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November 17, 2006

Party official allegedly OK'd dead-man vote

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From staff and wire reports



Brown

MACON — A state warrant that led to the seizure of absentee ballots in Noxubee County alleges that local Democratic Party leader Ike Brown witnessed and signed an absentee ballot vote cast by a deceased man, according to published reports.

Agents of the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation seized the absentee ballots from the Nov. 7 election last week. MBI spokesmen have not commented since.

In the warrant, MBI supervisory special agent Lt. Kenneth G. Bailey said a Macon resident reported that election worker Dale Haggard had observed an absentee ballot from a deceased man, Johnny B. Walker, according to The Commercial Dispatch in Columbus.

Bailey said Haggard told the MBI she worked for the Mashulaville community and handled the water billing. He said Haggard said she knew that Walker died sometime in 2003.

"Mrs. Haggard also advised that Mr. Walker's widow, Carmen Walker, was also working the polls and reviewed the ballot. She and Mrs. Haggard observed that the witness signature on the Johnny B. Walker absentee ballot was Ike Brown," according to the warrant.

According to the warrant, the rejected ballot was placed in the rejected absentee ballot envelope and was later placed in the Mashulaville No. 2 N-Z poll bag.

Bailey said the bag contained a legal size envelope that was stamped rejected absentee ballots and two books, one containing the signatures of the voters and one containing the 911 address updates.

The newspaper said Lt. Col. David Shaw, special agent in charge of the MBI, would not say whether charges would be sought against Brown or anyone else.

The warrant authorized the MBI to seize all Noxubee County absentee voter ballots, signed absentee voter affidavit applications, affidavit voting poll registration records and envelopes and any containers holding absentee ballots, according to the Macon Beacon in Macon and The Commercial Dispatch.

"I don't have anything to say about it," Brown told The Commercial Dispatch. "I guess when they get through reviewing all the documentation, it will shake itself out."

Today is the deadline for counties to report their certified election results to the secretary of state. David Blount, spokesman for the secretary of state's office, said the office has been talking with Noxubee County officials and the state attorney general's office "to try to get some resolution to the certification."

Brown is at the center of another election controversy.

A Jan. 15 trial date has been set in a federal lawsuit brought by the Justice Department alleging racial discrimination against white voters and candidates in the county.

The department sued Noxubee County and Democratic Party leaders, including Brown, in February 2005. County officials were removed from the lawsuit last year after they signed a consent decree with the Justice Department.

Justice Department spokeswoman Cynthia Magnuson would not comment on the federal case.

After the suit was filed, the Justice Department asked a federal judge to order Noxubee County Democratic Party leaders not to intimidate witnesses providing evidence in the voting rights case.

Staff writer Laura Hipp contributed to this report.

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