

TEXAS WOMAN ASKED TO COVER 'VOTE THE BIBLE' T-SHIRT AT POLLS: CHRISTIAN GROUP ALLEGES HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION



A Texas woman, Kay Hill went to vote in Taylor County, wearing a T-Shirt that had "Vote the Bible" written on it. Hill alleges that she was asked to cover up the slogan prior to voting. Election officials said that as the word vote was mentioned it could be interpreted as prohibited electioneering. When she tried to reason with them that her choice of clothing had nothing to do with electioneering she was categorically told that if she desired to vote she would have to either wear the shirt inside out so that the slogan was not visible, or go home and change into attire that did not transgress election rules. Eventually, an election volunteer gave her a jacket to wear over, what they considered was an offending slogan. Only then was she allowed to cast her vote. Williamson County Public Affairs Director Connie Watson argued that since the shirt had the word vote mentioned it did have something to do with voting and this was in violation of state laws concerning elections. Watson said that Texas law forbids a person from insinuating how another person should vote by word, sign or gesture, when he or she is in or around the polling area. Watson said that anything that could be construed as showing preference for a political party, candidate or making a suggestion, even if it was something as insignificant as a hat or a pen, or as in this case a T-shirt it was not permissible. Moreover, "Electioneering or loitering within 100 feet of the entrance to the polling place or inside the polling place is not allowed," she said. However, Attorney Jonathan Seinz was not in agreement with what Watson said and opined that Kay Hill was 'targeted because of her religious beliefs.' He said that he was willing to defend her legally because he believed that making it a compulsion for her to cover the words, if she wanted to vote, was a violation of her freedom of religion. "This is obviously a religious free expression and no one should be put in a position having to choose religious freedom over deciding to vote," he said. Seinz said that the law was being twisted and manipulated and there was nothing in the law that said you cannot have a shirt that says vote the Bible. "It's outrageous that a person of faith would be mistreated this way while trying to vote. If this isn't voter intimidation, I don't know what is," They have threatened to take the matter to the Attorney General's office unless an apology to Kay Hill is forthcoming. Seinz in a complaint to Williamson Country Election Administrator, Texas Values President Jonathan Saenz said that the woman was told that the slogan was an implied submission to vote for the Republican Party. Seinz says that they not only should publicly apologize for the "embarrassment, humiliation and intimidation," caused to the woman but should also issue a public statement that "Vote the Bible" T-shirts are permissible in polling areas. Watson however, felt that the issue was being blown out of proportion and that the poll workers were merely following and implementing the Texas election laws.