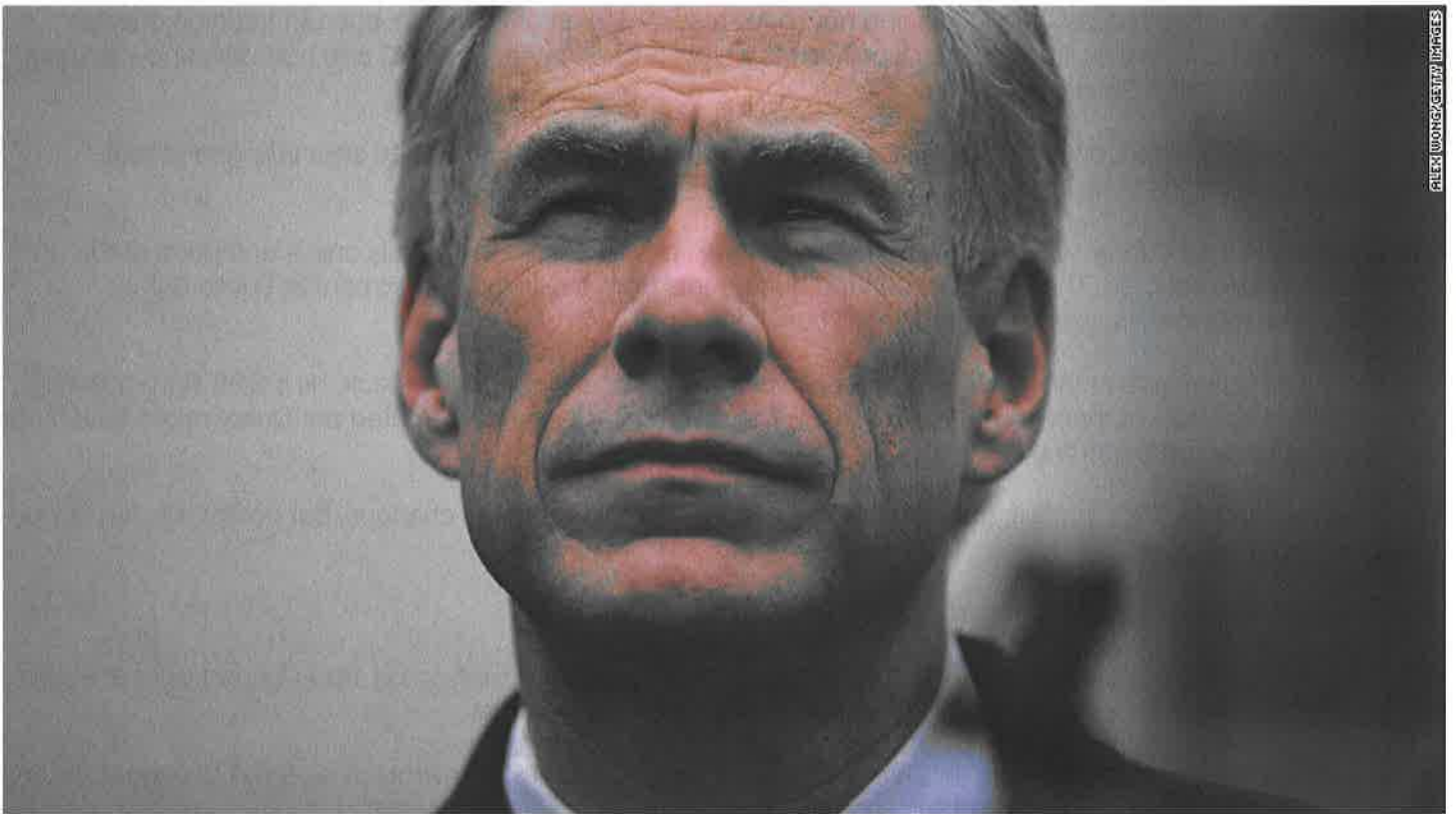


Emails show Texas employees saying governor's office pushed for details on voter purge

By [Kate Sullivan](#) and Dave Alsup, CNN

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(CNN) — Emails between Texas Department of Public Safety employees imply Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's office pushed for details and may have been the driving force behind a [failed GOP-led voter purge effort](#).

