



The Deceit of Voter Fraud

By Bob Hall and Isela Gutierrez*

This report has four sections. The first section shares the reaction of voters harmed by the false charges of fraud generated by Gov. Pat McCrory's 2016 re-election campaign and the NC Republican Party; it ends with a call for a criminal investigation. The second section (pages 2-4) summarizes key events after the November 2016 election. The third section (pages 4-5) provides a summary of findings of wrongdoing, drawn from the county profiles in the fourth section (pages 5-16).

I. VICTIMS AND CRIMINAL MISCONDUCT

"I was shocked and horrified and furious to learn our name was on a list with people who were alleged to have broken a federal law," said Anne Hughes of Moore County, North Carolina. She and her husband William were falsely accused of voting in two states by a local supporter of Gov. Pat McCrory's reelection.

In an apparent effort to overcome a narrow defeat, Gov. McCrory and his allies in the NC Republican Party (NCGOP) filed the legal paperwork and launched a media campaign to draw attention to the supposedly "invalid" ballots of Mr. and Mrs. Hughes and hundreds of other voters "known" to have committed a crime. By late November, the McCrory-NCGOP team had charged about 600 voters in 37 counties with committing fraud or casting suspect absentee ballots – but despite an avalanche of legal filings and the constant drumbeat of "serious voter fraud," nearly all the accusations proved to be false.

Aysha Nasir of Orange County thought she was targeted as an illegal voter because of her Muslim-sounding name. She felt harassed and vulnerable. "You obey the law, you do all the stuff you're supposed to, and then some person just randomly, without any burden of proof, can accuse you of breaking the law," she said.

Joseph Golden, a Brunswick County voter accused of double voting, felt upset and humiliated after seeing his name appear on the front pages of three area newspapers. As a newcomer to the county, he was especially disturbed that someone on social media called him out and wrote, "There's a cheater amongst us."

Another falsely accused voter, Robert Chadwick of Wake County, said, "It was a total shock. It really hurt me."

Hughes, Nasir, Golden, and Chadwick are the victims of irresponsible charges of voter fraud filed by agents of the Pat McCrory campaign and NC Republican Party. They are the innocent casualties of what happens when outrageous claims of voter fraud are used as a weapon for political gain. In truth, we are all harmed by this strategy because it undermines public faith in the election process and is often used to justify irrational barriers to voting.

The McCrory-NCGOP's use of voter fraud goes even further. Democracy North Carolina talked with dozens of voter-victims, county election officials, and the Republicans involved in filing charges of fraud in various counties. This report, based on those interviews and a review of public records, reveals that the McCrory campaign and NC Republican Party engaged in a coordinated legal and publicity crusade to disrupt, and potentially corrupt, the elections process with what amounted to fraudulent charges of voter fraud.

The crusade did not stop even after McCrory's attorneys were told by some elections officials that their claims were wrong, that they were confusing voters' names with other people, that they were using bad data. Instead of stopping, the attorneys caused more charges to be filed that maligned more innocent voters. And, in conjunction with the NC Republican Party, they continued a coordinated

attack on the legitimacy of certain ballots and the election outcome, despite the clear harm inflicted on individual voters and the election process.

Carol Turner, a Moore County voter falsely accused of committing fraud, asked us a crucial question: “Where are the laws that protect those of us who haven’t done anything wrong and allow those who want to make up these stories to be able to do that?”

Based on our interviews and research, Democracy North Carolina is calling on state and federal officials to undertake a criminal investigation into the activities of the attorneys and other agents of the Pat McCrory campaign and NC Republican Party that may have violated state and federal laws, particularly laws against harassing and intimidating innocent voters, corrupting the election process, and obstructing the election canvass. Relevant statutes include 18 U.S.C. § 594; 18 U.S.C. § 241; NCGS § 163-274(3); NCGS § 163-275(4); and NCGS § 163-275(17).

II. THE CRUSADE

On election night 2016, Gov. Pat McCrory thought he won reelection – until late returns from Durham County put Roy Cooper ahead by about 5,000 votes out of 4.7 million cast. For the next month, the McCrory campaign and NC Republican Party waged a vigorous crusade to give McCrory the victory he felt he deserved. The chief weapon became the “election protest,” a legal proceeding designed to pinpoint and remedy serious mistakes, misconduct and other “irregularities” that could impact the outcome of an election. Within 24 hours of the polls closing, the McCrory-NCGOP team began deploying resources to research and prepare election protests in counties across the state.

What began as an understandable call for Durham County to review its procedures for handling 94,000 ballots soon devolved into bombastic allegations of widespread “voter fraud” in dozens of counties. The discovery that a small number of African-American members of the Bladen County Improvement Association signed as witnesses for hundreds of absentee ballots in Bladen County – which is not illegal – became the flimsy basis for the McCrory-NCGOP team to protest over 400 absentee ballots in Bladen, Halifax, Greene, Franklin, and other

SOME RELEVANT STATUTES

Federal Law, U.S. Code

18 U.S.C. § 594 Whoever intimidates, threatens, coerces, or attempts to intimidate, threaten, or coerce, any other person for the purpose of interfering with the right of such other person to vote or to vote as he may choose, or of causing such other person to vote for, or not to vote for, any candidate for the office of President, Vice President, . . . shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than one year, or both.

18 U.S.C. § 241 If two or more persons conspire to injure, oppress, threaten, or intimidate any person in any State, . . . in the free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to him by the Constitution or laws of the United States, or because of his having so exercised the same . . . [t]hey shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both.

NC General Statutes: It shall be unlawful . . .

NCGS § 163-274(3) For any person to . . . interfere with the possession of any ballot box, election book, ballot, or return sheet by those entitled to possession of the same under the law, or to interfere in any manner with the performance of any duty imposed by law upon any election officer or member of any board of elections;

NCGS § 163-275(4) For any person knowingly to swear falsely with respect to any matter pertaining to any primary or election.

NCGS § 163-275(17) For any person, directly or indirectly, to misrepresent the law to the public through mass mailing or any other means of communication where the intent and the effect is to intimidate or discourage potential voters from exercising their lawful right to vote.

counties with African-American voter mobilization groups. In addition, the McCrory-NCGOP team used a deeply flawed data-matching process to file protests accusing 119 individuals, by name, of committing fraud by either (1) voting while serving a felony sentence or (2) voting in two states. Another set of protests sent to county boards of elections identified 23 ballots cast by “dead voters,” which turned out to mean the voter died before Election Day after casting a ballot early; i.e., there was no fraud.

Altogether, not counting the live/dead voters, allegations of illegal voting directly affected about

600 ballots across the state, while insinuations of greater fraud and malfeasance reached into six figures. Ultimately, officials at the Republican-controlled boards of elections upheld the Durham County vote count, dismissed dozens of protests in other counties, and determined that fewer than 30 of the 600 allegedly suspect ballots were illegally cast or counted – and, importantly, most of those were apparently cast by accident or out of ignorance of the voting rules for probationers, rather than an intent to cheat.

In short, more than 95 percent of the 600 ballots identified in protests were cast by legal voters.

