abbott would attempt to spin this as a victory for his office. But the fact remains that he changed his prosecution policy because he knew that his office was racially selectively prosecuting minority activists and Democrats for hypertechnical violations of the law."*

Background

Abbott's Vote Suppression History

Just a little over a two years ago in May of 2006, the Lone Star Project exposed Greg Abbott's bogus voter fraud investigations. ([Read the report here](#)) Abbott had launched the program with great fanfare promising to " [Stamp Out](#) " the "[epidemic of voter fraud in Texas](#) ." Long before the U.S. Attorneys' scandal broke, exposing the national problem of Republican's using bogus voter fraud prosecution to suppress the vote, the Lone Star Project was investigating the true purpose of Abbott's investigations.

LSP Investigates

While Abbott's bogus anti voter fraud program was being lauded in the San Antonio Express-News and the Texas Attorney General was putting out press release after press release congratulating himself, **the Lone Star Project issued numerous open records requests to the AG and found that virtually all the prosecutions were of minority senior citizens who were doing nothing more than helping their neighbors vote.** Additional research showed that **ALL** those prosecuted were Democrats. This research was confirmed by a Dallas Morning News investigative report this month detailing that:

"26 cases – all against Democrats, and almost all involving blacks or Hispanics... In 18 of the 26 cases, the voters were eligible, votes were properly cast and no vote

was changed – but the people who collected the ballots for mailing were prosecuted." (Dallas Morning News, May 18, 2008)

The LSP takes Action

The LSP took a two-pronged approach to challenge Greg Abbott.

We continued to expose the ridiculous nature of the Abbott investigation, documenting the [racist training materials](#) used by Abbott's office and Abbott's, investigators who admitted [peeping into a elderly woman's bathroom window](#).

The Lone Star Project also supported a legal challenge attacking these provisions - demonstrating the provisions fail to combat voter fraud and serve only to intimidate and suppress voters. The suit was brought by six individual voters, joined by the Texas Democratic Party, who were willing to fight the AG despite the fact that Abbott had nearly unlimited taxpayer funded resources to use against them. The plaintiffs were willing to undergo taped depositions and [verbal attacks from the Solicitor General Ted Cruz](#) to stand up for their right to vote and help their neighbors vote.

Today the Attorney General admitted that the Plaintiffs were right all along.

This is justification for the sacrifices made by brave people like Parthenia McDonald, who passed away while awaiting trial; Gloria Meeks who was literally terrorized in her own home when Greg Abbott's agents spied into her bathroom window when she was in the shower; and Willie Ray, who would have never been prosecuted, much less convicted, had the Attorney General been following the guidelines they agreed to today.

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