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NEWS RELEASE

FDLE Investigates Statewide Voter Fraud

For Immediate Release

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During the last several weeks, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement has received numerous complaints and has initiated several investigations related to voting irregularities from Supervisors of Elections, the Secretary of State's Office, and private citizens regarding widespread and sometimes organized efforts to commit voter fraud. These complaints are regarding voter registrations, party affiliation forms, and absentee ballots.

In some cases, persons who believed they were signing petitions later found out that their signatures or possible forged signatures were used to complete a fraudulent voter registration. In other instances, it appears that workers hired to obtain legitimate voter registrations filled in the information on the registration forms that should have been completed by the registrants. On several occasions, workers appear to have signed multiple voter registrations themselves using information obtained during the registration drive. In many of the situations complained about, the workers were being paid on the basis of each registration form submitted.

FDLE has on-going investigations in south, central and northern counties of Florida. Additionally, widespread submissions of suspected fraudulent voter applications have been reported so far in Bay, Alachua and Orange counties.

The State Attorney's Office in Jacksonville is investigating similar voter fraud issues that may have occurred in their jurisdiction.

One of the groups whose workers have been connected with the widespread voter irregularities is the Association of Community Organizations For Reform Now, Inc (ACORN). As reported in the national press, ACORN workers and their voter registration efforts are also under investigation in several states, including Colorado and Ohio.

To combat such widespread efforts to commit voter fraud during this elections process, FDLE has engaged in a statewide approach to voter fraud issues.. Regional task forces have already been created to address voter safety issues. These same elections task forces will focus their investigative efforts at groups, such as ACORN, to identify those persons responsible for illegally hiring workers to obtain fraudulent voter registrations or absentee ballots as well as those workers who are suspected of falsifying thousands of voter applications. Each task force will communicate directly with local law enforcement authorities, the state attorney's offices, the FBI and especially the Supervisors of Elections offices to determine the scope and the nature of any organized voter fraud in their area. Each regional task force will also exchange necessary information to identify those suspected of committing voter fraud, as well as those person victimized by these voter fraud efforts. This elections task force approach and cooperative sharing of resources will greatly assist FDLE's investigative efforts to identify, arrest, and successfully prosecute those groups or person(s) who have committed voter fraud.

“While we conduct this investigation, we are mindful that our number one priority will be to protect the rights of those individuals that are eligible to vote, and allow them the opportunity to do so,” said FDLE Commissioner Guy Tunnell. “Our agents will do nothing that will impede or hinder that process.”

While the details of any active criminal investigations cannot be discussed, FDLE will be vigorously pursuing investigations of such voter irregularities. It is important for citizens to be aware and take the following steps:

- Verify with the local Supervisors of Election that your voter registration information is accurate and up-to-date
- Bring your current voter registration and some form of valid photo identification with you to your polling place
- Report any irregularities or suspected voter fraud affecting you to your local FDLE office

In Florida, most violations of voter fraud are a third-degree felony, punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$5,000 fine. Each fraudulent voter application, registration, or absentee ballot can constitute a separate felony charge.

FDLE urges citizens to remain alert for signs of voter registration fraud and to protect your precious right to vote by reporting any suspected fraud to law enforcement.

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