Through open records requests and interviews, Democracy NC determined that a majority of the protests were prepared and sent by email to the county boards of elections by attorneys retained by the McCrory campaign from the Warrenton, VA-based law firm of Holtzman Vogel Josefiak Torchinsky (HVJT). The attorneys also prepared a smaller number of similar protests that local Republican officials hand-delivered to their county board of elections. Disclosure reports on the State Board of Elections' website indicate the Pat McCrory Committee and Pat McCrory Committee Legal Defense Fund paid the HVJT law firm \$98,000 in late November and December 2016.

A barrage of near-daily media releases and press conferences made it seem like the election outcome hung on the balance of ferreting out fraudulent ballots. “With each passing day, we discover more and more cases of voting fraud and irregularities,” said McCrory campaign manager Russell Peck. “We intend to make sure that every vote is properly counted and serious voter fraud concerns are addressed before the results of the election can be determined.” The McCrory campaign claimed protests were being filed [against voter fraud in 52 counties](#) and [against tainted absentee ballots in 12 counties](#) – but about a third of each type of protest never materialized.

As a candidate, Pat McCrory could have personally signed each of the protests. But, for whatever reason, the NC Republican Party and McCrory campaign coordinated a large effort to find a local registered voter to sign each county's protest. Generally, they chose an officer in the county Republican Party who was not a lawyer and who readily agreed to sign the protest without much

knowledge of evidence behind its accusations. In some cases, the officer simply authorized the attorney to sign for them by email or over the phone. Protests need not be notarized, and the protest signer need not supply evidence to back up a charge or specifically attest that the statements are truthful. (Thanks in part to the complaints of innocent voters, the troubling ease with which a person can file a claim of voter fraud is being addressed through the development of a new protest form by the State Board of Elections.)

Filing an election protest sets in motion a legal proceeding with a three-step process outlined in state law: (1) a determination that the protest makes a proper claim; (2) a preliminary hearing to decide if there is probable cause for a full hearing; and (3) a full hearing with the protestor and parties affected to resolve the issues identified. Different county boards of elections dismissed the McCrory protests at

***More than 95 percent of the
600 ballots identified in protests
were cast by legal voters.***

different stages, sometimes for as simple a reason as it named the wrong voter as a felon or it challenged the eligibility of a voter's registration rather than claim a violation significantly impacted the vote count in an election.

The McCrory attorneys submitted the largest wave of protests on November 17, the day before the 100 county boards were scheduled to conduct the official canvass to certify the 2016 election results. It quickly became apparent that many of the protests maligned innocent voters. For example, in a series of follow-up emails, all on November 17, the Stokes County board of elections director queried an attorney from the HVJT law firm and pointed out that the protest she sent named a voter as a felon who had a different middle name and lived in a different city from the felon identified by the attorney. The attorney thanked the director and wrote, “I will certainly look into it.” However, she did not withdraw the protest, which could have spared the voter from having his name appear in two newspapers as someone accused of voter fraud.

Rather than retreat, the McCrory-NCGOP publicists escalated their rhetoric about voter fraud,

and the team's attorneys continued to disrupt and delay certification of a winner with more protests and legal appeals. As more county boards of elections rejected the faulty protests, the McCrory-NCGOP team unsuccessfully filed new appeals and tried other legal maneuvers to convince the Republican majority on the State Board of Elections to rule that the election was riddled with fraud and irregularities. Some Republican leaders continued to inflate the magnitude of "serious voter fraud," but a majority of Republican election officials ultimately would not go along.

Finally, on December 5, Pat McCrory conceded defeat. By then, with provisional ballots and late absentee ballots tallied, he trailed Roy Cooper by more than 10,000 votes, which exceeded the margin to qualify for an automatic recount.

Why would the McCrory-NCGOP team mount such a giant legal and publicity campaign with so few cases of actual fraud? It's possible they hoped to establish enough confusion about the fairness of the election to trigger a state law (NCGS 163-182.13A) that would allow the Republican-controlled General Assembly to determine the winner. Whatever the plan, it failed – but not without inflicting substantial damage.

For weeks, media reports bombarded the public with allegations of voter fraud and dozens of innocent voters had their reputations impugned and lives disrupted. Fortunately, elections officials stopped the coordinated use of phony protests to corrupt the election results, but they cannot undo the corrosive impact of voter-fraud hysteria on people's faith in fair elections. The McCrory-NCGOP agents behind any proven acts of corruption or voter harassment should be held accountable to the fullest extent possible under federal and state laws.

III. FINDINGS OF WRONGDOING

The county-by-county descriptions in the next section of this report help illuminate why four voters in Guilford County filed a [defamation lawsuit](#) in February 2017 against the man who wrongfully accused them of voter fraud. Other civil lawsuits may follow. But it will likely take a criminal investigation to go behind the local protest filer to uncover a larger pattern of illegal activities and, as appropriate, hold accountable the attorneys and other

architects of the McCrory-NCGOP crusade.

Many details vary in the next section's profiles of the protests filed in counties. The victims varied by age, race, gender, and party affiliation. Most of those accused of voting in two states were first-time voters in North Carolina. Most of those accused of voting while serving a felony sentence are Black. Most

Some Republican leaders continued to inflate the magnitude of fraud, but ultimately the majority of Republican election officials would not go along.

striking are the common features that reveal a coordinated plan to potentially corrupt the 2016 election with a multitude of unsubstantiated charges of election fraud and irregularities, without regard for the harassment and harm inflicted on innocent voters.

Important findings from the county-by-county profiles in Section IV include the following:

- Agents of the McCrory campaign prepared Election Protests charging individuals with voter fraud and then recruited local Republican leaders to file the protests without revealing to them the tenuous nature of the charges.
- Even after the protest filer requested additional information, agents of the McCrory campaign failed to provide the person with substantiating evidence of the allegations. Many of the local Republican protest filers said they were "left hanging," "got screwed," or felt "disappointed" or even "victimized."
- The protests were all, or nearly all, prepared by attorneys with the law firm of Holtzman Vogel Josefiak Torchinsky, based in Warrenton, VA. The protests were apparently hurriedly produced and often contained sloppy errors, incorrect references, and false or misleading information.
- A minimum level of research would have revealed that dozens of the individuals charged with voter fraud in the protests were completely innocent. (For example, with a little practice, it takes less than 10 minutes to compare a voter's name and age on North Carolina's voter registration and criminal offender databases.)

