



Of Berrien and Cass Counties, MI

March 21, 2006

Dear Director Mueller:

At a time when Americans are rightly concerned about issues of security, we understand the need for the Federal Bureau of Investigation to be vigilant – but not vigilante.

We are concerned with an FBI agent's questions following comments made by Common Cause President Chellie Pingree at a panel hosted by the League of Women Voters of Berrien and Cass counties, Michigan, and cited in a local newspaper the following day, March 17.

An FBI agent, Al DiBrito, apparently read the newspaper story and called the local League of Women Voters president, Susan Gilbert, according to Gilbert, asking questions about "this Pingree woman." According to Gilbert, DiBrito said Pingree's comments on the US Patriot Act were "way off base," and that the League should have invited someone from the federal government to be on the panel and to respond.

Further, DiBrito also told Gilbert that an assistant U.S. attorney in Grand Rapids would be in touch with her to give her the real story on the Patriot Act. He urged Gilbert to "reach out" to the assistant U.S. Attorney, whom he identified as Hagen Frank, and said Frank was in the homeland security and terrorism division. DiBrito then supplied Gilbert with Frank's phone number.

DiBrito also said he had contacted the reporter who wrote the story to obtain Gilbert's contact information.

When the country has far more pressing security and terror concerns, we question the FBI using precious resources hounding leaders of two of the most distinguished citizen advocacy organizations in the country. Is this the kind of behavior citizen activists can expect from the FBI? To us, it smacks of intimidation.

Chellie Pingree
President
Common Cause

Susan Gilbert
President
League of Women Voters of Berrien and Cass Counties, Mich.