



COLLIN COUNTY

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District Clerk
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March 26, 2019

Via Electronic Mail: Senator Ted Cruz, Senator John Cornyn, Congressman Van Taylor

RE: Permanent Closure of the Collin County Passport Offices by the State Department and request for Investigation

Dear Senator Cruz, Senator Cornyn and Congressman Taylor:

I regrettably inform you that effective March 19, 2019, the State Department has permanently closed the Collin County Passport Offices. I am attaching the final response from Barry Conway, the Managing Director for Support Operations with Passport Services in Washington, D.C. formally removing Collin County from the Passport Application Acceptance Program.

I want to thank each of you and your staff for working with my office for the past few months to communicate with Consular Affairs on the status of this process. The concerns and interest showed by your offices are tremendous testaments to your leadership and commitment to your constituents in Texas. But I, on behalf of the thousands of negatively impacted citizens, still need your help. I am requesting that your office(s) investigate, either through a GAO investigation, or through any mechanism you deem appropriate, how the Federal agencies involved punished the Collin County District Clerk's office for essentially whistleblowing and, more importantly, work on ways to improve security procedures surrounding the passport procurement process.

I had, and continue to have, grave concerns over the policies and procedures of Passport Services. It is only after I met with investigators from Diplomatic Security Services ("DSS"), that I learned of the fraud investigation, which to me appeared to be focused on issues clearly attributed to weaknesses in the private expediting companies' role in the process. Tellingly, the DSS completely cleared my employees and closed their investigation with respect to the Collin County District Clerk Passport offices. But when the suspension continued and my office remained unjustly closed, I was compelled to speak out. But when I "went public" with the security flaws in the passport processes, primarily with respect to private expediting companies, and noted that the Collin County Offices has been "cleared", the State Department conjured up other reasons for the suspension to languish. My office provided Passport Services with almost 50 pages of documents on February 25, 2019 refuting allegations in its February 21, 2019 letter to my office. My response provided clear documentation that the allegations were without merit. However on February 26, 2019 on a conference call with Collin County, Mr. Conway made it clear that even if no allegations could be substantiated, Passport Services had the unfettered discretion to remove us from the program - which is what they have now done. It is disheartening to take this information all the way up to the Managing Director for Support Operations for Passport Services in Washington with nothing but the attached response to show for it. It remains my sincere belief that this closure was not based on merit, but rather,

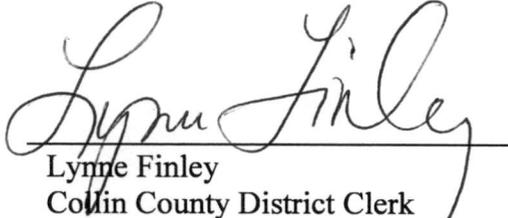
was simply retaliation for my very public critiques of Passport Services and highlighting their apathy towards known procedural weaknesses.

The disappointing irony of this unjust closure is that Passport Services removed us from the program for exposing the very flaws that they already knew existed. I am attaching U.S. Government Accountability Office 2009 testimony before the Subcommittee on Terrorism and Homeland Security, Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate entitled "Significant Vulnerabilities in the Passport Issuance Process". GAO testimony confirms that the State Department continues to struggle with reducing fraud risks identified numerous times by GAO over the years. The 2009 report offers possible corrective actions but because of the limitations in access to the processes, I have no idea if anything changed related to the 2009 report. I do know that there are at least 50 possible fraudulent passports discovered by DSS. While DSS cleared my offices of any wrongdoing or procedural violations, my concerns are not in the integrity of the acceptance facility but the integrity of the process established by Passport Services that they refuse to update or improve even in the face of this investigation and the information that I gave them.

As an elected official, I will lose four employees and a convenient service for my almost one million constituents, but it is the safety concerns and the Passport Services refusal and hostile response to ideas promoting positive change - - based on an actual investigation by DSS - - that is troubling for me, and I hope, for all of you as well. Senator Cornyn spoke to a related problem, "Far too often when citizens seek records from our government, they are met with long delays, denials, and difficulty. Federal agencies can routinely and repeatedly deny requests for information with near impunity." While I understand and certainly appreciate the vital national security concerns associated with the issuance of passports¹, the imperious attitude of Passport Services offends the public sense of a responsive, and responsible, Federal governmental agency.

I am seeking your help and guidance on how to bring light to this issue and protect our citizens from the disinterest and disregard of Passport Services as to known passport fraud and abuses. I understand, as Mr. Conway succinctly stated, that "our decision is final" regarding closure of the Collin County passport acceptance facilities, but the more looming issue of passport fraud, known yet still effectively ignored by Passport Services, must be publicly redressed.

Thank you again for your efforts in this matter.



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¹ GAO testimony simply states, "A U.S. passport not only allows an individual to travel freely in and out of the United States, but also can be used to obtain further identification documents, prove U.S. citizenship, and set up bank accounts, among other things. Because passports issued under false identity help enable individuals to conceal their movements and activities, there is great concern that passport fraud could facilitate acts of terrorism."