- Agents of the McCrory campaign continued to pursue legal proceedings against individual voters even after county elections officials informed them that an allegation of voter fraud was false. Rather than alert the protest filer, the agent allowed the proceeding to continue.
- In a rare case where a McCrory campaign official provided a sworn affidavit to support an allegation, the facts about the accused voter contradicted statements in the affidavit; i.e., the accused voter was decades older than the felon he supposedly matched, which would quickly be recognized if age was used to match a felon list with a voter list, as the sworn statement claimed.
- Attorneys with the HVJT law firm did not follow-up the protests they submitted by appearing at the preliminary hearings; they also told local protest filers they did not need to appear. County boards of elections often dismissed protests because they received no evidence to back up accusations. The lack of follow up raises questions about the real purpose of filing a blitz of protests: Was it was only a show to bolster the intense publicity about voter fraud tainting a fair election?
- In some cases, protest filers who did their own independent research continued to pursue legal proceedings against individual voters even after discovering that the voter fraud charges were false and individuals were completely innocent.
- Attorneys for the McCrory campaign and NC Republican Party continued to intervene and subvert the election with claims against voters that had been exposed as false, using new legal proceedings based on allegations that they knew or should have known were largely false.
- The proceedings subverted and delayed the regular canvasses, diverted staff and administrative resources, threatened to corrupt the results of a fair election, and burdened county and state boards of elections with complex legal, research and logistical problems at a time when they were already under great stress to finalize the election.
- The accusations harassed and harmed individual voters emotionally, damaged their reputations, exposed them to public ridicule, intimidated them with unfamiliar and warrantless legal proceedings to void their ballot, and maligned their character.

IV. COUNTY PROFILES

STOKES COUNTY

On November 17, 2016, Jason Perry, director of the Stokes County Board of Elections, received an email with an attached protest signed by Susan McBride, a Stokes County Republican activist. The email came from the Virginia law firm of Holtzman Vogel Josefiak Torchinsky, which represented the McCrory campaign. The protest said Larry G. Smith cast an “invalid” ballot because he was “adjudged guilty of a felony.” Director Perry sent Susan McBride an email asking for information showing that Smith was serving a felony sentence. Shortly thereafter, Erin

Even after the McCrory attorneys learned that the protests named the wrong people, they continued to send protests naming innocent voters.

Clark of HVJT sent Perry an email, saying McBride had forwarded the request to her, and she provided a hot link to the offender search tool on the NC Department of Public Safety’s website. Perry wrote back to Clark: “The website regarding state felons is what I was using. I’m not currently seeing this particular individual listed.” Clark sent back the link to a specific offender, with the note: “This is the guy.”

Perry wrote back two more times on November 17 and explained again that the voter being charged in the protest was Larry G. Smith and not Larry D. Smith, the felon referenced by Clark’s web link. Perry told Clark he checked with county sheriff’s office and they also “couldn’t find anything regarding Larry Gray Smith” with a felony conviction but did find Larry D. Smith, who was convicted and also removed from the registration rolls in Wilkes County. “That’s about 1.5 hours or so away from Stokes County,” added Perry. “I didn’t find anything for Larry G. Smith, whose voter registration in Stokes County dates back to 1992.”

In response, Erin Clark of the law firm wrote, “I will certainly look into it. Thank you for the open dialogue, I really appreciate it.” That’s the last that

Perry heard from her. Instead of withdrawing the protest or notifying Susan McBride to withdraw it, the process continued. Perry's board met and scheduled a preliminary hearing. He notified the law firm and Susan McBride but heard nothing back. On November 21, the board convened and Perry presented the email exchange, information about Larry D. Smith's voting and criminal records, and information about Larry G. Smith, including his handgun permit indicating his non-felony status. According to the minutes of the meeting, the board chair "noted that he knew Larry Gray Smith and had spoken to him earlier in the day" to let him know about the charge against him, and Smith "said he is in fact not a felon." The minutes record that Susan McBride, the accuser, attended the meeting but when asked, "She did not provide any additional information regarding the protest." The Republican-majority board dismissed the protest by a unanimous vote.

A couple days later, Larry G. Smith told a reporter with the [News & Observer](#) that he was glad "everything's straightened out." He added, "The sad part of it is I voted for McCrory." (Indeed, the innocent voters Democracy NC interviewed included several Republicans or voters who supported McCrory.)

ALAMANCE COUNTY

Steven Carter, a local Republican activist, said he was asked to file the protests "by an attorney from the Pat McCrory campaign." He thought they would send him some documentation to back up the protest or at least have the material to present at the hearing. But they didn't.

Jennifer Hook came home from the night shift to find a notice about a hearing regarding Carter's charge that she had voted in two different states. It was her anniversary and she planned to get some sleep before a celebration dinner. Instead, "my whole day was ruined," she said. She became "very scared" and called her mother in Maryland. She was worried because she had never voted in person before and thought she may have done something wrong. She wondered if she needed a lawyer. The date of the hearing on the notice had passed, but when she called the Alamance County Board of Elections, she was told it had been rescheduled to that very day, beginning in less than an hour.

Hook rushed to the county elections office in Graham and didn't realize her accuser, Steven Carter, was there. "They asked me if I knew him and I told them I've never seen him before and he said he'd never seen me." After some additional questions, she and a county staff person left to contact election officials in Baltimore who verified that they had sent Hook an absentee ballot for the primary, which was not returned, and did not send her anything for the November election. Armed with that information, they returned to the hearing, and the protest was finally dismissed.

While they were out of the room, the board considered the protest regarding two voters alleged to have current felony convictions. The elections staff found that one voter was indeed serving a felony sentence that began in mid-September. The other voter, Ricky M. Long, had long ago finished his felony sentence and was currently on probation for a misdemeanor offense. After prolonged discussion, the board agreed that he was eligible to vote. Reached in March 2017, Long was not happy with being accused of voter fraud. "That's crazy," he told Democracy North Carolina. "I've voted in the past four elections. No problem. Now somebody's saying this about me!? That don't make any sense."

Steven Carter, who signed the protest, also wound up feeling frustrated by the experience. He expected to see the McCrory attorney at the hearing with solid evidence. A Republican attorney attended but had nothing to offer. "I was kind of left screwed," Carter told us. The whole thing "was a pain in the butt," he said. "I won't do it again."

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

Jerry Reinoehl, a Republican activist who has challenged voters in the county in the past, told Democracy North Carolina that the "McCrory legal defense team" asked him to file two protests – one naming a voter "adjudged guilty of a felony," according to the protest, and the other naming seven voters who the protest said were "known to have voted in multiple states." The two protests with Reinoehl's signature were sent to the Cumberland County Board of Elections in an email on November 17 by attorney Erin Clark of the HVJT law firm.

Clark told Reinoehl he didn't need to attend the preliminary hearing for the protest, but he went

anyway – and nobody from the McCrory team showed up. “I was left to hang out to dry,” he said. “I suspected I would be disappointed.” He’s been “victimized” by the poor research of the Republican Party in the past, he said, so he did his own research before the meeting, using the commercial website BeenVerified and his frequent downloads of records from the State Board of Elections.

He easily confirmed the person identified with a felony had been convicted in early October, but he could only confirm that one of the seven people accused of voting in two states had done so. The others seemed to be cases of confusing a Jr. and Sr. or some other form of “mistaken identity,” he said. He was disappointed that the McCrory/NCGOP legal team “didn’t do their research to sort it out,” and he wrote them a memo criticizing their inferior work.

