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Possible **voter fraud** detected in 0.0007% of 2020 **Ohio** ballots cast

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Voter fraud cases, if proven, usually generate misdemeanor or low-level felony charges, often resulting in probation and a few hundred dollars in fines. In rare cases, the sentences carry a few days jail time.

Ohio election officials report at least 42 ballots were illegally cast and counted in the 2020 presidential election.

While additional "referrals will be forthcoming," **Ohio** Secretary of State Frank LaRose has said **voter fraud** is "rare" in **Ohio**, though the Republican facing re-election this year has taken to Twitter in recent days to support former President Donald Trump's claim that **voter fraud** is "a serious problem" in other states.

The 42 **Ohio** cases, including a township trustee who voted his dead father's ballot and an unsolved case in Summit County, represent 0.0007% of the 5.9 million ballots cast in **Ohio's** 2020 presidential election. Put another way, **voter fraud** in **Ohio** is suspected once in every 142,240 ballots that count.

"Our state is proof positive you don't have to choose between secure or convenient elections - we have both," LaRose said in referring 27 more cases of potential **voter fraud** to the **Ohio** Attorney General or county law enforcement earlier this month. "In **Ohio**, easy to vote and hard to cheat aren't mutually exclusive. At the end of the day, these referrals are all about accountability."

Election **fraud** isn't just rare in **Ohio**. It was rare where the nation's most consequential votes were cast in the 2020 presidential election.

Contrary to claims of widespread **voter fraud** by Trump and some Republicans, the Associated Press reviewed potential cases of **voter fraud** in six battleground states and found fewer than 475, which would not change the election outcome.

LaRose periodically reports new batches of fraudulent ballots or registrations after inspecting **voter** databases maintained by **Ohio** and shared by other states.

In July, he announced that 117 non-citizens were illegally registered to vote, often by mistake while offered registration forms at a BMV. Because election law bans the purging of **voters** within 90 days of an election, 13 of these 117 non-citizens were able to cast ballots that counted in the 2020 presidential election.

Using a report from the Electronic Registration Information Center, a consortium of 31 states that share voter activity, LaRose earlier this month announced 31 more cases of fraudulently cast ballots, including 27 cast in the 2020 presidential election. Each case was referred to the Ohio Attorney General, if involving non-citizens, or local law enforcement in the counties where the ballots were cast.

This latest batch of 27 illegal votes includes one from Summit County, which appears to be a U.S. citizen registered to vote in multiple Ohio counties, according to a spreadsheet provided by LaRose's staff. In addition, the probe found five non-citizens who were either registered to vote or voted in Summit County in 2020 and 2021.

LaRose's office refused to release the names attached to the fraudulently registered **voters** or illegally cast ballots.

Voter fraud cases, if proven, usually generate misdemeanor or low-level felony charges, often resulting in probation and a few hundred dollars in fines. In rare cases, the sentences carry a few days jail time. If caught during the early voting period or before election results are certified, double-voted ballots and those illegally cast by others generally don't count. They're often revealed to be spouses or family members of the same household who accidentally fill out each others' mail-in ballots.

At least 16 ballots in 2020 belonged to dead people, which is allowed if they're alive when the ballots are cast. These 16 were already dead.

Aside from systemic checks, these types of cases often crop up in media reports in the months following elections.

For example, the 2020 ballot of a Sagamore Hills woman was requested, returned and counted - all months after she had died.

The woman's request for a mail-in ballot was made in September 2020. The filled-out ballot was returned and processed in October. She had died in June.

The board of elections questioned her son, who brought the issue to everyone's attention when he complained on Facebook that his deceased mother had apparently voted. One of LaRose's regional liaisons spotted the social media post and alerted the Summit County Board of Elections, which brought in witnesses before referring the matter a year ago to the Summit County Sheriff's Office.

The election board questioned the husband, a registered Republican who said he couldn't remember, and others who interacted with her.

Ultimately, no charges have been filed.

"Although the facts might support a charge, based on the circumstances, we determined it would have been unlikely that we would have been able to secure a conviction," Brian LoPrinzi, chief of the Criminal Division at the Summit County Prosecutor's Office, said in an emailed statement.

The case did help local election officials discover that a Republican staffer at the election office had failed to deregister voters who died outside of Summit County, an error that left 700 dead voters, including the Sagamore Hills woman, active on the county's voter roll. The Democrat working on the bipartisan voter roll maintenance team failed to check the Republican's work and may have been illegally purging convicted felons who've served their time.

Both errors were caught and corrected after the election results were certified. LaRose has argued that the decentralized work of maintaining **voter** rolls conducted by individual counties would be strengthened if handled centrally by his office.

Another case of **voter fraud** was uncovered in June 2021 when a public official in Delaware County admitted to forging his deceased father's signature before casting a second ballot in the 2020 election.

Porter Township Trustee Edward Snodgrass, a registered Republican, told NBC News that he made "an honest error" by fulfilling "a dying man's wish."

Snodgrass had been caring for his father, who suffered from Parkinson's disease, for several years. As his power of attorney, Snodgrass had been signing documents for his father after his dad had broken his arm.

Charged with a misdemeanor falsification charge, Snodgrass was sentenced to three days in jail and a \$500 fine for casting ballots for himself and his dead father.

Columbus Dispatch reporter Haley BeMiller contributed to this report. Reach Doug Livingston at dlivingston@thebeaconjournal.com or 330-996-3792.

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--- **Index References** ---

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