



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on June 19, 2012

Allen West Blasts DOJ For Meddling in Florida Voter Purge

Responding to an uproar over Florida's contentious plan to purge its voter rolls, Rep. Allen West (R-Fla.) claimed the effort is not an attempt to target minorities, as Democrats and liberal groups are charging. Further, West blasted the federal government for "going after sovereign states," contending that states have the right to enforce such measures in their voting systems, as they are essential to ensuring voter accuracy, and ultimately, representative government as a whole.



Led by Florida Governor Rick Scott, the effort intends to clean the state's voter rolls of non-citizens and other non-eligible voters — including dead people — by examining driver's license databases, which contain vital citizenship information. Asserting that Florida's actions disenfranchise minority groups, particularly among Hispanics, the Justice Department filed a lawsuit against the state.

"We have an obligation to make sure the voter rolls are accurate and we are going to continue forward and do everything that we can legally do to make sure that ineligible voters cannot vote," [said](#) Chris Cate, a spokesman for Florida Secretary of State Ken Detzner. "We are firmly committed to doing the right thing and preventing ineligible voters from being able to cast a ballot. We are not going to give up our efforts to make sure the voter rolls are accurate."

Detzner alleges that his agency has pinpointed 182,000 Floridians who are not citizens by examining driver's license databases and comparing them to the state's voter rolls. In April, Detzner ordered county election officials to contact suspected voters by mail, and those who refused to provide evidence of citizenship would be purged.

"I don't think it is disenfranchisement. I think that African-Americans that are citizens of [the] United States of America can get out and vote. Four years ago we saw them vote in numbers that had never been seen before," West [asserted](#) on Monday. "I think that we should be able to go in and look at our voting systems and making sure they are clean."

Of course, voter advocacy groups aren't buying it. "The Florida Secretary of State is being recalcitrant," charged Judith Browne Dianis, co-director of the The Advancement Project, a Washington-based group that [asked](#) the Justice Department to open up the case. "He wants to move forward despite federal notice of illegality and supervisors of elections' refusal to purge voters. He should just quit it."

Adding to the Justice Department's effort, a coalition of voting-rights advocacy groups — including Project Vote, LatinoJustice, The Advancement Project, and the Fair Elections Legal Network — are filing a lawsuit against Detzner seeking to stonewall the state's effort to purge its voter rolls. The move, the suit [noted](#), to "systematically identify and remove alleged non-citizens from the voter rolls [is] in violation of the National Voter Registration Act."

The coalition says their action is more expansive than the Justice Department's suit and could potentially affect other states' efforts to purge voting lists. "This takes purging to a systematic level that



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is previously unseen,” [said](#) Penda Hair of the Advancement Project.

Meanwhile, Florida officials warned that they will sue the Department of Homeland Security for blocking access to a federal database to assist in the purge. Rep. West said tapping federal immigration data would help officials validate their matches, but that after a year of persistence, the agency refuses to cooperate. He added that the integrity of the voting system is critical to maintaining the democratic process, and that Florida’s effort helps strengthen that integrity.

The Florida congressman also cited voter ID laws, pointing out the “irony” of how customary it is for people to have to provide photo identification. “I found it interesting that the Democratic Convention is requiring people to have a picture ID. So that is a little bit ironic,” he affirmed. “I think that they should ask the Democrat Party, then why are they requiring picture IDs at their convention? Is that disenfranchisement as well? Or if you go to get on an aircraft, I think you have to show a picture ID. And I don’t think any airline is trying to disenfranchise people.”

“I guess [I feel] a little bit dejected because I think that it goes back to what my mother taught me: ‘A man must stand for something, or else he’ll fall for anything,’” West added Monday on Laura Ingraham’s radio show. “And I think the American people are looking for individuals that will stand up on some principal, and not try to punt it away.”

Hoping for a “much more forceful response” from GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney, Rep. West railed against President Obama for overstepping his authority on Friday when the President made a unilateral decision to [halt deportations](#) of young illegal immigrants. “The last time we had this was with King George III, and we didn’t like it too much,” he charged. “I think that you’re seeing the resurrection of an imperial presidency and the arrogance thereof.”

Photo: Rep. Allen West (R-Fla.) speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Washington, Feb. 10, 2012: AP Images



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