

# **SOUTH CAROLINA**

## ELECTION COMMISSION

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **SEC Releases Findings on “Dead Voters” Investigation**

Columbia, SC (February 23, 2012) – The S.C. State Election Commission (SEC) today released the findings of a partial review of information provided by the S.C. Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) suggesting 953 votes were cast in the name of deceased voters. Due to the size and scope of the task of examining every claim, the review was limited to 207 cases related to the 2010 General Election.

In 197 of these instances, the records show no indication of votes being cast fraudulently in the name of deceased voters. Research found each of these cases to be the result of clerical errors, bad data matching, errors in assigning voter participation, or voters dying after being issued an absentee ballot. In 10 cases, the records were insufficient to make a determination.

The research related to these 207 cases has been provided to the S.C. Attorney General’s office (AG) and the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED). The AG and SLED continue to examine all information related to the case.

“We are relieved to find that in more than 95% of the cases we examined, there is no indication that votes were cast fraudulently,” said Marci Andino, SEC Executive Director. “Even so, if even one illegal vote has been cast, that is one too many. We have presented our findings to the AG and SLED for review and to determine what further action may be necessary.”

An analysis of voter registration and death records by DMV produced a list of 953 voters who appeared to be deceased and appeared to have voted after the date of death. The information covered 74 separate elections dating back to April 5, 2005. Investigation of every claim would require more than 1,000 hours of work examining thousands of paper records housed in locations throughout the state. With limited time and resources, the SEC examined the cases related to the largest, most recent election – the 2010 General Election.

The records show:

- 106 cases were the result of clerical errors by poll managers.
  - 91 cases were name recognition errors such as marking the deceased John Doe, Sr. as voting when John Doe, Jr. actually voted
  - In 6 cases, the poll manager apparently began marking incorrect voter, realized mistake, but did not erase the original marks
  - In 5 cases, election officials marked the wrong voter as voting absentee
  - In 3 cases, election officials issued the absentee application in the wrong name

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- 56 cases were the result of bad data matching. In these cases, it appears DMV used only the voter's social security number to match against the death file. The voters' names and dates of birth in these cases do not match the names and dates of birth in the death file. In these cases, there is no indication that the voter is deceased.
- 32 cases were voter participation errors. Voter registration lists marked by poll managers are scanned electronically to record voter participation in each election. Stray marks on the lists and the sensitivity of the automatic scanner can lead to voters erroneously being given credit for voting in an election. In all of these cases, there is no corroborative information on voter registration lists, poll lists, or absentee applications indicating the voter actually voted.
- 3 cases were the result of absentee ballots being issued to a voter, who then died before Election Day.
- 10 cases had insufficient information in the record to make a determination:
  - In 7 cases, the signature on the poll list could not be matched to another voter
  - In 2 cases, the poll list is missing making it impossible to match the signature to another person
  - In 1 case, the signature on the poll list seems to match a voter in another precinct but could not be verified.

“This issue has presented an opportunity for the agency to improve its procedures for maintaining the quality of data in the statewide voter registration list,” Andino said. “We look forward to working with the AG, DMV, and the General Assembly to propose changes to state law that will improve the quality of voter registration records and promote confidence in the voting system.”

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