

## **OUR OPINION: Stab at illegal immigrants simply a fabrication to beat Dems at polls**

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution  
March 25, 2007 Sunday, Main Edition

Copyright 2007 The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution  
ajc.com

**Section:** EDITORIAL; Pg. 7C

**Length:** 834 words

**Byline:** CYNTHIA TUCKER

Staff

### **Body**

---

There they go again. Seeking a seat in Congress, a Georgia GOP legislator is raising the specter of phony voters -- **illegal immigrants** sneaking into the voting booth to cast a ballot.

In a letter to potential contributors, state Sen. Jim Whitehead (R-Evans) wrote, "An **illegal immigrant** should no more be voting in our elections in Georgia than you or I should be voting in Mexico. That's just wrong!" according to Atlanta Journal-Constitution reporters Jim Galloway and Tom Baxter.

Whitehead didn't give any examples of voting by **illegal immigrants** because he can't cite any. Said Thomas Patterson, an expert on elections at Harvard's Shorenstein Center: "If you are an **illegal immigrant**, the last thing you want to do is show up at a **polling** place. . . . We have enough trouble getting people to vote when they're eligible. The idea that people are going to stick their necks out and get [a] penalty stretches the imagination."

But an epidemic of fraudulent voters has become a favorite fairy tale of the Republican Party, a made-up monster they've planted under voters' beds that will jump out and scare us into endorsing voter ID laws. They invent stories about droves of people stealing driver's licenses or passports so they can sneak into the booth to cast an **illegal** ballot. GOP leaders have intimidated voters of color, unfairly purged voter rolls and set up unconstitutional barriers to the ballot box --- all in the name of cleaning up "voter fraud."

This unfortunate campaign has further eroded the GOP's credibility among voters of color, who see this for what it is --- an effort to block black and brown voters, who tend to support Democrats, from the ballot box. And it may prove more costly still to the Republican Party. The obsession with so-called voter fraud helped fuel the dismissal of federal prosecutors --- an ugly purge that has set up the possibility of a constitutional crisis.

There is not yet a detailed picture of the decision-making or motives that led to the dismissals of several federal prosecutors. But this much is clear: Republican operatives were unhappy over the failure of some U.S. attorneys to bring indictments over alleged voter fraud by Democrats. GOP regulars **simply** wouldn't believe that prosecutors didn't pursue indictments because there was no evidence to support the allegations.

## OUR OPINION: Stab at illegal immigrants simply a fabrication to beat Dems at polls

David Iglesias --- whose performance as an aggressive young Navy lawyer reportedly inspired the Tom Cruise character in "A Few Good Men" --- was the highly regarded U.S. attorney based in Albuquerque, N.M., recommended for the job by U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.). But Iglesias, a Republican, soon drew the wrath of Domenici, among others.

High-ranking Republicans in New Mexico were unhappy because Iglesias was not advancing a corruption case involving a Democrat on the GOP's timetable --- before the 2004 elections. Equally suspicious, in their view, Iglesias declined to bring indictments in a separate case involving faulty voter registrations by a Democratic-leaning group.

Complaints that Iglesias was not aggressive in pursuing voter fraud were relayed to President Bush, who forwarded those complaints to Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. Soon, Iglesias, who had received excellent job evaluations, was asked to resign.

Iglesias noted in a March 21 newspaper column that as one of two U.S. attorneys who set up task forces on voter fraud in 2004, he was considered an expert. But, he wrote, "What the critics, who don't have any experience as prosecutors, have asserted is reprehensible --- namely that I should have proceeded without having proof beyond a reasonable doubt. The public has a right to believe that prosecution decisions are made on legal, not political, grounds."

This ugly episode is unlikely to dim the GOP's enthusiasm for pursuing imaginary fake voters (or for turning away real ones). That's because that crusade accomplishes their purposes. It doesn't ferret out phony citizens trying to cast a ballot; they're virtually nonexistent. But it does work to suppress turnout among voters of color.

According to a recent study prepared for the federal Election Assistance Commission, states with restrictive voter ID requirements saw turnout fall by about 3 percent at the polls in the 2004 presidential election --- and by two to three times as much for minorities. That's because people of color tend to be poorer, and the poor, in turn, are less likely to have driver's licenses to show at the polls.

It's no coincidence that poorer minority voters also tend to cast their ballots for Democrats. In close races, 3 percent makes a difference. If Republicans can shave off a few hundred or a few thousand Democratic votes, they are more likely to prevail.

It's ugly and un-American, but that's the GOP playbook. And their operatives got pretty mad at David Iglesias when he placed integrity and constitutional principles above politicized prosecutions.

\* Cynthia Tucker is the editorial page editor. Her column appears Sundays and Wednesdays.

[cynthia@ajc.com](mailto:cynthia@ajc.com)

## Classification

---

**Language:** ENGLISH

**Document-Type:** Column

**Publication-Type:** Newspapers

**Subject:** US REPUBLICAN PARTY (92%); IMMIGRATION (90%); **ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS** (90%); ELECTIONS (90%); VOTERS & VOTING (90%); CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS (90%); POLITICAL PARTIES (89%); POLITICAL CORRUPTION (89%); ELECTION FRAUD (89%); BALLOTS (89%); US DEMOCRATIC PARTY (89%); LAWYERS (86%); INDICTMENTS (84%); PUBLIC PROSECUTORS (84%); FEDERAL INVESTIGATIONS (84%); ELECTION

OUR OPINION: Stab at illegal immigrants simply a fabrication to beat Dems at polls

LAW (78%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (78%); US CONGRESS (78%); US STATE GOVERNMENT (78%);  
PASSPORTS & VISAS (73%); DISMISSALS (66%); DRIVERS LICENSES (50%)

**Company:** ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION (57%)

**Industry:** LAWYERS (86%); DRIVERS LICENSES (50%)

**Person:** PETE DOMENICI (58%); TOM CRUISE (55%)

**Geographic:** ALBUQUERQUE, NM, USA (79%); GEORGIA, USA (92%); NEW MEXICO, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (92%)

**Load-Date:** March 25, 2007

---

End of Document