

*In re. Investigation of election
irregularities affecting
counties within the
9th Congressional District*

EVIDENTIARY HEARING



NORTH CAROLINA
STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Preview of Evidence

The evidence will show that a coordinated, unlawful, and substantially resourced absentee ballot scheme operated during the 2018 general election in Bladen and Robeson Counties.

Preview of Evidence

Scope of Investigation

- 142 completed voter interviews (401 total attempts)
- At least 30 subject and witness interviews
- Subpoenas of documents and other records including financial records and phone records

2018 Unofficial General Election Results

U.S. House of Representatives District 9

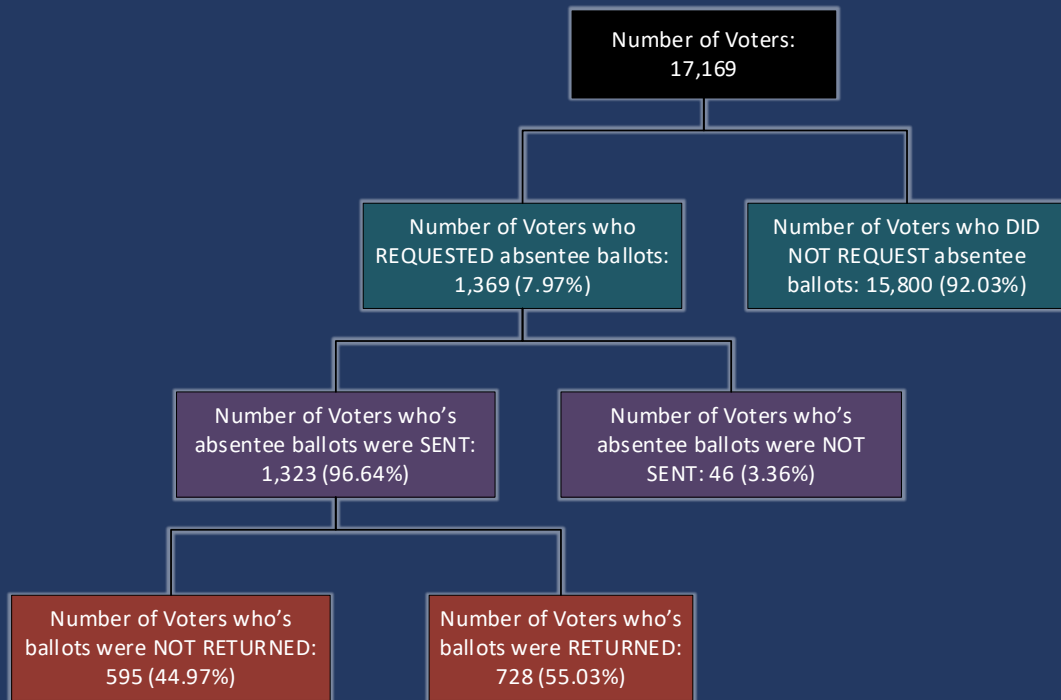
- Districtwide:
 - Harris received 139,246
 - McCready received 138,341, and
 - J. Scott received 5,130.
- In Bladen County:
 - Harris received 5,413 (absentee by mail, 420)
 - McCready received 3,856 (absentee by mail, 258), and
 - J. Scott received 129 (absentee by mail, 6).
- In Robeson County:
 - Harris received 12,691 (absentee by mail, 259)
 - McCready received 17,419 (absentee by mail, 403), and
 - J. Scott received 777 (absentee by mail, 18).



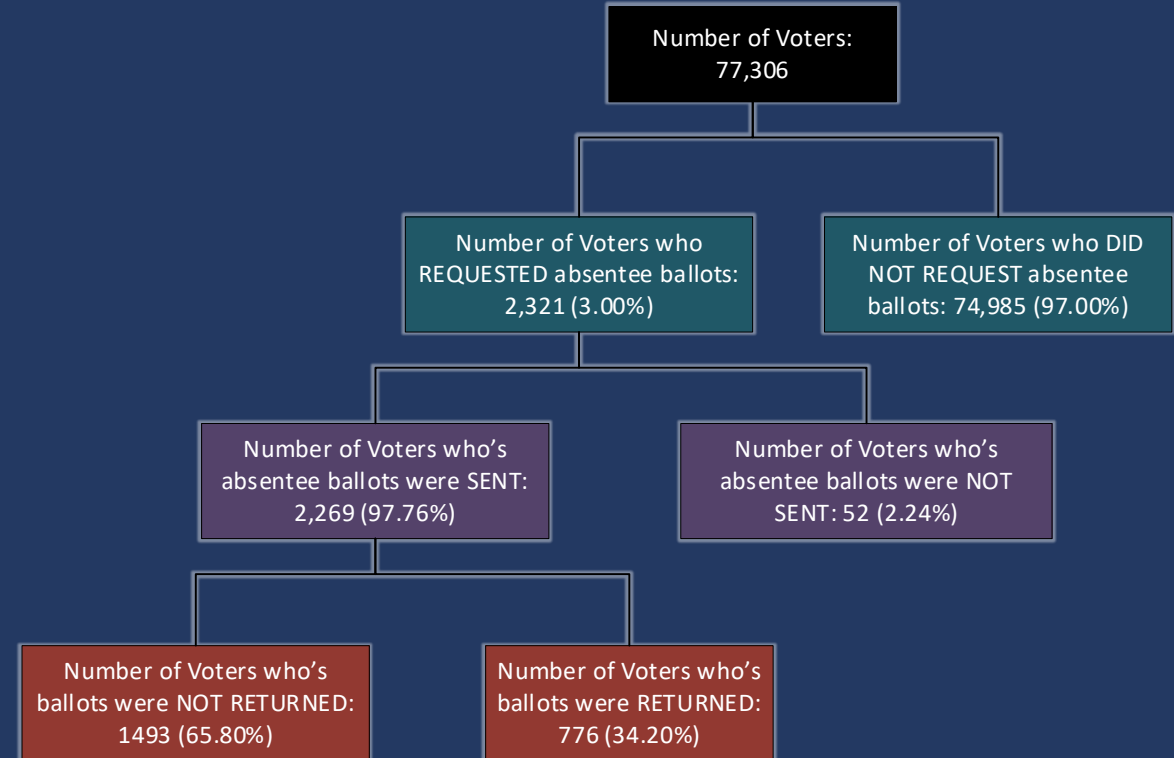
2018 Unofficial General Election Results

