

<https://www.clickorlando.com/news/local/2022/01/20/the-villages-fraud-suspect-wanted-to-vote-twice-fbi-says/>

## The Villages fraud suspect ‘wanted to vote twice,’ FBI says

Charles Barnes is the fourth Villages resident arrested for casting multiple ballots

**THE VILLAGES, Fla.** – A Connecticut native who also owns a home in Florida admitted to casting ballots in both states during the 2020 election, newly released court records indicate.

Charles Franklin Barnes, 64, was questioned by FBI agents after a Connecticut elections official identified records indicating Barnes may have voted twice.

[TRENDING: [Name of teen, charges released in shooting at Seminole High School](#) | [45 years ago this week, snow fell in Central Florida](#) | [Become a News 6 Insider \(it's free!\)](#)]

“When asked why he voted both in Florida and Connecticut during the November 2020 presidential election, Barnes stated that he did so because he just wanted to vote twice and wanted to see if he could vote twice,” an unclassified FBI report said.

Barnes is among four residents of The Villages who were recently arrested for allegedly violating a Florida law that prohibits voters from casting more than one ballot in an election. The crime is a third-degree felony punishable by up to five years in prison.

Barnes, John Rider, Jay Ketcik and Joan Halstead have pleaded not guilty to the charges. Their attorneys have not provided statements to News 6.

Barnes was not affiliated with a political party in 2020, voter records show. Rider, Ketcik and Halstead were registered as Republicans.

Florida Secretary of State Laurel Lee recently launched a [new elections integrity website](#) where citizens can report voter fraud.

“Governor [Ron] DeSantis and I have made elections integrity a defining priority and a cornerstone of this administration,” Lee said on the website.

The Secretary of State’s Division of Elections did not initially uncover the voter fraud allegedly committed by the four residents of The Villages, court records show.

Instead, people outside of the state agency identified potential cases of double voting and reported it to Florida elections officials for further investigation and prosecution, records indicate.

As [News 6 first reported](#), anonymous emails sent to Florida’s Secretary of State in May 2021 by someone using the pseudonym “Totes Legit Votes” prompted the voter fraud investigations into Rider, Ketcik and Halstead.

Using publicly available voter data, the anonymous tipster claims to have provided Florida elections officials with about 290 examples of potential double voting.

A spokesperson for Florida's Secretary of State has not confirmed that figure and has not answered questions first submitted by News 6 in December inquiring about the state's response to the anonymous emails.

Barnes's alleged crime was first uncovered in June 2021 by Kerry Rowland, the registrar of voters in Milford, Connecticut, newly released records show.

Rowland determined Barnes had double voted while using a system provided by the [Electronic Registration Information Center](#), or ERIC, a nonprofit organization that helps states improve the accuracy of America's voter rolls.

Florida is among more than 30 states that participate in the program.

"In 2019, Florida joined ERIC as part of the DeSantis administration's ongoing efforts to enhance the security and integrity of Florida's elections," the governor's spokesperson previously told News 6.

Florida's secretary of state and the governor's office did not immediately respond to questions from News 6 inquiring why the Connecticut election official may have uncovered Barnes's alleged crime before Florida officials did, despite both states being ERIC members.

Upon learning of Barnes's double votes, Rowland said she notified Connecticut's Election Enforcement Commission, records show.

“I believe in the integrity of our voting process, and I will do what is needed to defend and protect it,” Rowland stated in a recent email to Florida prosecutors while agreeing to appear as a witness against Barnes.

In August 2021, an investigator with the Connecticut Election Enforcement Commission exchanged evidence with the Sumter County Supervisor of Elections Office related to the Barnes case, court records indicate.

That evidence included an application for a Connecticut absentee ballot, allegedly signed by Barnes, indicating he was eligible to vote in the November 2020 election but was unable to appear at a polling place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to investigators, Barnes mailed in his Connecticut absentee ballot using an envelope he signed on October 7, 2020.

Three weeks later, on October 28, Barnes reportedly signed an early voting certificate confirming he cast a ballot in Florida while at the Rohan Recreation Center in The Villages, court records show.

Sumter County Supervisor of Elections Bill Keen was in contact with the office of State Attorney Bill Gladson about Barnes’s alleged crime by September 2021, records show.

In November 2021, FBI agents questioned Barnes at his home in Connecticut. Court records do not indicate why the FBI was involved in the case.

Barnes originally told the agents he did not recall voting in Connecticut but stated, “it won’t happen again,” according to an FBI report.

After being reminded that it was a federal crime to lie to FBI agents, Barnes reportedly admitted that he did vote in both Connecticut and Florida in 2020.

Barnes also confirmed his signature was on the Connecticut absentee ballot envelope, the FBI report states.

Less than two weeks after Barnes reportedly confessed to the FBI, Florida prosecutors filed a felony charge against Barnes and a judge issued an arrest warrant.

Barnes was taken into custody in Florida on Jan. 4 while visiting the Wildwood Police Department, court records show. He was later released from the Sumter County jail on a \$2,000 bond.