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State election board recommends prosecution of ex-Fayette election director

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STAFF REPORTS:

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Georgia's State Election Board has referred 35 cases of alleged violation of Georgia's election laws to authorities for prosecution, including the Georgia Attorney General's Office and local district attorney's offices, and Fayette County's former elections director is among them.

“Election fraud is not tolerated in Georgia. When there is evidence of it, the people responsible face prosecution,” said Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, chairman of the five-member board. “Georgia has multiple safeguards in place that allow our team of investigators to discover fraudulent voting. They worked to catch the wrongdoing in these cases, and they maintain the security of Georgia elections.”

The Secretary of State’s Office’s Investigation Division has 23 sworn officers with arrest power and experience as law enforcement detectives. The officers investigate allegations of voting irregularities and present their findings to the State Election Board. The board can levy fines, issue a “letter of instruction” or refer the case for prosecution.

Floyd Jones and the Fayette County Board of Elections and Voter Registration were referred for alleged improper handling of four memory cards, which included 2,760 votes, in the Nov. 3, 2020 presidential election. The discrepancy was discovered during the statewide hand count of ballots from the presidential election. At the time, Jones was director of the board; he has since resigned.

There was another referral to the Georgia Attorney General’s Office from a May 25, 2018 case, according to the Citizen News. The Fayette Board of Elections and Voter Registration rejected a woman’s ballot after her 16-year-old son voted in her name, before his mother voted. That case involved only two board members, according to The Citizen.

The board also bound over for prosecution a case against The New Georgia Project, for allegedly submitting 1,268 voter registrations after the 10-day deadline. According to the Secretary of State’s Office, that action caused voters to disenfranchise in the March 19, 2019 special election. Recently elected U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock was board chairman of the organization at the time, though the organization’s paperwork referred to him as CEO. The organization was formed by former State Rep. and gubernatorial candidate Stacy Abrams.

“A third-party firm misfiled our corporate documents with the secretary of state. Rev. Raphael Warnock has never been CEO of New Georgia Project,” the organization’s current CEO, Nse Ufot, said in a statement to the AJC. “He was the board chairman until his resignation via letter on Jan. 28, 2020. The two positions are not interchangeable.”

An individual, Samunta Shomine Pittman of Atlanta, was bound over for allegedly submitting 70 false voter regulation applications while canvassing for the Coalition for the People’s Agenda.

The board also bound cases for three men for allegedly voting while serving a felony sentence, one man for allegedly registering to vote while serving a felony sentence, two people for allegedly submitting a false voter registration application, three people for allegedly voting as a non-citizen, one person for allegedly registering to vote as a non-citizen and one person for allegedly voting in another person's name.