

## Fraud suspected in voter sign-up

*News & Observer, The (includes Chapel Hill News) (Raleigh, NC) (Published as News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC)) - October 10, 2008*

- Author/Byline: Stanley B. Chambers Jr., Staff Writer
- Edition: Final
- Section: News
- Page: A6

DURHAM -- State Board of Elections officials are trying to determine whether about 100 voter registration forms submitted by a local chapter of a national grassroots organization to the Durham County Board of Elections are fraudulent.

Similar accusations have been lodged across the country against the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, which goes by the name ACORN. In Durham, the claims were made last month after the group submitted about 5,000 voter registration forms to the county board of elections.

"All of a sudden, I started seeing the same names over and over again," said Mike Ashe, county elections director. He said some forms had similar names but different addresses or dates of birth.

Durham election workers enter the information from a registration form into a system that verifies voters' Social Security and driver's license numbers. Another elections employee reconfirms the information.

ACORN uses paid workers to register voters on the street. Ashe and Johnnie McLean, deputy director of the state Board of Elections deputy director, said they believe the problem stems from volunteers being paid according to how many people they register.

On its Web site, ACORN denies this claim, saying that volunteers are paid by the number of shifts they work.

The campaign of Republican gubernatorial candidate Pat McCrory issued a news release Thursday, saying the FBI has raided the group's offices in North Carolina and Nevada.

On ACORN's Web site, the group released a statement saying that "law enforcement officials appeared suddenly at our Las Vegas offices Tuesday" and that the group has always cooperated with authorities. The group's head organizer in North Carolina, Pat McCoy, said he hasn't heard of such a raid here.

Amy Thoreson, spokeswoman for the FBI's Charlotte office, would not discuss any North Carolina investigation, citing Department of Justice policy.

Registering 1.3 million

ACORN, on its Web site, bills itself as "the nation's largest community organization of low- and moderate-income families, working together for social justice and stronger communities."

ACORN volunteers have registered more than 1.3 million voters in 18 states, including more than 26,000 in North Carolina, according to its Web site.

"If there's anything with any card that our canvassers are turning in that are suspicious, we deal with that person about them," McCoy said. "If we can't deal with them satisfactorily, we fire that person."

McLean said she didn't know when the state's investigation will be completed. If the accusations are valid, those involved may face criminal charges, she said.

- *Index terms: ELECTION; VOTE*
- *Record: k8ieg289*
- *Copyright: Copyright 2008 by The News & Observer Pub. Co.*