

August 11, 2004

Secretary Colin Powell
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington DC 20520
VIA FACSIMILE 202-647-2283

Dear Secretary Powell:

I wanted to bring to your attention a serious matter which greatly concerns me and many of my constituents in Louisiana. I understand that the State Department has invited international monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for the next U.S. election. I cannot be more opposed to this invitation and to the presence of international monitors over the U.S. electoral process.

The United States has a long history of democracy that has worked well and is the envy of the world. Peaceful transition of power has always occurred in the United States, and there has been remarkable stability in our core institutions. Our fellow citizens overwhelmingly believe that we are governed by ourselves, our Constitution, and our duly elected leaders.

Recently, the U.S. House voted on an amendment to the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act that would bar taxpayer funds from inviting just these sort observers and monitors. The amendment passed by a vote of 243-161, representing a clear, bipartisan majority for this policy. While this bill has not yet been signed into law, the will of the House and the people is clear: international organizations like the UN or the OSCE have no place monitoring our elections.

This letter is in no way a denial of past or potential problems with ballot security or voting rights issues in the U.S. However, the solution is most certainly not found with United Nations or other international observers and monitors. Instead, we should work hard with state and local governments, with federal oversight where appropriate, to maintain our own electoral integrity.

Rest assured, I stand firmly committed to fighting election and ballot fraud, and continue to be a staunch opponent of these assaults on our democracy. No one should be denied their right to vote, and votes legally cast should count. But I firmly believe that the presence of international observers would cause far greater problems with our electoral process than their absence.

The State Department should consider measures to both rescind this invitation, as well as prevent this sort of action in the future. Frankly, as a Member of Congress I would prefer the State Department devote its time to diplomacy and pressing events overseas, rather than playing some role in domestic political events. I urge you to carefully consider the electoral problems that will ensue if international monitors and observers become part of this nation's process, in direct contradiction to the will of the citizens.

Thank you and I look forward to your response on this matter.

Sincerely,

David Vitter
Member of Congress