

GOP senator wants investigation of ACORN

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WASHINGTON – A Republican lawmaker on Tuesday urged the Justice Department to investigate ACORN, a community organization under fire for several voter-registration fraud cases.

Sen. Mike Johanns, R-Neb., wrote Attorney General Eric Holder requesting the investigation. He cited reports that ACORN, which stands for the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, may "have been engaged in illegal activity" by aiding and abetting tax evasion, prostitution, human trafficking, fraud and conspiracy.

The Senate voted Monday to block the Housing and Urban Development Department from giving grants to ACORN following a measure introduced by Johanns. The Nebraska lawmaker said the organization has received more than \$50 million in taxpayer funds since 1994.

Hidden-camera videos released by conservative activists posing as a prostitute and a pimp have shown ACORN employees giving advice on home buying and how to account on tax forms for the woman's income.

Brian Kettenring, an ACORN spokesman, said Republicans were "playing politics" and trying to "stop ACORN's good work fighting to stop the foreclosure crisis and to win quality, affordable health care for all Americans."

The Justice Department did not immediately comment on Johanns' letter.

Last week, the Census Bureau on Friday severed its ties with ACORN, which has been hit with Republican accusations of voter-registration fraud. In splitting with ACORN, Census director Robert Groves sought to tamp down GOP concerns and negative publicity that the partnership will taint the 2010 head count.

In recent months, Republicans have become increasingly critical of the census' ties with ACORN. The group, which advocates for poor people, conducted a massive voter registration effort last year and became a target of conservatives when some employees were accused of submitting false registration forms with names such as "Mickey Mouse."

ACORN has said only a handful of employees submitted false registration forms and did so in a bid to boost their pay.