

Testimony of Catherine Engelbrecht

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Good morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. Thank you for inviting me to participate in today's hearing. My name is Catherine Engelbrecht. I am the Founder of True the Vote, a national nonprofit initiative to protect voters' rights and promote election integrity.

I'm here today because I was targeted by the government for daring to speak out. I'm here as one of thousands of Americans who have become living examples of a kind of trickle down tyranny that is actively endorsed by the current Administration and rigorously enforced by the Department of Justice. I'm here because this confirmation can bring needed reform to one of the federal government's most powerful agencies.

It is my earnest hope that our next Attorney General will lead with unwavering commitment to fair and equal justice. That they will stand for all Americans, without concern of political beliefs, religious preference or pigment of skin. Find that Attorney General, so that no other citizen will ever have cause to share with you the story that brings me here today.

The Department of Justice has made their presence well known in both my personal and professional life. Over the years it has become clear to me that they don't just want True the Vote shut down, they want me broken.

In 2010, I filed two non-profit applications with the IRS, one for True the Vote, and the other for a community group I had also started, called King Street Patriots.

Since those filings in 2010, my private businesses, my nonprofit organizations, and I personally, have been subjected to more than fifteen instances of audit, inquiry, or investigation by federal agencies, including; the IRS, OSHA, ATF, and the FBI.

All of these inquisitions began only after filing applications for tax exemption. There is no other remarkable event, no other rationale, to explain away how for decades I went unnoticed by the federal government, but now find myself on the receiving end of interagency coordination into and against all facets of my life, both public and private.

I shared that same timeline as part of testimony given in a February 2014 hearing before the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee, but time did not permit then or now to give the full account of the cast of characters and confluence of events that fill a binder with over 800 pages worth of government subterfuge. There is, however, a consistent presence that has been engaged in almost every aspect of my story since it first began and that is - the Department of Justice.

For the House hearing, my attorney prepared testimony, which, among other things, spelled out for the Committee why we believed the Department of Justice 'investigation' was a sham. She filed that testimony on Tuesday, February 4, 2014.

Within hours, she received a phone call from the Department of Justice and, for the first time, was told that DOJ wanted to interview me as part of its investigation into the IRS targeting scandal. That was *nine months* after the investigation purportedly commenced.

Ultimately an arrangement was made to meet with the DOJ's Public Integrity Division, but we were told that the Civil Rights Division would also be attending. This is significant because at the same time they wanted to question me, the Civil Rights Division was filing objections and fighting tooth and nail to prevent True the Vote from intervening in the Texas voter ID litigation.

We learned that lawyers from DOJ's Civil Rights Division had zeroed in on True the Vote, conducting a line of questions about me and my organization in another case – and that the Civil Rights Division had generally demonstrated hostility to True the Vote in various proceedings in 2013-14.

The DOJ told my attorney that they wouldn't let me "dictate" who could be present for my interview – so unless I was willing to waive my rights and objections to the involvement of the Civil Rights Division, they would not interview me at all.

A handful of months later we met the Department of Justice in court again, but this time they were representing the IRS in a lawsuit True the Vote filed against the IRS in 2013. DOJ attorneys assured the Judge that there was no more evidence that could be recovered from any of the IRS employees named in our suit. All the contents from all the hard drives had been totally, completely, and absolutely lost. The solid assurance that there was no more data to be discovered was a factor in our Judge's decision to dismiss our case.

One month later, the Inspector General's investigation turned up an additional 2.5 million emails, of which 30,000 were Lois Lerner's.

What I have learned in my experience with the Department of Justice is that, as it is often said, absolute power corrupts absolutely. For six years the Department of Justice has operated as an increasingly rogue agency, where preservation of personal liberties runs a distant second to preservation of political power. Will new leadership be any different?

It was extremely troubling to hear Mrs. Lynch's comments in a speech made earlier this year, when she said that voter ID laws were passed in the deep South so that "minority voters would be disenfranchised" and further, that she applauded DOJ's lawsuits filed against states having ID programs and promised that "those lawsuits will continue".

Voter ID is widely supported in this country. 70% of Americans believe we should show photo identification in order to vote. It is a common sense safeguard to our electoral process. Should we count on continued resistance from a Department of Justice led by Loretta Lynch?

The most significant threat of voter disenfranchisement facing our country was made possible by Executive Amnesty. Drivers License Offices are being flooded with new requests. As a standard part of the program sign up, non-citizens are offered the opportunity to register to vote. And they are registering in droves. Every fraudulent vote cast by a non-citizen voids the honest vote of an

American citizen. We know Mr. Holder is a proponent of amnesty. Where will Mrs. Lynch stand on the issue?

The Department of Justice's investigation into IRS targeting of pro-liberty organizations is, as I've stated before, quite simply, a sham. Are we to expect any more under the leadership of Mrs. Lynch? We can't expect any less.

Attorney General Eric Holder has created a radical, racist agency that metes out social justice on an as needed basis to promote the advancement of a progressive agenda. Will Mrs. Lynch follow in his footsteps or will she turn in a new direction to protect the interests of the average American citizen?

In a 2009 speech, General Holder called America a nation of cowards. If you remember nothing else from my comments, remember this - I am not a coward, I am not a victim, I am a messenger, and I am here to say we are, right now, at the tipping point. Who will this Committee entrust to protect the rights of all citizens? The wrong choice, and one more season of government stoked civil unrest, could well tip our country back into total apathy or forward into complete chaos.

Please be bold, please choose wisely, America is watching. Thank you Mr. Chairman and Committee Members for allowing me this opportunity.