



The Senate of The State of Texas

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July 16, 2015

Steven McCraw
Director - Texas Department
of Public Safety
5805 N. Lamar Blvd.
Austin, TX 78773-0001

Dear Director McCraw,

This morning I was made aware of an ordeal that took place in Waller County, Texas over the past weekend that ended in the tragic, and I will call suspicious, death-in-custody of 28 year-old, Sandra Bland. Ms. Bland was found unresponsive in the Waller County Jail late Monday morning July 13. She had been taken into custody following her arrest by Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) troopers on Friday - July 10, 2015 after what was reported to have begun as a routine traffic violation for improperly changing lanes.

My unconfirmed information is that Ms. Bland, who was returning to Texas to begin work at her alma mater, Prairie View A&M University, was followed some distance by a DPS trooper and stopped her vehicle near the Prairie View campus. Local police joined the scene. Privately recorded video shows Ms. Bland being forcefully held to the ground by officers. She can be heard complaining to officers about their treatment and handling of her. It is also noted that the person who recorded the video was told by one of the officers to stop doing so, although it does not appear that he was in any way interfering with the officers in the execution of the traffic stop and appeared to be recording from a reasonable distance.

Director, you know of my work to secure for law enforcement, in-car audio visual recording equipment and most recently, body-worn cameras. The use of those tools by officers has encouraged, as studies have shown, greater accountability for both the public and members of law enforcement.

This detainment, arrest and the events that transpired have raised a number of questions for numerous persons, none more than myself. It comes months and weeks into what seems to be an unabated season of unfortunate police-citizen encounters. During the investigations of these

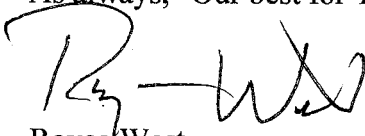


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events it has become apparent the value of the timely release of audio-visual evidence recorded by law enforcement in answer to demands for public accountability and transparency.

To this purpose, I am requesting the immediate public release of information recorded by DPS troopers in their observation, pursuit and subsequent contact and arrest of Ms. Sandra Bland. As soon as possible, please inform me of your response to this request. It is important for all Texans and American citizens to have confirmed that those who enforce the law also remain accountable to those they serve.

As always, "Our best for Texas,"

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Royce West". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "R" and a long horizontal stroke.

Royce West
Texas Senate
District 23

RW/kb