



**VOTING RIGHTS  
INSTITUTE**

May 5, 2016

Mr. T. Christian Herren, Jr.  
Chief, Voting Section  
Civil Rights Division  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Room 7524 – NWB  
1800 G St., NW  
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Mr. Herren:

It has come to our attention that minority voters in Edwards County, Texas are allegedly being intimidated by the local sheriff. We call upon the Department of Justice to conduct a federal investigation of this matter to ensure the protection of Latino voting rights. According to a recent article in the Texas Observer (<https://www.texasobserver.org/above-the-law-pamela-elliott-sheriff/>), at a recent meeting of voters at the home of a local community activist and former Rocksprings mayor Rachel Gallegos, Edwards County Sheriff Pamela Elliott arrived with deputies and surrounded the house where the meeting was being held. The meeting, held in 2014, was reportedly an executive committee meeting of the county's Democratic Party executive committee. One Latina eye witness reported that when she dropped her husband off at the meeting, she observed the crowd outside the house which she described as an "angry mob." The article also reports that Elliott said she had a right to attend the meeting being held on private property and held her boot in the door to prevent it from being closed. The voters inside the house were a group of voters who were supporting a candidate that was opposed by one of Elliott's allies. It would appear that Elliott took this action to intimidate voters who were opposing her preferred candidate.

This is not the first time Elliott has engaged in activities that suggest she is engaged in voter intimidation. According to the article, in the 2014 midterm elections, there were sheriff deputies stationed inside at least four polling places. The article notes that the county clerk "called the sheriff's office to tell her to pull her officers out of the polls. It was about 3 p.m. and voting had been underway for hours. Ms. Gallegos, according to the article, believes Sheriff Elliott was attempting to intimidate Hispanic voters in Edwards County, which in the last 15 years has grown from 45 percent Hispanic to 55 percent." The article goes on to note that "Romana Bienek, the city secretary who was working at City Hall...says she took nine phone calls from voters intimidated by the presence of sheriff's deputies at the polls."

The actions of Sheriff Elliott to date strongly suggest that she is engaging in targeted actions to intimidate Latino voters. Because we are deeply concerned that Elliott, who has an opponent in the Fall election, will abuse the power of her office and attempt to intimidate Latino voters, we ask the Department of Justice to conduct a full investigation and take appropriate action.

Sincerely,

J. Gerald Hebert