“I was left to hang out to dry. . . . [The McCrory/NCGOP legal team] didn’t do their research.” - Jerry Reinoehl, local Republican who filed the protest

At the preliminary hearing on November 21, Reinoehl presented some information, but only the board chair supported taking the matter to a full hearing; the [protests were dismissed](#) by a 2 to 1 vote. Reinoehl was unhappy the protests were lumped together into one motion, but when asked if he told the board that the focus should be on the two illegal votes he personally verified and that six of the accused were innocent, he said, “No, I didn’t let them know. I intended to withdraw those if it got past the initial hearing.” He still feels part of his protest is “going to be successful” because details about the two voters were sent to the State Board of Elections and referred to the local district attorney for further action.

One of the innocent voters doesn’t see the protest as “successful.” Betty B. Adams, accused of double voting, was outraged when she received the elections board’s notice about the charge against her. “I was literally shocked. I was upset for several days,” she said. “I was thinking about suing whoever was behind this.” She’s been involved in grassroots politics for years and is disturbed to see “things going backwards.” She called the protests part of a “voter suppression” effort.

BUNCOMBE COUNTY

Attorney Steven Saxe of the Virginia law firm sent two protests to Buncombe County Board of Election on November 23 – nearly a week after his colleague Erin Clark learned about her faulty protest for Stokes County and several days after multiple counties dismissed protests for a lack of evidence or mistaken identity. The two protests were signed by Eldon S. (Buck) Newton III, the losing Republican candidate for Attorney General. One protest alleged a dead person cast a ballot, which turned out to mean the person died before Election Day, after casting a ballot early. The other protest from Newton said the board “must invalidate” the ballot of Earl Lordman of Asheville because he is a person “adjudged guilty of a felony.” But that accusation is completely false. Lordman is not serving a felony sentence, nor has he ever been “adjudged guilty of a felony.”

The protest against Lordman is unusual not only because it was filed after canvass day by a candidate for NC Attorney General; it was also accompanied by a sworn affidavit supporting the research behind the allegation. The affidavit from Ryan Terrill, who described himself as “the political director for the Pat McCrory Committee,” said the McCrory Committee used “publicly available data” to compare criminal conviction and voting records “to identify voters who had improperly voted due to not having active voting rights for the 2016 General Election.” And then he says, “To enhance the accuracy of these comparisons, the Pat McCrory Committee matched with multiple criteria, including both name and age information.”

The affidavit included an appendix with copies of the criminal record of “Earl Lordman Jr,” which included his age and date of birth. But the voter registration records show Earl Lordman Jr. lives at a different address in Buncombe County than the one given in the protest, which is the address for Earl Lordman Sr. Voter records confirm the ages of the two men are clearly different. Despite the sworn affidavit, the protest confused Earl Lordman Jr. and Sr. Furthermore, the criminal record provided with the affidavit shows that Earl Lordman Jr. is not even serving a felony sentence; it shows he is on probation for a misdemeanor conviction, and the sentence for his prior felony conviction was completed in May 2014. In a double mistake, the

protest confused Earl Lordman Sr. with his son, who it turns out is also eligible to vote.

Lordman Sr. was unhappy and frustrated by being falsely accused. “Why are they causing a problem where there is no problem,” he wondered. He thought “a higher threshold” of proof should be required before someone could misuse the system to put people’s names in the public record as committing voter fraud. “It’s sad,” he said. “It should be stopped.”

WAYNE COUNTY

Albert Artis Sr. of Pikeville was accused of voting in North Carolina and Georgia by Brent Heath, chair of the Wayne County Republican Party. The protest was emailed to the Wayne County Board of Elections by Steve Roberts, an attorney for the Pat McCrory campaign with the HVJT law firm. It said that Artis’ cast an “invalid” ballot because he was “known to have voted in multiple states.” We reached Artis in February 2017 at his son’s home in Georgia. He explained that he and his wife spend several months each year in Georgia and often vote by absentee mail in North Carolina’s fall elections. Told about being accused of also voting in Georgia in 2016, he said, “That’s not right. It’s not me. They’ve got me confused with somebody else.”

Wayne County’s daily newspaper, [The Goldsboro News Argus](#), wrote about the Wayne County Board of Elections meeting where the protest against Artis was discussed, publishing his name and his hometown. “The people that filed the protest did not show up and did not present any evidence,” Wayne County Elections Director Dane Beavers told the paper. “We had no grounds to rule on so it was dismissed.”

But the accuser, Brent Heath, still thinks Albert Artis Sr. committed voted fraud. Reached at his home on March 5, 2017, Heath said that he filed the protest “in conjunction with the McCrory campaign.” He said, “They provided some information but I did the research.” He felt “confident it is accurate.” His research found that Artis voted in Georgia and was registered at the same Georgia address where his North Carolina absentee ballot was sent. When told that Artis was staying at the home of his son Albert Artis Jr. and perhaps he got the two men confused, Heath insisted

he was “absolutely” certain Artis Sr. voted in Georgia. He said “the date of birth and everything” matched up with Artis Sr. But Heath is wrong. A call to the Gwinnett County Voter Registration and Elections Office revealed that Artis Sr., age 73, is not registered, but Artis Jr. is. He’s the one who voted in the November 2016 election from the Lawrenceville, GA address, not Albert Artis Sr.

HALIFAX COUNTY

On November 17, Steve Roberts, attorney for Pat McCrory’s campaign at the HVJT law firm, sent a protest to the Halifax County Board of Elections signed by R. J. Myrick, vice chair of the Halifax County Republican Party. In the protest, Myrick alleged that “a scheme to operate an absentee ballot mail” was funded by the state Democratic Party through a local African-American political action committee and “used to harvest ballots voting for the Democratic slate of candidates.” Myrick lists Jeff Hauser of Raleigh, then director of media affairs for the Pat McCrory campaign, as a witness of the “misconduct” which “appears to be similar to the pattern of witness signatures found in Bladen County, whereby one individual” witnesses many absentee ballots.

Myrick told Democracy NC that the protest was put together by the McCrory campaign or Republican headquarters in Raleigh. He said, “They couldn’t find anybody to sign it so I agreed. I’m retired and have the time.” He’s not sure why the county Republican Party chair didn’t sign, but they seemed in a rush to get the protest filed. “They were desperate to find someone.”

The protest named two individuals who witnessed “at least 18” and “at least 6” absentee ballots, respectively. There is no law against a person being a witness for multiple absentee voters. Nevertheless, Myrick’s protest asked the county elections board to “conduct a full investigation into these absentee ballots witnessed by multiple individuals, and review all witness signatures on these absentee ballot envelopes to look for evidence of obvious ballot harvesting.” It then declared, “The confirmation of these allegations would cast doubt on the outcome of any number of elections up and down the ballot, including the historically close race for Governor.”

At [the protest hearing](#), Halifax County Board of

Elections Chair Sandra Partin, a Republican, said she reviewed Myrick's allegations about multiple ballots witnessed by the same person. "He doesn't go on to say how this is illegal," Partin said. "It's not. The law does not put a limit on how many witnesses [there can be]. He offers no proof as to why it should be illegal." The board found no evidence of misconduct and unanimously dismissed Myrick's protest.