The emails were released as a part of a lawsuit against Texas's now-former Secretary of State David Whitley and Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton over their effort to purge nearly 100,000 people suspected of not being US citizens from the state's voter rolls. [The San Antonio Express News](#) first reported the emails.

The state settled the lawsuit in the spring and agreed to end the initiative that a prominent Latino civil rights group said intimidated voters based on a false narrative of voter fraud.

Whitley touted that provision within the settlement, saying in a statement that it would allow his office "to develop a sustainable non-citizen list maintenance process."

In one email dated August 27, 2018, John Crawford, a Texas DPS information technology manager, wrote to another DPS employee that Governor Abbott's office was pushing for the effort to move quickly.

"We delivered this information earlier in the year, and we have an urgent request from the Governor's Office to do it again. Is this a canned process that can be executed easily?" Crawford wrote in the email. "Can we do it today?"

John Wittman, Abbott's spokesperson, denied that the governor's office pushed for the effort.

"This is patently false. Neither the governor, nor the governor's office gave a directive to initiate this process. No one speaks for the governor's office, but the governor's office," Wittman told CNN in a statement.

"Not one of the emails came from anyone in the governor's office," Wittman added. "No one from the governor's office was cc'ed on the emails."

Wittman said the first time the governor met with Steve McCraw, the head of DPS, about the voter data error was March 2019.

Domingo Garcia, president of the national League of United Latin American Citizens has told CNN that the state's effort was an example of the "severe voter suppression efforts" around the country to improve electoral conditions for Republicans at the expense of minority voters.

"It's based on the fact that Republicans have -- at least in Texas -- have stopped trying to reach out and win Hispanic votes via their policies and ideals and now have resorted to an unfortunate, age-old tradition of voter suppression, going from the Jim Crow laws, poll taxes, whites only primaries, voter-ID and now, you know, purging of voters from the rolls," Garcia said.

Whitley, who led the effort, on behalf of Texas has since resigned as secretary of state after failing to attract sufficient support in the state legislature to stay in the role.

The Campaign Legal Center, which was also involved in the lawsuit, posted the emails online and parts of the emails have been redacted. The CLC subpoenaed documents from the Texas Department of Public Safety regarding their role in the citizenship matching process.

In response to Crawford's email, another DPS employee, Vani Madipadga, emailed back, "Is it SOS Non Citizen file ? We provided the data to them on 05/16/18 ... If it is the same data, It can be executed but Query might take more than an hour to run on Reporting DB."

Crawford responded, "Yes, that's it; they want a new one. ... They've requested changes, but not for this run, so we would run what we have."

CNN has reached out to Crawford and Madipadga for comment.

In a separate email, Amanda Arriaga -- the director of the driver license division at the Texas Department of Public Safety, emphasized to other state officials that Abbott wanted the information.

"The Governor is interested in getting this information as soon as possible," she wrote in an email to Gayatri Vasan, a division support manager in the driver's license division.

"Presuming we were able to change the priorities, please let me know how soon that could be."

CNN has reached out to Arriaga and Vasan for comment.

The lawsuit from LULAC with a coalition of civil rights groups came after Whitley and Paxton released statements claiming the now-former secretary of state's office had discovered about 95,000 potential non-US citizens registered to vote in the state. They said roughly 58,000 of those identified had voted in at least one Texas election.

Whitley's office pledged to investigate and refer individuals who were improperly registered to county registrars for further action, but a federal judge in Texas temporarily blocked the effort in February and said there was no evidence of widespread voter fraud.

CORRECTION: This story has been updated to correct the name of the Campaign Legal Center.

CNN's Devan Cole contributed to this report.