



February 24, 2015

VIA U.S MAIL AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

Honorable Eric H. Holder
U.S. Attorney General
950 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20530

Re: Request for DOJ Involvement in Pasco Shooting

Dear Attorney General Holder,

The American Civil Liberties Union of Washington supports the request of Consejo Latino and other community leaders in Pasco, Washington for the U.S. Department of Justice to assist in the investigation of the Pasco Police Department's shooting of Mr. Antonio Zambrano Montes.

The facts surrounding Mr. Zambrano's death must be fully and carefully investigated. The Department of Justice can help ensure that the investigation is fair and impartial.

We share the community's concerns with the apparent focus of the investigation by the Special Investigative Unit. From public media statements, it appears that this unit, made up of investigators from the police departments in nearby Richland and Kennewick and the Benton and Franklin Sheriff's Office, is unnecessarily focusing on Mr. Zambrano's activities during the weeks preceding the shooting, rather than the circumstances of the shooting itself. This line of inquiry makes it appear that the SIU is looking for ways to discredit Mr. Zambrano based on any problems he may have faced in his past, instead of ascertaining the facts about the officers' knowledge at the time of the shooting.

The DOJ also can fulfill an important need by investigating potential civil rights violations as well as potential systemic problems within the Pasco Police Department. We urge the Department's Special Litigation Section to consider involvement as part of its advocacy to protect the rights of people who interact with local law enforcement agencies. Mr. Zambrano's death is just the most recent fatal shooting in an area that has experienced several officer-involved deaths over the past year. Additionally, one of the officers involved in the current shooting was previously sued for using excessive force against another Pasco resident.

AMERICAN CIVIL
LIBERTIES UNION
OF WASHINGTON
FOUNDATION
901 FIFTH AVENUE #630
SEATTLE, WA 98164
T/206.624.2184
F/206.624.2190
WWW.ACLU-WA.ORG

JESSE WING
BOARD PRESIDENT

KATHLEEN TAYLOR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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The community's trust in its police department has been seriously shaken. Through involvement in the ongoing and its own investigations, the DOJ can assure the community that the facts are fully investigated and help to improve equality, fairness, and public safety for all residents of Pasco.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jennifer Shaw', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jennifer Shaw
Deputy Director

Cc: Michael C. Ormsby, United States Attorney, Eastern District of Washington

Jonathan M. Smith, Chief, Special Litigation Section, United States
Department of Justice

Colonel Felix Vargas (Retired), Chair, Consejo Latino