After the meeting, the McCrory campaign told the [News & Observer](#) that it would appeal the Halifax County ruling and that similar allegations were being filed in a total of 12 counties about illegal absentee mills funded by the Democratic Party. "The evidence of this voter fraud must be taken seriously if we are going to have any faith in our system," declared Ricky Diaz, spokesman for the McCrory campaign.

U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield attended the hearing in Halifax County and came away with a different conclusion. "It's obviously a coordinated effort by Pat McCrory as he is going down in defeat to find some kind of creative ways to reverse his defeat," he told the N&O. "There's a direct correlation between the counties that were selected for challenges and the active participation of black political action committees. This is targeting the African-American community and their participation in the election."

Katherine Turner, one of the two individuals named in the Halifax County protest for signing as a witness to absentee ballots, told Democracy NC that she was "really shocked how that could be voter fraud." She received a notice about the hearing but it didn't say she needed to attend, so she didn't. She didn't see how being a witness could be a crime and bristled at the insinuation that she signed or filled out ballots in place of the voter. "That never happened," she said. "When I got word that I might be charged with voter fraud, I thought 'let them bring it on' because I know I did nothing wrong." She said she found the whole experience confusing, unnerving and very unpleasant.

BLADEN COUNTY

The McCrory-NCGOP claim about "a scheme to operate an absentee ballot mail" arose from an unusually large number of votes for a write-in candidate on the absentee ballots in Bladen County. The county board of elections began studying those

ballots and alerted the State Board of Elections of possible wrongdoing. The handwriting of one of the witness signatures often matched the handwriting on the write-in line of the ballot; if the witness helped the voter by filling in the candidate's name on the ballot, a box indicating the assistance should have been checked on the ballot envelope. There was a much bigger concern: Did the witness forge the voter's signature and illegally cast a ballot for another person?

On election night, the rumors of illegal voting caught up with L. McCrae Dowless, the incumbent candidate for Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor. He watched the returns at the county board of elections office and saw the large number of votes for his opponent, Franklin Graham, the write-in candidate. The next day, he began asking more questions, and soon the chair of the Bladen County Republican Party called to see if he would talk with an attorney from the McCrory campaign. A handwriting expert had already been retained from the Charlotte area, and the McCrory-NCGOP team was ready to blow up her findings with a media splash and legal protest.

Dowless told Democracy NC he authorized an attorney from the HVJT law firm to sign his name to the protest and submit it to the Bladen County Board of Elections on November 15. He didn't see it or know the full extent of its allegations. The protest didn't hold back. It claimed "literally hundreds of fraudulent ballots were cast" as the result of "a massive scheme to run an absentee ballot mill involving hundreds of ballots, perpetrated by and through the Bladen County Improvement Association PAC," a political committee funded with donations from its local members, the NC Democrat Party, and Democratic candidates.

The McCrory campaign's press release said the evaluation of ballot envelopes by a handwriting expert provided "shocking evidence resulting from a blatant scheme to try to impact the voting results of an entire county and perhaps even sway statewide and federal elections," including the gubernatorial race. "With hundreds of fraudulent votes found in just one North Carolina county for a straight Democratic ticket, close examination of this election is required to make sure the true winner of the election is properly determined," said HVJT attorney Jason Torchinsky, described [in the release](#) as legal counsel for the Pat McCrory Committee Legal

Defense Fund. “The staggering evidence of voter fraud in Bladen County and the number of similar PACs that the North Carolina Democratic Party donated to shortly before the start of early vote requires close examination throughout the state.”

The State Board of Elections already had investigators interviewing voters and members of the Bladen County Improvement Association PAC (BCIAC). After countless hours of research, local meetings and protest hearings, lots of statewide media attention, and an appeals hearing in Raleigh, the truth finally came out: neither the McCrory campaign nor the state’s investigators could find a single case where a BCIAC member or volunteer forged a voter’s signature or marked the ballot against the voter’s wishes. At the end of the appeals hearing in Raleigh, the State Board members voted to dismiss the protest. (Ironically, the only evidence of a forged ballot presented at the appeals hearing pointed to a volunteer associated with Dowless’ campaign who may have voted a stolen absentee ballot.)

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

Raymond Dyer, chair of the Northampton County Republican Party, emailed his protest about an “absentee ballot mill” to the Northampton County Board of Elections. Dyer told Democracy NC that he “got the stuff” from Steve Roberts, the McCrory campaign attorney with HVJT. He acknowledged that the protest didn’t have details about his county and said Roberts explained he “couldn’t provide any because of the ongoing investigation in Bladen County.” The Northampton protest used the same language, format and general accusation as other protests about “harvesting” absentee ballots. This cookie-cutter approach often led to sloppy errors in the protests. For example, Raymond Dyer’s protest in the Northampton County included this statement: “To confirm the integrity of the absentee ballots cast in Durham County, my representative visited the county’s Board of Elections on November 16, 2016 . . . to visually inspect the absentee ballots . . . I was denied access to visually review these documents.” It is doubtful that Dyer went to Durham to review ballots cast in Northampton County.

Dyer’s emailed protest apparently never reached the Northampton County Board of Elections. Board

director Susie Squire said she heard about the protest but never received it, so no action was taken by her board.

GREENE COUNTY

Sara Sparks, chair of the Greene County Republican County Party, hand delivered her protest alleging “a scheme to operate an absentee ballot mill.” It also forgot to change “Durham County” in one part to “Greene County,” but it included specific allegations, based on research by McCrory campaign staffer Jeff Hauser, that three Greene County residents witnessed “at least 72,” “at least 11,” and “at least 10 other” ballots, respectively.

Sparks said one of the staff people with the McCrory campaign asked her to sign the protest and put her in touch with the attorney who prepared it. “I really didn’t write it or know anything about it,” she told Democracy NC. “My name is on it, but I didn’t write it.” She hand delivered it to the Greene County Board of Elections and thought they handled the protest very well.

Board of Elections director Steve Hines said his office took the time to compare the voter’s signature on absentee ballot to the signatures of the witnesses and to the signature on the voter’s registration card. They found no irregularities. In addition, the individuals named in the protest for witnessing multiple ballots took the trouble of bringing sworn affidavits to the preliminary hearing attesting that they did not sign ballots in place of voters.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Danny Pearce, a vice chair of the Franklin County Republican Party, delivered a protest about “an absentee ballot mill” to the Franklin County Board of Elections on November 17. The protest references the one filed in Bladen County and said that Emily Weeks, a staff member of the NC Republican Party in Raleigh (now press secretary for the NC GOP), “attempted to inspect absentee ballots or envelopes in Franklin County and was denied twice.”

Lisa Goswick, director of the Franklin County Board of Elections, said Emily Weeks first came on November 9, the day after the election, which shows how quickly the McCrory/NCGOP team began

taking action. Goswick asked her to come back when the crush of processing ballots slacked up a little. Pearce came several day later and received permission to look at the absentee ballot envelopes after the county board met about his protest.

Pearce told Democracy NC that he and his wife and Larry Norman, an attorney from Louisburg “sent by the Republican Party,” looked over the ballot envelopes and found “about 40” that appeared to be witnessed by the same people. Pearce said the state GOP also sent “a young guy” who took notes and “was very evasive with us.” Pearce said the protest and follow-up seemed to be coordinated through the attorney at the party, Tom Stark, who “was smack in the middle of it all.”

