

Democracy North Carolina

1821 Green St., Durham, NC 27705 • 919-489-1931 or 286-6000 • democracy-nc.org

STATEMENT TO STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

RE: 08 NCAC 02 .0111 – ELECTION PROTEST FORM

Bob Hall, Executive Director, July 31, 2017

I want to focus my comments on the comprehensive changes recommended to the Election Protest Form. Overall, Democracy North Carolina supports these changes because the current Protest Form can be too easily misused. Last year, highly partisan agents capitalized on problems with the Protest Form to accuse hundreds of innocent voters with voter fraud in order delay the official canvass for weeks. They used charges of voter fraud as a political weapon for partisan gain.

Serious problems with the Protest Form meant that dozens of them were submitted (1) without the protester attesting that the information was true; (2) without providing any evidence to back up their allegations; (3) without disclosing the assistance of candidates, attorneys or others in making the accusations; but (4) filled with innuendo and false information meant for a propaganda campaign, not a legal proceeding.

The recommended changes address all these problems, and we support them.

Last year, Pat McCrory's campaign and his Republican allies used the form to make outrageous claims of voter fraud; it could be a different party next time. They used dozens of Protest Forms to accuse more than 600 voters of committing voter fraud or casting illegal absentee ballots – but it turns out more than 95% of those cases were false. More than 95%. Democracy North Carolina spent months investigating the cases, and we are submitting that report, the “Deceit of Voter Fraud.” It can be found at: <https://democracync.org/research/deceit-voter-fraud/>

The report documents that hundreds of voters were needlessly maligned. Many had their names in newspaper stories for being accused of voter fraud, some were the topic of social media attacks.

Their stories need to be part of the record today – so we’re also including a link to audio and video tapes of the voters.

<https://democracync.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Democracy-NC-SBOE-call-1.mp3>
<http://demnc.co/facesoffraud>

For example, Anne Hughes of Moore County told us, “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.” She and her husband William were falsely accused of voting in two states by an agent for McCrory’s reelection campaign.

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 new resident of Brunswick County, had his name appear on the front pages of three area newspapers. Someone on social media wrote, “There’s a cheater amongst us.” Golden felt humiliated and upset. “This is not how you want to begin living in a new community,” he said.

Carol Turner, a falsely accused Moore County voter, 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?” 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.”

Another falsely accused voter, Robert Chadwick of Wake County, said, “It was a total shock. . . . Someone just randomly pulled my name out of a hat and said, ‘That guy cheated.’ It really hurt me.” 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.”

Yes, let’s make it happen today.