

# DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

Have you been getting that feeling that this year is going to be different?

Early voting starts today in Texas. In Waller County, a primarily rural county about 60 miles outside Houston, the county made the decision to offer only one early voting location: at the County Courthouse in Hempstead, TX, the county seat.

Prairie View A&M students organized to protest the decision, because they felt it hindered their ability to vote. For background, Prairie View A&M is one of Texas' historically Black universities. It has a very different demographic feel than the rest of the county. There has been a long history of dispute over what the students feel is disenfranchisement. There was a lot of outrage in 2006, when students felt they were unfairly denied the right to vote when their registrations somehow did not get processed.

According to an article in today's **Houston Chronicle**:

Waller County has faced numerous lawsuits involving voting rights in the past 30 years and remains under investigation by the Texas Attorney General's Office based on complaints by local black leaders. Those allegations, concerning the November 2006 general election, related to voting machine failures, inadequate staffing and long delays for voting results.

The article adds,

"I was angry after registering to vote in the 2006 election only to be turned away at the voting booth," said sophomore Dee Dee Williams.

So what are the students doing?

1000 students, along with an additional 1000 friends and supporters, are this morning walking the 7.3 miles between Prairie View and Hempstead in order to vote today. According to the piece I saw on the news (there's no video up, so I can't link to it), the students plan to all vote today. There are only 2 machines available at the courthouse for early voting, so they hope to tie them up all day and into the night.

Watching this video sure makes me believe this year is going to be different.