

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

August 8, 2025

The Honorable Pamela Bondi
Attorney General
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Kash Patel
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Attorney General Bondi and Director Patel,

We write with great concern about the abuse of federal public safety resources for completely political purposes and without a law enforcement rationale that is reportedly taking place right now. We demand information about the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) involvement in efforts to locate or apprehend members of the Texas House of Representatives who are not accused of any federal crime but have chosen to break quorum during the current legislative session.

Senator John Cornyn has claimed that the FBI is assisting the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) in identifying or locating Democratic state lawmakers who left the state to counter President Trump's aggressive moves to consolidate power by redrawing Congressional district lines in Texas¹ to prevent being investigated by a Democratic majority in the House of Representatives. These reports suggest that the FBI is diverting federal law enforcement away from fighting terrorism, drug trafficking, and other federal crimes to instead harass and target Texans' duly elected representatives, and thus raise urgent questions about the legal basis, scale, and appropriateness of federal law enforcement involvement in a state-level political matter.

As you may be aware, breaking quorum has occurred periodically in the Texas political process for more than a century. Texas lawmakers from both parties have left the state to prevent legislation from moving forward, including during the 1870 "Rump Senate incident," the 1979 "Killer Bees" quorum break, and the more recent 2003 and 2021 quorum breaks over redistricting.²

¹ *Cornyn Says FBI Will Help Locate Absent Texas Democrats, but Scope of Feds' Role Unclear*, Texas Tribune (Aug. 7, 2025) (online at www.texastribune.org/2025/08/07/john-cornyn-fbi-texas-democrats-illinois-quorum-break-redistricting/); *Led by Trump, Republicans Push to Redraw Election Maps in Multiple States*, Washington Post (Aug. 7, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/08/07/trump-republicans-redistricting-texas-indiana/).

² *Denying quorum has been a Texas political strategy since 1870*, Texas Tribune (Aug. 3, 2025) (online at www.texastribune.org/2025/08/03/texas-quorum-breaks-history/).

In 2003, in a case with specific relevance to the current episode, then-U.S. House Majority Leader Tom DeLay's staff assisted Texas DPS in tracking down quorum-breaking state Democratic lawmakers by requesting that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) track a plane carrying one of the absent lawmakers, prompting significant legal and ethical scrutiny of federal involvement in a state dispute.³ According to reports by the Offices of Inspector General for both the Department of Transportation and DHS, the FAA shared information on private flight plans that was then relayed to the Texas Governor and House Speaker to track the state legislators, later prompting the agency to address the erroneous and inappropriate judgment of a political appointee and to revise its policies to restrict such disclosures.⁴ The House Ethics Committee, in a unanimous vote, also reprimanded DeLay for acting to unethically and inappropriately wield federal resources for plainly partisan purposes.⁵

Furthermore, a Texas state district judge ruled that the 2003 Texas DPS search for the Democratic state lawmakers was illegal as DPS lacked the authority to apprehend lawmakers breaking quorum. The court held that Texas law "limits the role of DPS to enforcing the laws protecting the public safety and providing for the prevention and detection of crime."⁶ The ruling made clear that the state cannot treat quorum-breaking as a criminal offense subject to law enforcement pursuit.

On July 31, 2025, U.S. Senator John Cornyn, trailing far behind in a Republican Senate primary, chose to ignore this precedent and publicly called for the FBI to assist Texas authorities in tracking down Democratic state lawmakers who had left the state in order to prevent a quorum in the Texas House of Representatives.⁷ He urged federal law enforcement to investigate and potentially detain the legislators despite the fact that "there is no apparent legal breach under [the FBI's] purview."⁸ The request has been criticized by legal experts and civil rights advocates, who raised concerns about criminalizing political protest and the potential misuse of federal resources in a partisan dispute.⁹

³ *Drawing the Line*, New Yorker (Feb. 26, 2006) (online at www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/03/06/drawing-the-line-3).

⁴ *DeLay, FAA Roles in Tex. Redistricting Flap Detailed*, Washington Post (July 11, 2003) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2003/07/12/delay-faa-roles-in-tex-redistricting-flap-detailed/3d1c20a5-9f37-4bea-971f-9219440709ae/); Letter from Kenneth M. Mead, Department of Transportation Inspector General, to Ranking Member Joseph Lieberman, Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs (July 11, 2003) (online at www.oig.dot.gov/sites/default/files/lieblet.pdf).

⁵ *Drawing the Line*, New Yorker (Feb. 26, 2006) (online at www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/03/06/drawing-the-line-3).

⁶ *Texas Search for Democrats Is Ruled Illegal*, Associated Press (July 12, 2003) (online at www.nytimes.com/2003/07/12/us/texas-search-for-democrats-is-ruled-illegal.html).

