



**John Bonifaz**  
Democrat for Secretary of the Commonwealth

*Returning  
Voters to Power*

## **Bonifaz on the Justice Department's Voting Rights Lawsuit in Springfield**

On February 10, John Bonifaz called attention to Department of Justice (DOJ) investigations for possible voting rights violations in Springfield, Boston, Lawrence and Lowell. At the time, Secretary Galvin told the State House News that John was saying "things that aren't true."  
Galvin added: "I don't know who [John's] talking to."

One month later, on March 10, the DOJ confirmed all four investigations. On March 14, John Bonifaz issued a statement that included:

*"The confirmation of the Bush Justice Department's investigation of Springfield is the latest example of the need for a pro-active Secretary of State who will work collaboratively with each jurisdiction to assure that these voting rights cases never come to fruition."*

Now, a full five months later, the DOJ is suing Springfield for voting rights violations uncovered during its investigation. This makes two voting rights lawsuits in two years (the DOJ sued Boston in 2005). Both lawsuits could have been avoided.

The **Springfield Republican** reports that the latest suit charges:

*"... the city failed to provide Spanish-language assistance at the polls to the majority of its Spanish-speaking voters in recent elections. The complaint states that these minority-language citizen voters have faced hostile treatment at the polls because of their limited ability to speak English, and that in some cases, they have left the polls without casting a ballot, due to the absence of bilingual assistance."*

*The article continues, "The complaint states that the city prevented Spanish-speaking voters from receiving assistance from the person of their choice, even in cases where bilingual assistance was otherwise unavailable."*

It should not have to come to this.

Why did Bill Galvin claim not to know about the investigation? Once it was confirmed, why didn't Bill Galvin, our Chief Elections Officer, do something over the last five months to remedy the situation? Why did he allow this to get to the lawsuit phase – just seven weeks from our next election? Where has Bill Galvin been while the rights of Latino voters have been denied?

Nowhere to be found.

As the recent editorial in the Republican, titled "Springfield's voters all need equal access," states:

*"... Springfield must make every effort to find out what has been going on - and to work to fix any problems it finds as soon as possible. Instead of trying to fight the Justice Department, the city should fight for its voters. All of its voters."*

John Bonifaz has been engaged in this fight throughout his career – including defending the rights of Latino voters in Lawrence last year. As our Secretary of State, he will establish a Voters' Bill of Rights and work with cities and towns to ensure that all voters are able to fairly cast their ballot and have their vote counted.

As John Bonifaz likes to say, "The right to vote is universal; it does not speak only one language."