



# TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

**Chris Turner**

*State Representative, District 101*

August 27, 2019

Colonel Steven McCraw  
Director, Texas Department of Public Safety  
P.O. Box 4087  
Austin, TX 78773-0001

*DELIVERED VIA EMAIL*

Dear Director McCraw:

It was brought to my attention yesterday that there was partisan political activity occurring at the entrance of Department of Public Safety (DPS) driver license offices in Tarrant County. In response to the concerns raised, I visited two driver license offices (Hurst and Fort Worth – Brentwood Stair) where I witnessed the activity described. Specifically, individuals were engaging DPS customers directly in front of the doors to the offices and asking them if they would sign a petition to “ban late-term abortion.” The petition was actually a form on an electronic tablet, prompting the customer to fill out their name, address, email and phone number, as well as answer some survey questions. If a person signed the petition, they are then asked if they are registered to vote.

I spoke with a total of three people at two locations who were collecting signatures. When asked who they were with, they said either, “Engage Texas, a Republican Super PAC” or “Engage Texas, a conservative Super PAC.” According to a June 17, 2019 story in the *Texas Tribune*, “**...Engage Texas, is the brainchild of some of the state's biggest GOP donors, and it is led by a former top staffer at the Republican National Committee. It comes as Texas Republicans look to gain ground in an area where their Democratic counterparts have dominated in recent years: signing up new voters.**”

When asked, all the Engage Texas employees informed me that DPS had granted permission for this Super PAC to conduct political activity on-premises at various DPS locations. When I asked if permission was granted from the local DPS office or elsewhere, I was told elsewhere. The people I spoke to indicated that an agreement had been worked out between an Engage Texas leader and DPS for permission to conduct this activity at various locations around the state. One of the Engage Texas staffers shared that DPS approved their group setting up a tent directly outside the main entrance to the Hurst office. He also told me that their efforts were focused in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston and Austin regions, not in rural areas. Coincidentally, I am sure, the areas he said they are focused on just happen to be where the most competitive congressional and legislative races will be in the 2020 General Election.

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When I asked further about their intentions, a woman working for Engage Texas and also collecting signatures stated, "We want those on our side, period. You're either on our side or you're not. Plain and simple. We're also out here registering them to vote too."

Engage Texas is a partisan political action committee, not a non-profit organization or government entity. It is inappropriate for such a political organization to be allowed to utilize state property for campaign activity. The taxpayers of Texas have a right to expect that their hard-earned dollars are not subsidizing political activity, as is the case here. And Texans who are trying to renew their driver licenses, already forced to wait hours – sometimes outside in the heat – are enduring enough already without having to deal with political operatives while stuck in line.

This situation raises a series of questions that I would like the Department to provide answers to:

1. Does DPS have any policies, procedures, or rules in place governing the conduct of political activity on state property, beyond those prescribed in state law? If so, where can the public find those and how are they shared with various organizations in Texas?
2. Who specifically at DPS granted permission for Engage Texas to conduct petition drives at driver license offices? Who else in DPS was involved in this decision? Were there any external state officials or employees involved in this matter in any way?
3. Is there a formal approval/denial process the Department utilizes for granting permission for a PAC, or any political candidate or campaign, to engage in political activity on state property? If so, please provide me any applications or forms that such an entity must complete to be given approval.

Additionally, please provide all documentation related to the approval of Engage Texas to conduct political activity at DPS facilities, including all emails related to this matter from within DPS, as well as any external communications DPS employees may have received.

I appreciate and look forward to your swift response to these questions. Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to reach out to my Chief of Staff, Emily Amps, in my Capitol office at (512) 463-0574.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Turner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chris Turner