⁷ *Texas AG Paxton will try to expel Texas Democrats if they don't return by Friday*, Politico (Aug. 5, 2025) (online at www.politico.com/news/2025/08/05/paxton-removing-dems-00494730).

⁸ *FBI Agrees to Help Chase Down Quorum-Breaking Texas Democrats*, Politico (Aug. 7, 2025) (online at www.politico.com/news/2025/08/07/fbi-texas-democrats-quorum-cornyn-00497699).

⁹ *Senator Cornyn Says FBI Will Help Track Down Texas Democrats Who Fled Over Redistricting Vote*, Reuters (Aug. 7, 2025) (online at www.reuters.com/legal/government/senator-cornyn-says-fbi-will-help-track).

Following Cornyn's request, public reports indicate that the FBI agreed to provide assistance to Texas authorities, including Texas DPS, in locating the lawmakers.¹⁰ The specific legal basis and scope of the FBI's involvement remain unclear.¹¹

In light of these developments and precedents, we request that your office provide answers to the following questions and furnish all responsive documents by no later than August 21, 2025:

1. Has the FBI or the Department of Justice (DOJ) agreed to assist with these efforts?
2. A full accounting of any DOJ or FBI personnel assigned to assist the State of Texas, the Texas Department of Public Safety, or any other agency in locating or identifying Texas lawmakers involved in the current quorum break;
3. A detailed explanation of the legal authorities under which the FBI has acted or coordinated with state authorities in this matter;
4. All communications between DOJ or FBI personnel and officials in the Texas executive or legislative branches regarding the current quorum break;
5. A detailed and comprehensive explanation of any federal databases, surveillance tools, or law enforcement resources—including flight tracking systems, mobile phone location data, or license plate readers—accessed in connection with this matter;
6. All DOJ or FBI communications regarding whether and how this situation may or may not fall within the jurisdiction of federal law enforcement, including internal legal analysis or memoranda;
7. A list of any federal laws that DOJ or FBI officials believe may have been violated by the lawmakers who have broken quorum;

down-texas-democrats-who-fled-over-2025-08-07/); Public Citizen, *Press Release: Siccing the FBI on State Lawmakers Who Oppose Trump's Agenda Sets Dangerous Authoritarian Precedent* (Aug. 7, 2025) (online at www.citizen.org/news/siccing-the-fbi-on-state-lawmakers-who-oppose-trumps-agenda-sets-dangerous-authoritarian-precedent/).

¹⁰ *FBI will help locate Texas Democrats who fled the state, Cornyn says*, Axios (Aug. 5, 2025) (online at www.axios.com/2025/08/07/fbi-texas-democrats-illinois-cornyn-redistricting?); *Cornyn Says FBI Will Help Locate Absent Texas Democrats, but Scope of Feds' Role Unclear*, Texas Tribune (Aug. 7, 2025) (online at www.texastribune.org/2025/08/07/john-cornyn-fbi-texas-democrats-illinois-quorum-break-redistricting/).

¹¹ *FBI Agrees to Help Chase Down Quorum-Breaking Texas Democrats*, Politico (Aug. 7, 2025) (online at www.politico.com/news/2025/08/07/fbi-texas-democrats-quorum-cornyn-00497699).

8. A detailed account of whether the DOJ has received any requests from Texas or federal elected officials for FBI involvement, including the identity of any such officials and the nature of their requests;
9. Any internal DOJ or FBI communications referring to or assessing historical precedent, including the 2003 FAA incident involving Rep. Tom DeLay, in deciding how to approach the current quorum break; and
10. All documents and communications regarding any DOJ or FBI policies or guidance related to involvement in state legislative or political disputes, including those related to quorum enforcement.

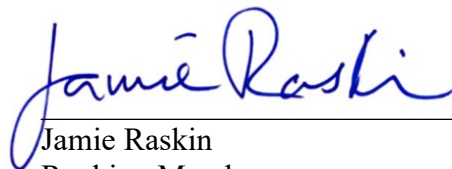
Given the FBI's crucial role as a federal law enforcement agency, it is essential that its actions be guided by clear legal authority, political neutrality, and an appropriate respect for the autonomy of state legislatures and their members. The involvement of federal agents in a state-level political dispute raises serious questions about potential overreach and misuse of federal power.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. The Committee on the Judiciary has oversight jurisdiction over DOJ and the FBI under House Rule X. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Oversight Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051 and Judiciary Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-3951. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



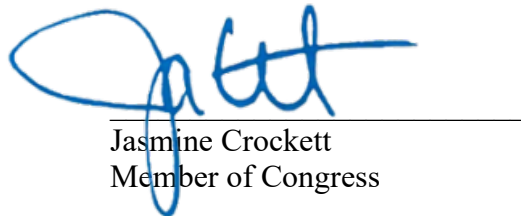
Robert Garcia
Ranking Member
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform



Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member
House Judiciary Committee



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman
The Honorable Jim Jordan, Chairman