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SBI CASE: 2018-00619 (858)
ACTIVITY: April 23, 2018
VICTIM(S): State of North Carolina
COPIES: (1) Case Records Management Section
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(4) CS D. S. Faircloth
(5) SAC T. D. Ammons
(6) SA J. Hanish, FBI

Jens Lutz, W/M/DOB: [REDACTED] (Witness)
Residence: [REDACTED], Bladenboro, North
Carolina 28320, Telephone: [REDACTED]
Business: N/A

On Monday, April 23, 2018, at approximately 10 a.m., Investigator Joan Fleming with the North Carolina State Board of Elections (NCSBE) interviewed Jens Lutz at the North Carolina State Board of Elections office located at 430 N. Salisbury Street, Raleigh, North Carolina 27603. Special Agent (SA) Julia S. Hanish with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) T. B. Tanner were also present during the interview. ASAC Tanner took the following notes during the course of the interview.

Lutz contacted the NC State Board of Elections due to concerns about the way things were run in Bladen County. The purpose of this interview was to discuss those concerns and determine the depth of knowledge Lutz had regarding Leslie McCrae Dowless' campaign activities in Bladen County and surrounding counties.

Lutz served in the United States Navy from 1979-1982. He received his Bachelor's degree from St. Leo's in 1985 and then went to work for Charlotte Security Services. After leaving Charlotte Security Services, Lutz owned a video store until 1996 and then joined the Pinehurst Fire Department until 2003. In 2003, Lutz moved to the Lumberton Fire Department where he retired as a Captain in 2013.

Lutz currently works in real estate and was appointed as Chairman of the Bladen County Board of Elections on April 19, 2018 by the North Carolina State Board of Elections. Lutz has been active in politics for the past 38 years. The first political campaign he worked was for Terry Sanford as soon as Lutz got out of college. Lutz has held various offices for the Democratic party, including the Democratic party chair from 2012 to 2014, but no elected offices.

Lutz was told by Cynthia Shaw, Director of the Bladen County Board of Elections (BOE), that "sometimes you have to bend the rules." Lutz informed Shaw that their local board of elections would be going by the book moving forward.

According to Lutz, there was a lot of distrust of the Bladen County BOE by the candidates because things were run loose and open with easy access to the interior of the BOE building. Lutz stated Shaw allowed Republicans and conservative Democrats who vote Republican to have more access to the interior of the building. Lutz noted that the building does not have an alarm system and the surveillance system does not work.

Lutz stated Larry Hammonds, who previously held Shaw's position, is currently the Veterans Affairs Liaison. Hammonds has an office in the Bladen County BOE building with a door that exits the building, and another door that leads to the interior of the building. The door that leads to the interior of the building locks from the inside and no one knows if Hammonds still has keys to the building or when the building was last re-keyed.

Since Lutz made it clear to Shaw how things will be run at the BOE, Shaw had been more compliant in the security integrity of the building. Lutz listed the current members of the Bladen County BOE as Al Daniels, Bobby Ludlum, Brian Hehl and himself.

Lutz met Dowless in 2010 while Lutz was working against Dowless' candidate during the sheriff's race. Lutz was supporting Prentiss Benston, while Dowless was supporting Eric Bryan. It was during this election Lutz became familiar with the absentee ballot mill Dowless was coordinating.

Lutz stated Dowless had questionable individuals working for him then and now. Lutz said Dowless used the term "gas money" when referring to the payments he made to the people, gophers, who brought him absentee ballots. This information was provided to Lutz by Cindy Brisson, who was one of Dowless' gophers.

Lutz learned that Brisson and Dowless had a falling out because of Internal Revenue Service (IRS) penalties Brisson incurred from cashing checks for Dowless. Lutz explained the candidates wrote checks to Brisson, Brisson's mother and Sheila Kinlaw, who would in turn cash the checks and return the cash to Dowless less a small check cashing fee of \$10 to \$15 per check.

Lutz indicated Dowless received disability and did not own anything in his own name. Lutz was unsure why Dowless was on disability, but knew he had a heart attack in 2012. This was the reason Dowless hid money and would not cash checks himself. According to Lutz, Dowless drove a Black Kia Soul 4-door sedan that was owned by Craig Benton. Dowless payed Benton to drive the car. Lutz said Dowless had a truck that was in the shop and had not run in one year. Dowless' last known address was on Airport Road in Bladenboro in a house owned by Billy Ray Pait, who was the former chair of the Board of Commissioners.

Lutz stated Dowless would be very well off financially if he knew how to manage money. As an example, Lutz explained that Dowless worked for Mickey Meekins in a race against David Edge. Meekins gave Dowless \$13,000 in cash for absentee ballots, however, instead of using the money toward Meekins' campaign, Dowless took a group of his workers on a beach trip. Lutz was not sure if the payment was reported to the BOE.

According to Lutz, Dowless took money from both sides, Democrat and Republican, and burned bridges in Robeson County as a result. Lutz stated during the Meekins vs. Edge race, Dowless allegedly took money from both campaigns.

Lutz then discussed the ballot mill activities that Dowless coordinated. According to Lutz, Amanda Collins, Anna Robeson and Donna Outlaw collected absentee ballots for Dowless. Bladen County BOE processed 317 absentee ballots for the current primary that had Outlaw as the witness. On

one ballot, Outlaw started writing her name on the voter line and then crossed it out. Jerry Lesane coordinated absentee ballots for the minority voters. Lesane previously worked with the Bladen County Improvement Association (BCIA), but was thrown out for mishandling money.

Lutz stated Dowless also coordinated "hauling," where he paid drivers to pick up groups of voters and drive them to the polls. The voters were told who to vote for and when they returned from the polls, the voters were each paid \$5-\$10.

Dowless had a black book he kept in his pocket. Dowless referred to this book for his drivers and loyal voters. Lutz observed Dowless look in the black book and immediately made phone calls.

Jeffrey Scott Smith told Lutz that during the 2014 election for Sheriff, Smith gave the McVicker campaign a check for \$4,000. Landon Bordeaux, who was working for the McVicker campaign, brought the check back to Smith and asked for cash.

Lutz also said Tom Gibson out of Robeson County heavily bankrolled McVicker's campaign in 2014 because they were friends. Gibson was self-employed and hired Dowless to conduct activities in Bladen County. Lutz did not know why Gibson was so interested in Bladen County politics.

According to Lutz, Dowless worked for Mark Harris and Jim McVicker in 2016, but Harris did not win that election. Lutz suggested looking at Harris' finance report.

Lutz stated recently Dowless had a falling out with Smith. Smith was bankrolling Dowless for a while because Smith was involved with Patriots for Progress.

Smith operated a business with sweepstakes machines and thought he had an agreement with McVicker that if McVicker were planning to shut Smith down, he would let Smith know and Smith would voluntarily close the business. However, in 2016, McVicker had his deputies surrounded Smith's business with squad cars, landed a helicopter in a nearby field, entered Smith's business and ripped the machines out so Smith could no longer do business. As a result of this incident, Smith was attempting to unseat McVicker by

supporting Billy Ward. Ward was an unaffiliated write-in candidate in 2010, but was now running against McVicker as a Republican.

Outlaw told Lutz that Smith paid Dowless several thousand dollars to help with Ward's campaign during this current election period. However, Bordeaux offered Dowless more money to help with McVicker's campaign, which Dowless accepted. Outlaw got this information from another female assisting with McVicker's campaign, who was unaware of Outlaw's friendship with Smith. Lutz witnessed a verbal altercation at the Elizabethtown polling site between Smith and Dowless. Lutz said Dowless told Smith to call him and Smith said it would not be a phone call, it would be face to face.

Lutz said Dowless' current activities included putting out campaign signs, getting absentee ballots and possibly hauling voters to the polls. Lutz had seen evidence of the absentee ballots, but not the hauling. Lutz said Outlaw had been the predominant witness on the absentee ballot envelopes. Lutz had not seen the request forms, but said he planned to ask Shaw to show him where she was keeping them.

Lutz said Dowless kept a list of names of the voters who requested absentee ballots with assistance from his people. Dowless then got a copy of the list of ballots that had been sent out from Shaw as it was public record. Once the ballots had been mailed, Dowless sent his people back out to visit the people on his list to encourage them to vote the way he wanted them to vote. Lutz was not sure how those ballots were being returned.

Lutz said Dowless was being protected by Scott Ussery, who was his cousin and a sitting judge. Dowless was also protected by Bill Gore, an attorney in Columbus County.

Lutz reported that Dowless was a convicted felon. Dowless took out an insurance policy on a dead man and spent time in prison. Lutz did not know Dowless' relationship to the deceased. Lutz did say that Dowless was related to Ray Britt who was the former chairman of the Bladen County Elections Board.