

# MASSACHUSETTS BLACK EMPOWERMENT COALITION FOR REDISTRICTING

June 14, 2011

Eric H. Holder, Jr.  
The United States Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Attorney General Holder:

We are writing to you as co-chairs of the Massachusetts Black Empowerment Coalition, a collective of more than 50 organizations located in Boston who represent African-American communities across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Our coalition formed late 2010 in the light of serious concerns within the African-American community statewide regarding the relative lack of voting rights and equal rights protection for minority citizens. The coalition exists for the purposes of working towards ensuring electoral justice for minorities, especially on behalf of historically disenfranchised groups protected by the Voting Rights Act.

We are contacting you specifically requesting the oversight of Department of Justice in the 2011 redistricting process in Massachusetts, particularly in the City of Boston. As you know Boston, over the last 3 decades, has witnessed a number of voting rights cases that have required intervention by the federal courts (Black Political Task Force v. Connelly, 1988, Oiste v. City of Lawrence, 2002, Black Political Task Force v. Galvin, 2003, Chinese Progressive Association v. City of Boston, 2005). Each case have required legal remedy. Given the sensitivities expressed by minority citizens on this matter, its seems appropriate for the federal government to monitor the redistricting process in Massachusetts.

Our coalition has committed to proactively engage this process to reduce any illegalities. Among our supporters are the local branch of the NAACP, The Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts, The New Democracy Coalition, The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute at Harvard Law School, The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University and Demos. We believe that the oversight of the DOJ will serve us well in this statewide process. We believe that in order to avoid what has been a consistent pattern of error and misinterpretation by local state government, we must appeal to the federal level. Given the history of inconsistent handling of voting rights matters by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, we believe this request is necessary.

Kevin C. Peterson, Co-chair  
**The Mass Black Empowerment Coalition**

Tony Van Der Meer, Co-Chair  
**The Mass Black Empowerment Coalition**