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More Suspicious Voter Forms Are Found

By [LIZETTE ALVAREZ](#)

MIAMI — The number of Florida counties reporting suspicious voter registration forms connected to Strategic Allied Consulting, the firm hired by the state [Republican Party](#) to sign up new voters, has grown to 10, officials said, as local election supervisors continue to search their forms for questionable signatures, addresses or other identifiers.

[After reports of suspicious forms](#) surfaced in Florida, the company — owned by Nathan Sproul, who has been involved in voter registration efforts since at least the 2004 presidential election — was fired last week by the state Republican Party and the [Republican National Committee](#). The party had hired it to conduct drives in Colorado, Nevada, North Carolina and Virginia.

In Colorado, a young woman employed by Strategic Allied was shown on [a video](#) outside a store in Colorado Springs recently telling a potential voter that she wanted to register only Republicans and that she worked for the county clerk's office. The woman was fired, said Ryan Call, chairman of the Colorado Republican Party.

The [Florida Division of Elections](#) has forwarded the reports of possible fraud to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for investigation. Prosecutors in some affected counties are also investigating. It is unclear how many forms have been forwarded, in all: in Palm Beach County, the election supervisor found 106 suspicious forms, but the number in several other counties is far lower.

Bay County has found eight suspicious forms with the Republican Party registration code connected to Strategic Allied. In Pasco County, three have been found.

The state Republican Party, which paid the company \$1.3 million to register voters here, said it would file an elections fraud complaint against Strategic Allied, which is based in Tempe, Ariz.

Mr. Sproul was once the executive director of the Arizona Republican Party. In 2004, his voter registration project was investigated by the Justice Department and the attorneys general in Arizona, Nevada and Oregon after widespread allegations of fraud surfaced, but no charges were brought.

Questions are now being raised about how the company's employees were paid to register voters.

Mary Blackwell, a volunteer for the [League of Women Voters](#) in Okaloosa County, said she was registering voters this month at Northwest Florida State College. Sitting nearby was a man who said he was registering voters for the Republican Party of Florida. The man told her he received \$12 an hour but had to bring in at least 10 forms to get paid.

Paul Lux, the election supervisor for Okaloosa County, a Republican who is still combing through registration forms in his office, said he was told by several "concerned citizens," including Ms. Blackwell, that the employees were being paid for the number of forms they brought back.

In Florida, it is illegal to pay someone per registration form.

"I told my friends in the party then that paying people to do this was a bad idea, and it almost inevitably leads to problems," Mr. Lux said. "Unfortunately, I was not proven wrong."

Fred Petti, a lawyer for Strategic Allied, said the employees were paid only by the hour, with no quota attached. He added that they also were instructed to register anyone from any political party, not just the Republican Party.

Previous investigations of Mr. Sproul's operations focused on efforts to register only Republicans or allegations that Democratic forms were torn up. Mr. Petti also said that Mr. Sproul cooperated with the Palm Beach County election supervisor to find out who was at fault and has offered to do the same with other election supervisors.

In Palm Beach County, one person was responsible for the fraudulent forms, officials said. Mr. Petti said he does not yet know how widespread the problem is in other counties.

Election supervisors said they have come across forms with handwriting that did not match previous registration forms, bogus addresses and other identifiers like driver's license numbers that appeared to be invalid. But in other cases, the forms were just incomplete, which does not constitute fraud.

"Until we see what the cards are, it's hard for us to comment," Mr. Petti said.

Mark Anderson, the Bay County supervisor, said he has found eight questionable forms in his county, but he is looking for more. The forms had either unchecked boxes for party affiliation or signatures that looked different from previous ones. He said he had also received calls from voters who said they had not changed their party affiliation, although it appeared they had. "I don't believe there is going to be massive numbers," Mr. Anderson said.

Election supervisors are able to pinpoint the group responsible for the questionable forms because of a 2011 state law that tightened rules on voter registration groups. The law, which sparked lawsuits and controversy, requires groups to register with the state and have their registration number on the forms they distribute.

A provision that required groups to turn in registration forms within 48 hours was struck down in court this year. "The Republican Legislature was beaten up pretty badly, partially by myself," Mr. Lux said. "But they seem to have been doing something to improve the process."