

Questions and Answers on Minnesota Majority and its Research into Election Integrity Issues

Who is Minnesota Majority?

Minnesota Majority is a non-partisan grassroots advocacy organization working to promote traditional values in public policy. We have traditionally focused on issues like limited government, fiscal responsibility, health care reform and immigration enforcement.

How did you get involved in election investigation?

It was really by accident. It all began about two months prior to the November 2008 election. In the course doing some mailings using the public version of the Minnesota voter registration file, we discovered some strange irregularities in the data. We decided to take a closer look at the voter registration records and found things like deceased people on the rolls and non-existent voter registration addresses. We documented our findings in a letter to Secretary of State Mark Ritchie in mid-October and requested that he investigate these irregularities prior to the November election.

Secretary Ritchie responded by convening a press conference, surrounding himself with a number of county election officials, Ritchie dismissed our concerns and assured voters that Minnesota had the best electoral system in the nation.

The Secretary of State's office told us that it was not their job to investigate election problems and directed us to contact the county attorneys in the counties in which these problems occurred.

When it became clear that Secretary Ritchie was not planning to take any action, we mobilized some volunteers to investigate the inconsistencies by contacting voters to confirm the accuracy of their voter registration records. Secretary Ritchie responded by filing a trumped-up complaint with the US Justice Department claiming that our volunteers were involved in voter intimidation.

It was at this point that we decided to pursue another angle in our investigation. We sent letters to 30 county attorneys and county election officials requesting a formal investigation into what appeared to be double voting on the part of about 100 individuals. We also sent a letter to the Department of Justice requesting a formal investigation into what we believed to be violations of the Help America Vote Act by Secretary of State Mark Ritchie.

What was the response to your inquiries?

Fewer than half of the county attorneys responded to our request, which in itself is a violation of Minnesota law. Those that did were largely dismissive our concerns. Our request for records related to the election went unanswered by the Secretary of States office. We also sent certified letters to the US Justice Department on November 17, 2008 and again on October 5, 2009 requesting an investigation. There has been no response from the DOJ.

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What were your findings in the 2008 Election?

Our review of the 2008 election records revealed many concerning irregularities:

- Probably the most serious problem is that there were 40,000 more ballots than voters accounted for in the state's voter history file. The Secretary of State has publicly acknowledged this fact, but attributes it to recordkeeping problems.
- Over 40,000 returned postal verification postcards. Minnesota has a 50-year old process of trying to verify voter registrations. Upon receiving and processing a new voter registration card, election officials mail a post card to the address listed on the voter's registration form. If the postcard is not returned by the postal service, election officials assume that the individual completing the card actually exists. If the postcard is returned, election officials are suppose to flag the voter's registration record to be challenged when they next show-up to vote.
- Deceased voters – we found several hundred individuals on voter roles that appeared to be deceased. Our research showed that several of these individuals actually voted in the 2008 election. Our Secretary of State responded by stating these were simply data entry errors on the part of election workers. But this response fails to address why deceased people are on the voter registration roles to begin with. State and federal law requires that deceased voters be removed from the roles.
- Felons – we identified thousands of potential felons that voted in the 2008 election. Minnesota has 87 counties statewide.
- Non-Citizens –while our ability to research this has been thwarted by public officials who have refused to grant us access to the appropriate records, we have found evidence suggesting non-citizens did in fact vote in the 2008 election.
- Double Voting – we have over 200 cases in which it appears one individual cast more than one ballot in the 2008 election.

What did you do about it?

We initially notified the Secretary of State's office regarding the discrepancy in the vote totals. They eventually got back to us and acknowledged there appeared to be a system-wide problem. We asked when they expected to have the problem corrected. Their response was that they did not know.

It was at this point that we decided to initiate a lawsuit against the Secretary of State and a number of county election officials. State law requires that election records must be updated 6 weeks after the election. But here it was nearly 28 weeks after the election and the Secretary of State could not balance their books.

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What is your goal?

The integrity of our election system is the cornerstone of our democratic republic. If the people can't have trust in their elections, how can they have trust in their government? We have called for specific three reforms in Minnesota's election laws:

- **Verification of Voter Identity:** Require voters to present a government-issued photographic identification in order to vote in an election; and
- **Verification of Voter Eligibility:** the eligibility of every voter should be verified before their vote is counted.
- **Verification of Election Records:** Require the Secretary of State to employ specific data verification and validation techniques to ensure the accuracy and integrity of Minnesota's voter rolls; and require an annual independent audit of the voter registration system.

Was ACORN a factor in the 2008 election?

Look at the facts. First, ACORN acknowledged that it registered over 45,000 new voters prior to the 2008 election. One can safely assume the majority of those registrations came from the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul since that is base of ACORN's operation in Minnesota. Secretary of State Mark Ritchie, the individual entrusted with our election system here in Minnesota, was endorsed by ACORN. It appears his campaign was financed by a number of individuals with ties to ACORN. He has refused to investigate election irregularities and instead have actively opposed legislation designed to improve the integrity of our elections election integrity. Our State Attorney General Lori Swanson was also endorsed by ACORN. While ACORN is under investigation for election fraud in 13 other states, strangely there has been no formal investigation in Minnesota.

What are Minnesota Election Laws?

It is important to understand that Minnesota has some of the most liberal election laws in the nation. If you are a registered voter, no identification is required for you to vote. You simply show-up at a polling place and sign your name on a register. There's no verification to confirm you are who you say you are.

You can register to vote on Election Day. And you can do so by simply providing a utility bill with your name on it. If you don't have this documentation, you can simply have another registered voter from the precinct vouch for your identity.