Pearce became more suspicious when he saw that the witnesses were also active with a local African-American group, the Franklin County PAC, which the protest said received a donation from the NC Democratic Party. He compared the handwriting on their witness signatures to the voters’ signatures and found nothing irregular. “I was hoping it would turn up something,” he said, “but nothing was found.”

MOORE COUNTY

The protest for Moore County was sent by email from Steve Roberts of the HVJT law firm and signed by John Rowerdink, chair of the Moore County Republican Party. It declared that ballots of four individuals should be invalidated because they “were cast by the following persons known to have voted in multiple states.” Glenda Clendenin, director of the Moore County Board of Elections, said her staff researched the allegations and notified the voters about a preliminary hearing scheduled to determine if sufficient evidence justified holding a full hearing. Clendenin’s research uncovered one of the rare cases where the evidence indicated that someone did vote in two states in the 2016 general election. Kaley I. Mulder, one of the four people accused by Rowerdink, apparently voted in Florida and North Carolina – and then she moved out of the county fairly quickly. The Moore County Board of Elections has referred her case to the local district attorney and the State Board of Elections.

The other three voters accused by Rowedink are completely innocent and still upset that he could so easily begin a legal proceeding against them with no

evidence. “I was shocked and horrified and furious to learn our name was on a list with people who were alleged to have broken a federal law,” said Anne Hughes who was accused with her husband. “There should be a higher burden before people are accused of voting in two states,” added William Hughes. “Everybody should have the same right to be able to vote. It’s the bedrock of democracy.”

The fourth voter accused, Carol Ann Turner, made a special effort to cancel her registration in Maryland before the general election. “They need to provide proof before they accuse me of voting twice,” she said about her accuser. She wondered why false claims of voter fraud are growing and getting more attention. “Where are the laws that protect those of us who haven’t done anything wrong and allow those who want to make up these stories to be able to do that?” Turner said what she feels “is disbelief, it’s anger, it’s frustration, but most of all it’s sadness that this is where we’re at.”

Rowerdink, the county Republican Party chair, has no regrets about filing the protest. “It sounded credible and I wanted to support the governor’s campaign and didn’t want fraud to occur,” he told Democracy North Carolina. He had “no problem with filing it,” but he said he withdrew the protest at the preliminary hearing because “the legal team never provided evidence to support the claims.” He said he had an email exchange with McCrory’s team before the hearing, trying to get something to back up the protest. “They were not very responsive,” he said. “They left me hanging.” Lacking anything more to present to the board, he withdrew the protest. He feels his effort was justified because the board’s staff learned through its own research that one of the voters had voted twice.

LEE COUNTY

On November 17, attorney Steven P. Saxe of the HVJT law firm sent a protest to the Lee County Board of Elections that was signed by Charles Staley, chair of the Lee County Republican Party. The protest falsely accused one voter of voting while serving a felony sentence. Staley’s protest said he made the accusation, “Based on a review of the public records.” However, records at the NC Department of Public Safety clearly shows that the voter completed his felony sentence in January 1997, nearly a decade before the protest.

Staley told Democracy North Carolina he “spearheaded the complaint” but it came from the McCrory campaign. He didn’t try to verify the information, but after the county board determined that the accused voter had finished his sentence, Staley said he “did my own investigation.” Staley is a former probation officer and has access to a secure system to look up the status of probationers. He used that system to verify that the man was “an eligible voter.”

Staley also said he saw the whole list of people being accused as felony voters by the McCrory campaign, but he didn’t try to verify their status. “I was on the inside of it all,” he said, but he recently retired, gave up his positions with the party, and is moving with his wife to Carteret County. He still believes that McCrory won the election and that votes were illegally added in Durham County after the election to give Roy Cooper and now Attorney General Josh Stein their victories.

James W. Creacy, the voter falsely accused by Staley, didn’t like being pulled into a political fight and publicly charged with voter fraud because of a felony record from many years earlier. He wondered how he could get his record expunged so his name wouldn’t be misused and his past wouldn’t create new problems. “I’m 68 now. It’s not fair,” he said.

BRUNSWICK COUNTY

On November 17, attorney Erin Clark, attorney for Pat McCrory’s campaign at the HVJT law firm, sent a protest to the Brunswick County Board of Elections signed by Joseph Agovino, chair of the Brunswick County Republican Party. The protest accused Joseph D. Golden of voting in two states and said it is based “Upon review of early voting files from other states.” Agovino told Democracy NC that the GOP attorneys informed him they had “ironclad” evidence that Golden voted in Maryland’s general election, so he agreed to sign the protest. However, the Brunswick County Board of Elections staff investigated and learned that Golden, although registered in Maryland earlier in 2016, did not vote there in the November election. The board notified Golden about a preliminary hearing, but said he didn’t need to change his planned trip for that day because the matter would be easily resolved.

However, Golden soon found his name on the

front page of the local newspapers as being charged with voter fraud. Someone on social media wrote, “There’s a cheater amongst us.” Golden was surprised and frustrated by the experience. “This is not how you want to begin living in a new community,” he said.

For his part, Agovino now wonders, “Why did I get myself involved in this crap.” Shortly before the hearing, he contacted the state Republican Party to get documentation from the attorney to back up the claim of double voting, but he was told “she’s left” and they had nothing for him. He felt “hung out to dry,” he told us. “I didn’t have enough information to follow through,” so on the day of the hearing, he withdrew the protest. But by then, the damage to Golden’s reputation and Agovino’s credibility had been done.

***“Why did I get myself involved in this crap”
- Joseph Agovino, after he couldn’t get
the attorney’s help to back up his protest***

GUILFORD COUNTY

Three protests filed in Guilford County say they’re from William C. Porter, but underneath his signature on each one are the words “authorized by / spr,” as in Steve P. Roberts, the HVJT attorney who emailed the protests to the county board of elections. Porter is a leader in the Guilford County Republican Party and attended the preliminary hearing where the county board discussed the protests. He may have thought he was just helping Gov. McCrory, but he got an earful after the hearing from Karen Niehans, one of the people he accused of voting in two states. Several weeks later, Niehans, her husband, and two other voters falsely accused of committing fraud filed [a defamation lawsuit](#) against Porter in Guilford County Superior Court.

Karen Niehans learned about the preliminary hearing from a certified letter sent by the Guilford County Board of Elections. The letter said Mr. and Mrs. Niehans’ “eligibility to vote” had been questioned and they should attend the hearing, but attendance wasn’t required. Karen recounted other confusing aspects of the ordeal to Democracy NC, including being sworn in at the hearing and grilled by a board member, “Can you prove you didn’t vote

in another state?” Taken aback, she and her husband tried to explain they were new to the state and only voted once. Then Karen remembered she had an email exchange on her phone with an elections official in Wisconsin that included her refusing the official’s offer to send an absentee ballot. The board finally voted to dismiss the protest. On her way out, Karen [went to the back of the room](#) to confront her accuser, William Porter. “Why did you do this to us?” she demanded. He had no answer for her.

