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# Adair County man charged with voter fraud

**BY SHEILA STOGSDILL**

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STILWELL — An Adair County man who had previously been investigated for voting irregularities has been charged with falsifying ballots, District Attorney Jerry Moore said.

Darryl Cates, 73, of Westville, was charged Tuesday in Adair County District Court in Stilwell with two counts of false affidavit in voting registration and two counts of false notarization of an absentee ballot. He is free on \$5,000 bail.

"I am pleased he was finally charged," Moore said.

Cates is accused of signing the names of Sherri Eagle and Michael Cooksey in absentee voting for the Cave Springs school election held in February 2009, Moore said.

Cates is known in political circles for his work for Democratic candidates, Moore said.

A man who identified himself as Cates' son when contacted at the elder Cates' last known address said Darryl Cates didn't live there and he didn't know how to reach him.

The voting problem was discovered by the Adair County Election Board.

"It was discovered the two people voted in person by absentee ballot," said Rusty Clark, Adair County Election Board assistant secretary.

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The two votes would not have changed the outcome of the election, Clark said.

This year, the Cave Springs school board election was contested, said Teresa Turner, Adair County Republican party chairman.


There were 33 votes contested because of differences in the signatures requesting the ballots and the signatures on the voting affidavits, Turner said. All of the 77 absentee ballots in this year's election were notarized by Darryl Cates, Turner said.

"My goal for this county is to have fair, honest elections and elected officials that have both personal and public integrity and honesty," Turner said. "I do not feel that is happening when close to 300 absentee ballots are being mailed to one person. I am extremely concerned about this ongoing problem in Adair County."

Cates was the center of an OSBI probe into a 2004 Adair County primary election after a high rate of absentee voting was reported.

In that election, 465 absentee ballots were marked and mailed back. Cates notarized 265 of them. He was never charged.

In December 2002, the district attorney's office gave the OSBI a handwritten list of names on absentee ballots that were not properly notarized or witnessed for the District 3 county commissioner's runoff. After reviewing the OSBI report, then-District Attorney Richard Gray said he couldn't substantiate any allegations and did not file charges.




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