U.S. House of Representatives District 9

Bladen (CD9 portion)



Robeson



**1. Absentee by Mail Irregularities in
Bladen and Robeson Counties**

**2. Disclosure of Early Voting Results in
Bladen County**

**3. Office Security in
Bladen County**



1. Absentee by Mail Irregularities in Bladen and Robeson Counties

Voting an Absentee Ballot

- A ballot can be marked only by the voter, or a qualified assistant following the voter's instructions while in the voter's presence. G.S. 163A-1310.
- The voter or qualified assistant must seal the ballot in the container envelope in the voter's presence. G.S. 163A-1310.
- Two witnesses or a notary must:
 - 1) See the voter mark her ballot,
 - 2) Sign the container return envelope, and
 - 3) "Respect the secrecy of the ballot and the privacy of the absentee voter." G.S. 163A-1310.
- Only a voter or near relative of the voter can return the ballot to the county board of elections, or mail the ballot. G.S. 163A-1310



Preview of Evidence

- In April 2017 McCrae Dowless was hired to conduct an absentee ballot operation leading up to the 2018 elections.
- In June 2017 the Mark Harris Campaign hired Red Dome Consulting. Thereafter, McCrae Dowless was paid by Red Dome. Red Dome would bill the Mark Harris Campaign for these expenses.
- McCrae Dowless was also paid by other candidates, including but not limited to Sheriff candidate James McVicker.



Preview of Evidence

- McCrae Dowless hired workers he paid in cash to collect absentee request forms, to collect absentee ballots, and to falsify absentee ballot witness certifications.
- McCrae Dowless paid \$150.00 per 50 absentee ballot request forms and \$125.00 per 50 absentee ballots collected. Other amounts paid per ballot or a flat weekly rate.
- The activities identified took place in Bladen and Robeson Counties.
- There appear to be two phases to the operation:
 - Absentee Ballot request collection;
 - Absentee Ballot collection



Preview of Evidence

Phase 1

- In addition to using blank forms to solicit voters to request to vote absentee by mail, Dowless and his workers prepared request forms utilizing forms from previous elections to pre-fill the absentee request form so that workers could return to those voters and have the voter sign the request form.
- For the general election, at least 788 Absentee Ballot request forms in Bladen County were submitted by McCrae Dowless or his workers.
- For the general election, at least 231 Absentee Ballot request forms in Robeson County were submitted by McCrae Dowless' workers, though an email indicates the number may have been at least 449.

Preview of Evidence

Dowless workers obtained absentee ballot request forms from voters



Dowless workers provided collected absentee ballot request forms to Dowless for payment



Request forms were photocopied and copies maintained at Dowless' office



Request forms were delivered to BOE by Dowless or workers



Preview of Evidence

Phase 2: Pay individuals to collect the absentee ballot and deliver to McCrae Dowless

- Absentee ballots were collected directly from voters, including ballots:
 - With no witness signing or only one witness signing.
 - Unsealed ballots.
- Ballots collected by workers were provided to Dowless in order to obtain payment.
- Dowless held absentee ballots at his home or at his office.
- Dowless instructed workers to falsely sign as witnesses.
- Blank or incomplete ballots were voted in Dowless' home or office.

Preview of Evidence

Actions taken to hide conduct:

- Small batches taken to post office.
- Ensuring ballots mailed at a post office geographically close to voter.
- Ensuring witnesses signed and dated the same date as the voter signature.
- Ensuring same color ink used by the witnesses, including by tracing existing signatures.
- Ensuring stamps not turned in a way on the envelope to be a red flag to BOE staff.
- Taking collected ballots back to the voter for hand-delivery to the BOE.

Preview of Evidence

Payments to McCrae Dowless from Red Dome Consulting

Total Red Dome Payments to
McCrae Dowless
(7/3/2017-11/7/2018)

\$131,375.57

Total General Election
Red Dome Payments to
McCrae Dowless
(6/8/2018-11/7/2018)

\$83,693.57



Preview of Evidence

Payments to McCrae Dowless from Red Dome Consulting

Total Jim McVicker Payments
to McCrae Dowless
(7/3/2017-11/7/2018)

\$5,000
Purpose GOTV



Preview of Evidence

- Efforts were made to obstruct the investigation and testimony provided at this hearing.

2. Disclosure of Early Voting Results in Bladen County

Preview of Evidence

- Results were tabulated on November 3, 2018, and early voting personnel working at the site had access to those results.
- We were unable to confirm whether any early voting personnel divulged those results to anyone outside of the early voting site.

3. Office Security in Bladen County



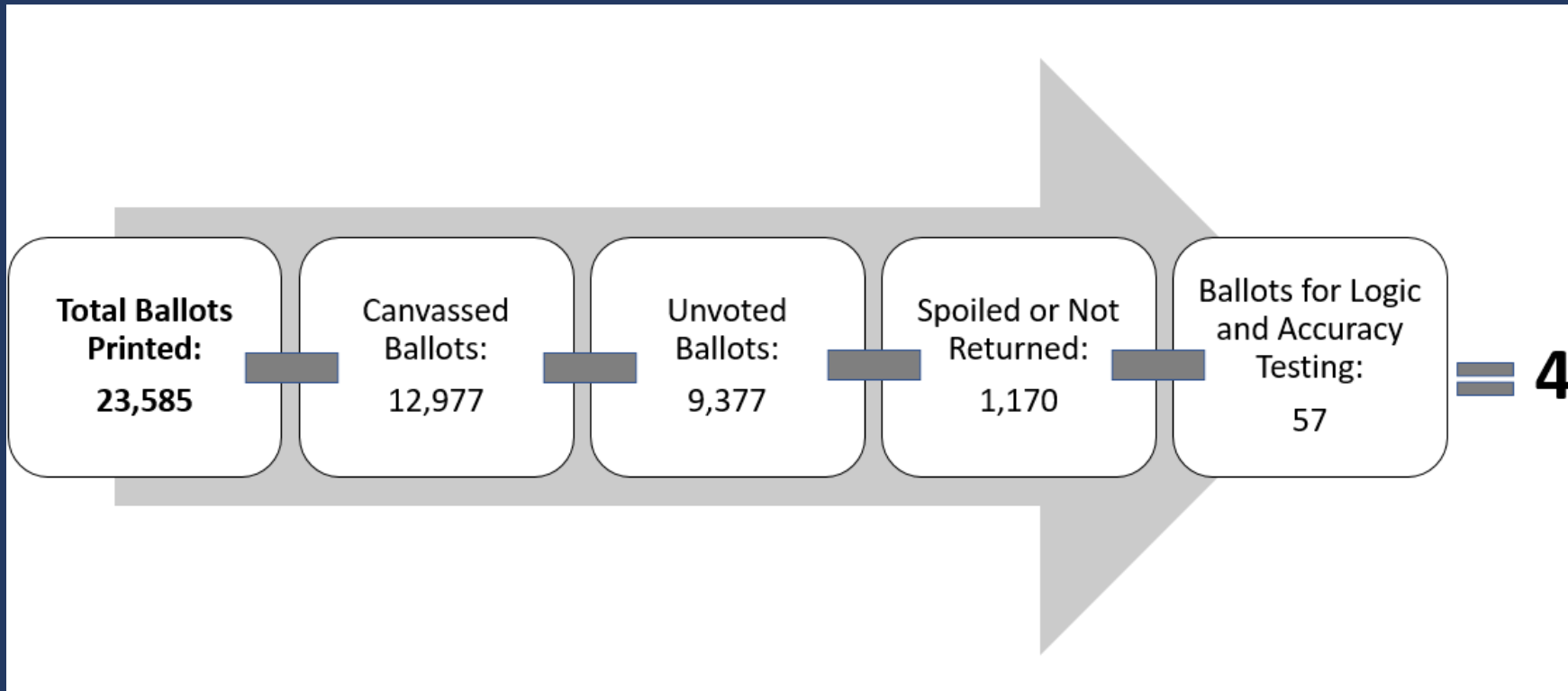
Preview of Evidence

- Bladen County Board of Elections is co-located with the Bladen County Veterans Affairs Administration at 301 S. Cyprus Street in Elizabethtown, NC.
- Homeland Security conducted a review of physical security in 2018.
- The Bladen County Board of Elections requested security updates in 2018 that were not made.
- Our review of the site found several problematic security practices:
 - Labeled keys to the ballot room were observed hanging on the wall in a common space.
 - Non-elections staff had access to the building.
 - Recommendations from Homeland Security were not implemented prior to the General Election.



Preview of Evidence

Reconciliation of Ballots to Rule out Quantities of Unaccounted For Blank Ballots



End



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STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS