

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 17, 2025

The Honorable Harmeet K. Dhillon  
Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Assistant Attorney General Dhillon:

We write out of grave concern for the reported changes to the mission and work of the Civil Rights Division's Voting Section, which appear to redirect the Section's focus towards the extremely rare instances of voter fraud and noncitizen voting. Since its creation by the *Civil Rights Act of 1957*, the Division has been charged with enforcing the civil and criminal provisions of federal laws that protect the civil rights of Americans, including the right to vote.

To start, we are unable to fully understand the Section's work as the Department has repeatedly refused requests for the memorandum you sent to employees of the Civil Rights Division—which was reported by the *Associated Press* in May 2025—highlighting the new mission statement for the Voting Section.<sup>1</sup> This refusal to cooperate with such a simple and specific congressional information request is alarming, and we once again renew our request for basic transparency to review this document and confirm these reports are accurate.<sup>2</sup>

We are particularly concerned about the Voting Section's unprecedented and intrusive request for significant amounts of election data from the state of Colorado.<sup>3</sup> This overly broad and burdensome request appears to have limited justification and raises alarming questions regarding what the Department intends to do with this information, and which states are next to be targeted. This initial request demands a full, public explanation and exacerbates ongoing concerns about the sharing and misuse of voter data by the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency.

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Riccardi, *Justice Department will switch its focus on voting and prioritize Trump's elections order*, memo says, ASSOCIATED PRESS (May 3, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/trump-justice-department-voting-rights-elections-fraud-0717d58a10daa11b3957d277a7ca8e0e>.

<sup>2</sup> E-mail from Rules Cmte. to Off. of Leg. Affs. (Apr. 24, 2025); E-mail from Rules Cmte. to Off. of Leg. Affs. (Apr. 28, 2025); E-mail from Rules Cmte. to Off. of Leg. Affs. (May 15, 2025); E-mail from Rules Cmte. to Off. of Leg. Affs. (May 20, 2025) (E-mails on file with Rules Cmte.).

<sup>3</sup> Miles Parks & Jude Joffe-Block, *Trump's DOJ makes its most sweeping demand for election data yet*, NPR (June 11, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/06/11/nx-s1-5426097/trump-justice-department-voter-data-colorado>.

Public reporting and court filings also indicate that the Voting Section is down to a small number of attorneys and that Maureen Riordan—who previously worked for an anti-voting rights group and has associated with individuals who perpetuated falsehoods around the 2020 election, has been appointed as Acting Chief.<sup>4</sup> This raises questions about whether the Section has abandoned its longstanding mission to conduct meaningful voter protection work and will instead act to perpetuate the myth of widespread voter fraud.<sup>5</sup>

Ms. Riordan’s documented disregard for established legal precedent in the voting rights context is troubling and should disqualify her from leading the Section. For instance, Ms. Riordan recently appeared on election-denier Cleta Mitchell’s podcast and expressed disapproval of the Department’s previous challenges to racial discrimination in the electoral process. Ms. Riordan also joined Ms. Mitchell in spreading false claims of widespread voting by noncitizens and criticizing as negligent states’ voter roll maintenance, among other inflammatory comments.<sup>6</sup>

With the significant changes occurring at the Department, we are paying close attention to the Division’s work and are alarmed at how the Section is now using its limited resources. In addition to the recent action in Colorado, the Voting Section is pursuing alleged infractions about proper semantics of “and/or” language on Arizona’s voter registration form,<sup>7</sup> and the Section is requesting that the U.S. Election Assistance Commission withhold any future election security funding for the Wisconsin Elections Commission based on alleged violations of federal elections laws.<sup>8</sup> The Voting Section is also attempting to pursue a partisan agenda by suing the North Carolina State Board of Elections over the same baseless voter registration claim that was at issue in the Republican challenger’s failed attempt to nullify election results to regain a seat on North Carolina’s Supreme Court.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Yunion Rivas, DOJ’s New Top Voting Lawyer Worked for Leading Anti-Voting Law Firm, Democracy Docket (May 31, 2025), <https://www.democracydocket.com/news-alerts/doj-top-voting-lawyer-worked-for-anti-voting-firm/>.

<sup>5</sup> “Justice Department Files Statement of Interest in Illinois Case Concerning States’ Obligations Under the National Voter Registration Act.” U.S. Dep’t of Justice, Off. of Pub. Affs. (July 8, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-files-statement-interest-illinois-case-concerning-states-obligations>.

<sup>6</sup> WHO’S COUNTING WITH CLETA MITCHELL, *Maureen Riordan: A First-Hand Account of the Left’s Takeover of the DOJ Voting Section* (May 18, 2022), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQkZN30GwDY> (Mitchell: “The Left is collectively crazy...you hear them talk about the Shelby County decision; you would think its reinstituting slavery.” Riordan: “Yes.”).

