

## Greene Co. voters deliver petitions with 3,000 signatures to Rep. Sewell requesting U. S. Justice Department intervention in closure of electronic bingo at Greenetrack

Greene County voters deliver petition with 3,000 signatures to Congresswoman Sewell requesting the Justice Department intervention in Greenetrack closure.

Approximately 3,000 residents of Greene and surrounding counties signed a petition to Congresswoman Terri Sewell requesting a U. S. Department of Justice investigation of voting rights violations in conjunction with the State of Alabama's closure and seizure of all electronic bingo machines at Greenetrack.

"Today, I received letters and a petition signed by over 2,000 constituents regarding the dire situation at Greenetrack asking that I bring the situation to the attention of the Justice Department. I plan to be in contact with DOJ to see what can be done. Greenetrack has been a critical source of jobs for hundreds of people in the Seventh Congressional District and its closing affects families, communities and the state's economy. The unemployment rate in Greene County is 12.7%, well above the state and national average. During these challenging eco-

nomic times, additional job losses will further damage the county's economy. It is important that those families are put back to work, and to the extent that I can do anything to assist in that process I will," said Rep. Terri A. Sewell (D-AL).

On June 1, 2011, Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange raided Greenetrack closing the electronic bingo section of the facility and seizing over 500 machines. This was the second raid on Greenetrack in the past year. The first raid was conducted by former Governor Riley's Task Force on Illegal Gambling last June.

In November of 2003, voters in Greene County overwhelmingly by an 82% majority approved Alabama Constitutional Amendment 743 to authorize electronic bingo in Greene County. Bingo was operated for the benefit of public institutions and charities in the county through Greenetrack.

As a result of the state's closure of Greenetrack over 300 people have lost their jobs. The Greene County Board of Education has lost

over \$750,000 a year in revenues forcing teacher and staff layoffs. The Greene County Hospital and Nursing Home lost over \$100,000 per year in revenues needed to offer care to low income people in the county. Many other smaller agencies and charities have been stripped of much needed income.

Rev. A. B. Griffin of the New Peace Baptist Church who transmitted the petition to Congresswoman Sewell said, "Greene County voters, especially our majority of African-American voters, have been deprived of our voting rights by the Governor and Attorney General.

"We have been struggling to get our votes considered and counted since the 1960's in Greene County and we want the Justice Department to investigate. Our voting rights are hollow and don't count for much if a white Governor and Attorney General can override our citizens, our Sheriff, Circuit Judge, State Representative and our local District Attorney, all of whom were elected by Black votes in a county with a majority of Black residents," said Rev.



Congresswoman Terri Sewell

Griffin

Greenetrack officials say a hearing is scheduled on July 6, 2011 in Greene County Circuit Court to determine the legal status of electronic bingo machines confiscated from Greenetrack on June 1. Greenetrack officials are urging U. S. Attorney General Eric Holder to attend this hearing or send representatives to see the blatant violations of the voting and civil rights faced by Greene County residents.