Gabriel Thabet, a registered Republican, finished parole for his felony sentence 17 years ago, but Porter accused him of illegal voting in 2016. In an opinion column published in the [Greensboro News & Record](#), Thabet said the accusation “scared me to death.” He thought he must have done something wrong, but finally realized “I was the person who was wronged.” He said he decided to “fight back” by joining the defamation lawsuit against Porter. “At the national level, accusations have been made that millions of people voted illegally in this past election. These are broad and baseless allegations with an apparent intent to intimidate people – like me – from voting,” he wrote. “Now is the time that voters fight back against false accusations.”

ORANGE COUNTY

On November 17, Orange County Republican Party Vice-Chair Evelyn Poole-Kober accused six voters of voting in multiple states; they were mostly UNC-CH students or recent graduates. Steven Saxe of the HVJT law firm sent the protest to the Orange County Board of Elections in an email attachment. Tracy Reams, director of the elections board, followed up with Poole-Kober, who said she suspected the voters cast ballots in Maryland in addition to North Carolina. The election board staff contacted officials in Maryland and learned that, while all the voters had previously been registered there, none cast absentee or other ballots in Maryland’s general election.

Poole-Kober did not attend the preliminary hearing on November 18, and no one else provided evidence to support the protest. According to the minutes of the meeting, Board member Jamie Cox noted that “there is a complete lack of substantial evidence that indicate a violation of election laws or other irregularity or misconduct. . . . Mr. Cox felt the protest was filed to delay canvass and frivolous in nature given the fact that the protestor was not

present. Mr. Cox made a motion and Mr. Randall seconded the motion that the protest be dismissed. The motion was unanimous. The Board dismissed the protest at 11:40 am.”

Aysha Nasir, a graduate of UNC and one of the accused voters, initially suspected that her ballot was being challenged because “of my Muslim name.” It made her feel “targeted” and “awfully vulnerable” to be picked out and accused of something she didn’t do. After seeing the names of other voters similarly charged, she realized her name wasn’t the issue, but she still felt subject to arbitrary harassment. “You obey the law, you do all the stuff you’re supposed to, and then some person just randomly, without any burden of proof, can accuse you of breaking the law,” she said.

MECKLENBURG COUNTY

On November 17, attorney Erin Clark with HVJT sent a protest to the Mecklenburg County Board of Elections signed by Brenda Brown, voter registration chair of the Mecklenburg County Republican Party. The protest accused two voters of voting while serving a felony sentence. It is based “Upon review of the North Carolina Department of Corrections active prisoner and parole database.” Brown told [WFAE-FM radio](#) that she filed the protest because “there were things in 2012 and in previous elections that concerned me, and then at the very last minute when our voter ID elections laws were overturned, I was concerned we would see that exact same problem again.” But Brown presented no evidence to back up her claims.

Freddie Williams, who Brown falsely accused of committing voter fraud, is concerned, too. He’s worried that it’s too easy to file irresponsible charges against innocent voters. He thinks “it’s a good idea” for the State Board of Elections to require people to present some evidence to back up their claim before a complaint is accepted.

ROCKINGHAM COUNTY

Local Republican Party activist Thomas Schoolfield hand delivered his protest to the Rockingham County Board of Elections, charging three voters with voting in two states. However, all three accusations proved to be false and the board voted to dismiss the protest.

According to Tina Caldwell, director of the elections board, one of the accused voters had a different middle name and different age from the voter who cast the ballot in the second state, Washington.

The other two voters, Cheryl and James Holcombe, had voted in the Virginia primary but moved to North Carolina, registered and voted only in this state in the general election. “This is all very alarming to us,” Cheryl Holcombe said after learning that she and her husband were accused of voter fraud. Thomas Schoolfield, a trustee of the Rockingham County Community College and retired executive from Burlington Mills, didn’t want to discuss his protest with Democracy NC, saying only that it turned out there was “no record of them having voted in two states.”

FORSYTH COUNTY

On November 17, attorney Steve Roberts with HVJT sent two protests to the CBOE signed by Linda Petrou, vice chair of the Forsyth County Republican Party. One protest named two voters who it said had died – but one of them turned out to be alive. The other protest accused two voters of voting while serving a felony sentence. “It really concerns me when I see people who aren’t eligible to vote voting,” Petrou told the [News & Observer](#). She said she would not have filed the protest “if some lawyer friends of mine hadn’t approached me.” When informed that one of her accused voters was not serving a felon sentence, she sluffed it off: “I don’t think anyone pays attention,” she told the reporter.

The falsely accused voter, Barron R. McCollum, was not amused. “They should at least find out if I’m still considered a felon instead of taking it for granted,” he told Democracy NC. McCollum said he didn’t like the fact that Petrou seemed concerned about voters she thought cheated but not about people who filed bogus protests. He was notified about the preliminary hearing, but the letter arrived after the meeting had already begun. The Forsyth County Board of Elections unanimously dismissed the protest because it received no evidence to substantiate the accusations. Petrou told the [Winston-Salem Journal](#) that the Republican attorney said she didn’t need to attend the elections board meeting. “My understanding was that they had all the information they needed,” she said. “Something fell through the cracks.”

JOHNSTON COUNTY

Denise Rentz, now chair of the Johnston County Republican Party, told Democracy NC she read the protest via email and authorized attorneys at the HVJT law firm to sign her name and submit it on November 17. She was not sure whether the law firm represented the McCrory campaign or NC Republican Party. The two were “on the same page, working together,” she said.

Rentz’s protest is one of several submitted with a signature and then the initials of a Holtzman Vogel attorney under the signature. In this case, the initials are EC, presumably for Erin Clark, although Rentz said Clark is not the woman she talked with; it may have been Gabriela Fallon, an associate at the firm who handled protest submission in a few other counties.

On November 18, the scheduled day for canvass, the Johnston County Board of Elections discussed the protest, read relevant statutes, and made an initial conclusion that it amounted to a late challenge of the registration eligibility of four voters based on their alleged felony convictions, not a protest asserting an irregularity or mistake that might influence the election outcome. One board member said it looked like an effort “to shoehorn challenges that have passed their deadline into a protest.” Since the canvass had to be postponed for other reasons, the board delayed their decision and eventually forwarded the protest to the State Board of Elections.

Rentz thought the county board handled everything properly and “professionally.” She agreed that the basic problem was “the lawyers didn’t submit the paperwork properly.” She thought it was “too bad” that the county couldn’t do anything to disqualify the votes, but she understood that four votes would not have changed the election outcome at the county level.

Actually, at least one of the four voters accused of voter fraud is completely innocent. Johnny L. Benson is 71 years old and has a different middle initial from the 48-year-old man serving a felony sentence, who did not vote in 2016. Benson says he votes “every time” and used early voting 2016 to join his wife. He believes the board of elections should change its procedures so somebody like him can’t be so easily accused of a crime.

GRANVILLE COUNTY

Floyd Adsit, chair of the Granville County Republican Party, recalled working with “a hired gun out of Virginia” – an attorney named “Steve” – to prepare a protest and have it filed. Tonya Burnette, director of the Granville County Board of Elections, said she received the protest as an attachment to a November 17th email from Steve Roberts of the HVJT law firm. The protest accused one voter of voting while being “adjudged guilty of a felony.”

Burnette forwarded information about the voter to the county sheriff, who wrote back that a search of the voter’s name and birthdate established that he “has not been convicted of any felony charge.” Adsit told Democracy NC that he initially “got information from the attorney” about the voter’s felony conviction, but upon receiving a copy of the sheriff’s statement, Adsit immediately sent Burnette a memo withdrawing his protest – the same day it was filed. “I didn’t have reason to doubt the sheriff. I know him,” said Adsit. “That was enough for me.”

WAKE COUNTY

Charles Hellwig, now chair of the Wake County Republican Party, filed three protests that were emailed to the county board of elections on November 17 by Gabriela Fallon of the HVJT law firm. One protest named two voters who the county board confirmed died after they cast early ballots. Another protest named three “persons adjudged guilty of felony” who cast “invalid ballots” – except two of the three were obvious cases of mistaken identity; the innocent voters had family members with different ages on felony probation.

The third protest listed 22 individuals accused of voting in Wake County and in another state in the November 2016 election. At the preliminary hearing, an attorney for the McCrory campaign presented a spreadsheet with information about the voters and people with similar names who supposedly voted in another state. The spreadsheet included obvious mismatched names and it listed the majority of voters as all voting in Maryland on the same day. By a 2-to-1 vote, the Wake County Board of Elections dismissed the protest. Subsequent research confirmed the bogus quality of the spreadsheet.

Robert Chadwick, who moved to North Carolina from Virginia, was disturbed to learn he was on the list of alleged double voters. “It was a total shock,” he said. “Someone just randomly pulled my name out of a hat and said, ‘That guy cheated.’ It really hurt me.” He thought the current process makes it too easy to claim someone committed voter fraud without any evidence. He added, “Whatever needs to be done to stop this in the future, I think now is the time to let’s push this button and make that happen.”

BEAUFORT COUNTY

Joseph Knox volunteered with the McCrory campaign throughout the summer and fall of 2016, and at age 20 he served as the youngest delegate in the nation to the Republican National Convention. He told Democracy NC that Robert Andrews, state grassroots director for the McCrory campaign, asked him to file a protest being prepared by attorneys and he agreed. Erin Clark of the HVJT law firm sent the protest to the county board of elections by email on Saturday, November 19. It listed three voters “adjudged guilty of a felony” and said their ballots should be disqualified.

The Washington Daily Times published the names of the three voters in its [November 22](#) edition, but later that day, the county board dismissed the protest. In a front-page story on [November 23](#), the newspaper said, “Knox, who wanted [the three] ballots excluded from vote counts, failed to appear at the preliminary hearing conducted by the board.”

Knox told Democracy NC that the attorney said he didn’t need to show up at the hearing. When he learned the protest was dismissed, he notified the attorney and was told “they would try to follow up.” He didn’t hear anything later from the attorney; meanwhile, he did hear from several friends and party members who chastised him for not attending the meeting. That attention really bothered him. “I was between a rock and a hard place,” he said. The attorneys said he didn’t need to attend to defend the protest, but the county board “threw it out” because no evidence was presented to back up the charges.

It’s doubtful that Knox will jump so quickly to accuse people of voter fraud in a legal document. That’s good – but it’s a little late for one of the people Knox falsely accused and the newspaper named as possibly linked to voter fraud. Sylvester

D. Ore is not serving a felony sentence and has not lost his right to vote. “I don’t like it,” he said about being accused of fraud. “That’s saying I’ve gotten involved with wrong kind of people. That’s not me!”

HARNETT COUNTY

B. Carolyn Elmore, vice chair of the Harnett County Republican Party submitted her protest by hand to the county board of elections on November 18, 2016. She accused Michael Conwell of voting while being “adjudged guilty of a felony.” The elections staff

investigated the protest and quickly found that Conwell was not serving a felony sentence. In fact, his supervised probation for a misdemeanor conviction had ended; his status with the NC Department of Public Safety is shown as “inactive” on its public search site.

Elmore didn’t want to talk with Democracy NC about her protest. “That was five months ago,” she said. “I’ve put that behind me.” But Conwell is still unhappy he was falsely accused of voter fraud. “It was wrong,” he said. “It should never have happened.” ■

County	Protestor	Category	Number Voters
Alamance	Carter	Felony Sentence	2
Alamance	Carter	Voted 2 States	1
Alexander	Sims	Deceased	1
Beaufort	Knox	Felony Sentence	3
Bertie	Terry	Felony Sentence	1
Bladen	Dowless	Absentee Fraud	~275
Brunswick	Agovino	Voted 2 States	1
Buncombe	Newton	Deceased	2
Buncombe	Newton	Felony Sentence	1
Burke	Parris	Deceased	3
Cabarrus	Kennedy	Deceased	5
Cabarrus	Kennedy	Felony Sentence	1
Carteret	Newton/ Pruett	Felony Sentence	1
Cleveland	Bowland	Felony Sentence	1
Craven	Mischka	Deceased	2
Craven	Mischka	Felony Sentence	1
Cumberland	Reinoehl	Felony Sentence	1
Cumberland	Reinoehl	Voted 2 States	7
Davidson	Younts	Deceased	1
Durham	Posthill	Absentee Fraud	0
Durham	Posthill	Felony Sentence	7
Durham	Posthill	Voted 2 States	17
Forsyth	Petrou	Deceased	2
Forsyth	Petrou	Felony Sentence	2
Franklin	Pearce	Absentee Fraud	42
Granville	Adsit	Felony Sentence	1
Greene	Sparks	Absentee Fraud	~94

County	Protestor	Category	Number Voters
Guilford	Porter	Deceased	1
Guilford	Porter	Felony Sentence	8
Guilford	Porter	Voted 2 States	9
Halifax	Myrick	Absentee Fraud	~24
Halifax	Myrick	Felony Sentence	1
Harnett	Elmore	Felony Sentence	1
Hoke	Hartman	Felony Sentence	1
Iredell	Corbin	Deceased	3
Jackson	Hammond	Felony Sentence	1
Johnston	Rentz	Felony Sentence	4
Lee	Staley	Felony Sentence	1
Mecklenberg	Brown	Felony Sentence	2
Moore	Rowerdink	Voted 2 States	4
New Hanover	Anderson	Absentee Fraud	0
New Hanover	Sengsoul- avong	Felony Sentence	2
Northampton	Dyer	Absentee Fraud	0
Orange	Poole- Kober	Voted 2 States	6
Person	Wrenn	Deceased	1
Rockingham	Schoolfield	Voted 2 States	3
Stokes	McBride	Felony Sentence	1
Wake	Bunn	Absentee Fraud	0
Wake	Hellwig	Deceased	2
Wake	Hellwig	Felony Sentence	3
Wake	Hellwig	Voted 2 States	22
Wayne	Heath	Felony Sentence	1
Wayne	Heath	Voted 2 States	1