<sup>7</sup> Mary Jo Pitzl, *Feds want changes to Arizona’s voter registration process. Will Adrian Fontes comply?* USA TODAY (June 6, 2025), <https://ftw.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2025/06/06/feds-want-changes-to-arizona-voter-registration/84059480007/>.

<sup>8</sup> “Justice Department Announces Action Against Wisconsin Elections Commission for Lacking Complaint Procedure Required by Federal Law.” U.S. Dep’t of Justice, Off. of Pub. Affs. (June 4, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/media/1402606/dl?inline>.

<sup>9</sup> “Justice Department Files Help America Vote Act Lawsuit Against North Carolina for Inaccurate Voter Lists.” U.S. Dep’t of Justice, Off. of Pub. Affs. (May 27, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-files-help-america-vote-act-lawsuit-against-north-carolina-inaccurate>.

Recent reporting also indicates the Department is using its limited resources to determine how existing laws could be used against state and local election officials to charge them criminally as they administer elections.<sup>10</sup> This clear attempt to intimidate these hardworking individuals, whose work holds up our democracy will not go unchallenged. The Department must abandon this effort and instead focus on working on actual problems facing election officials, which includes protecting these officials from the ongoing threats and harassment.

As its priorities shift, the Department is also withdrawing from cases that it has been engaged in for years that are meant to protect the right to vote, including dropping its lawsuit challenging Georgia's Senate Bill 202,<sup>11</sup> dropping all its claims in several consolidated cases in Texas around redistricting,<sup>12</sup> and withdrawing its requests to participate in oral arguments before the Supreme Court for consolidated cases involving redistricting in Louisiana.<sup>13</sup> Through these actions, it is clear that the Department has abandoned any work protecting the voting rights of communities of color, despite its core mission to enforce the protections of the *Voting Rights Act*.

Taken together, the Department is clearly pursuing an anti-voter, partisan agenda aligned with 2020 election deniers and conspiracy theorists. We urge you to change course and take a nonpartisan approach to protecting voters' rights that is grounded in facts and the law, not unfounded speculation and conspiracy theories.

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<sup>10</sup> Devlin Barrett and Nick Corasaniti, *Justice Dept. Explores Using Criminal Charges Against Election Officials*, NEW YORK TIMES (July 2, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/02/us/politics/justice-department-election-data.html>.

<sup>11</sup> "Attorney General Pamela Bondi Dismisses Biden-Era Lawsuit Against Commonsense Georgia Election Law, Advancing President Trump's Mandate to End Weaponization." U.S. Dep't of Justice, Off. of Pub. Affs. (Mar. 31, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/attorney-general-pamela-bondi-dismisses-biden-era-lawsuit-against-commonsense-georgia>.

<sup>12</sup> Order Dismissing the United States' Claims. *League of United Latin American Citizens, et al., v. Greg Abbott, et al.*, Case No. 3:21-CV-00259-DCG-JES-JVB (W.D. Tex. Mar. 6, 2025), Docket No. 872, available at <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/25591653-league-of-united-latin-american-citizens-2025-03-06-order-dismissing-the-united-states-claims/>.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Acting Solicitor General Sarah M. Harris to Clerk of the Supreme Court of the United States (Jan. 24, 2025), available at [https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/24/24-109/340108/20250124140523161\\_letter%2024-109%2024-110.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/24/24-109/340108/20250124140523161_letter%2024-109%2024-110.pdf).

We respectfully request specific responses to these concerns and your prompt response in sharing the new mission statement for the Voting Section with Congress without further delay.

Sincerely,



Alex Padilla  
Ranking Member, Committee  
on Rules and Administration



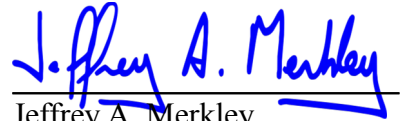
Richard J. Durbin  
Ranking Member, Committee  
on the Judiciary



Peter Welch  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



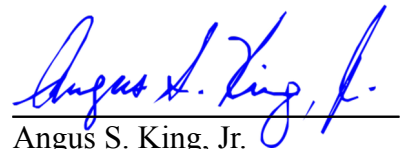
Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator



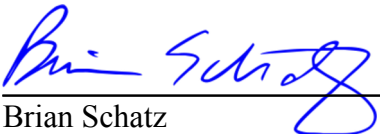
Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff  
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator



Brian Schatz  
United States Senator

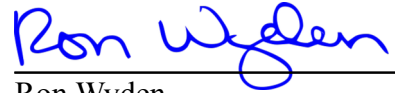


Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



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Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



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Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



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Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



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Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator