

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1007

June 6, 2012

The Honorable Eric Holder  
Attorney General  
Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 5111  
Washington, DC 20530-0009

Dear Attorney General Holder:

I am writing with concern regarding recent reports that several members of the community of online political commentators have been targeted with harassing and frightening actions. Any potentially criminal action that incites fear, seeks to silence a dissenting opinion, and collaterally wastes the resources of law enforcement should be given close scrutiny at all levels.

According to these individuals' reports, these dangerous hoaxes, also known as "SWAT-ting," have a perpetrator contacting a local police department to report some type of violent incident at the home of the target. It is believed that these callers utilize some of the less traditional telecommunications methods, including voice over IP (VOIP) to make the call appear as though it is coming from the target residence and to better hide the true identity of the caller.

In response, a dispatcher then sends a large number of understandably anxious police units, in a heightened state of readiness, to the home of the still unsuspecting target. The first that the target or their unsuspecting family learns of this false report to law enforcement is when they are shocked to see an abnormal police presence descending on their residence.

The use of SWAT-ting as a harassment tool is apparently not new, but its use as a tool for targeting political speech appears to be a more recent development. During the last year, some of the more widely reported cases of SWAT-ting have taken place against blog operators across the country, including in Georgia. The emerging pattern is both disturbing and dangerous.

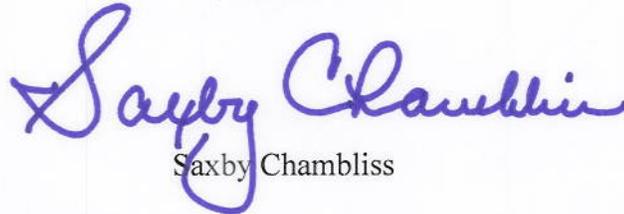
While these incidences are currently small in number, and have fortunately not led to any accidental physical harm, they are extremely concerning. The perpetrators appear to be targeting individuals who are vigorously exercising their First Amendment rights to political speech. As you know, these reported efforts to intimidate those who choose to enter the political forum and express their opinions are in conflict with the founding principles of our nation.

Regardless of any potential political differences that may exist, threats and intimidation have no place in our national political discourse. Those who choose to enter into that political discourse should not have to worry about potential threats to their or their family's safety.

While I am certain that local law enforcement is reviewing each of these instances, I am asking you to please look into each of these cases as well to determine if any federal laws may have been violated. Future targets of SWAT-ting, whether engaged in political speech or not, may not be so fortunate as to escape physical harm.

I appreciate your attention to this matter, and I look forward to your response no later than June 29, 2012. Please feel free to contact my office with any questions or comments that you may have.

Very truly yours,



Saxby Chambliss