

# 'RNC Official' Arrested for Trashing Voter Registrations in VA Worked for Romney Consultant, 'Fired' GOP Operative Nathan Sproul

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A man originally reported to have been working for the Republican Party of Virginia was arrested by the Rockingham County, VA Sheriff's office on Thursday and charged with attempting to destroy voter registration forms by tossing them into a dumpster behind a shopping center in Harrisonburg, VA.

"Prosecutors charged him with four counts of destruction of voter registration applications, eight counts of failing to disclose voter registration applications and one count of obstruction of justice," according to a report late Thursday afternoon [from TPM's Ryan Reilly](#). More charges could be forthcoming, according to officials.

But there is more to the story, as evidence emerges to document that it ties in to a still-expanding nationwide GOP Voter Registration Fraud Scandal that [The BRAD BLOG first began reporting in late September](#), after we'd learned that the Republican Party of Florida had turned in more than 100 allegedly fraudulent and otherwise suspect voter registration forms in Palm Beach County. The story has continued to widen ever since, to a dozen Florida counties and several other states, now including Virginia, and even to the upper-echelons of the Republican Party itself.

The man arrested today was 23-year old Colin Small of Phoenixville, PA. As it turns out, he does not only work for the VA Republican Party. According to an online profile, he appears to be working for the Republican National Committee and, prior to that, served as an Intern for [Congressman Mike Kelly \(R-PA\)](#) in the U.S. House of Representatives.

[Joseph Tanfani at the Los Angeles Times is reporting](#) that Small was "working as a supervisor as part of a registration operation in eight swing states financed by the Republican National Committee."

He was first hired, says Tanfani, by Strategic Allied Consulting, the firm owned by the disgraced GOP operative and paid Mitt Romney political consultant, Nathan Sproul. Even before this year's registration fraud scandal which began with Strategic in Florida, Sproul's companies have long been accused of, though never charged with, destroying Democratic voter registrations in election after election and state after state, going back to at least 2004. Despite that, Sproul was hired by the Bush/Cheney campaign in 2004, by the McCain/Palin Campaign in 2008, and by Romney during the Republican Primary cycle.

Sproul's company, Strategic Allied Consulting, was hired by the RNC in August for more than \$3 million, reportedly as its sole voter registration company this cycle. His company was said to have been [fired by the RNC](#) and five different battleground state Republican parties several

weeks ago, after fraudulent voter registrations began to emerge across Florida. Some of those questionable applications included address changes for existing voters, such that [FL election officials told The BRAD BLOG](#) they worry voters could find themselves disenfranchised come Election Day. In Florida, as in many states, provisional ballots cast at precincts other than where voters are officially registered will *not* be counted. So changing the addresses on voter registrations without voters' knowledge is a serious crime with potentially very serious consequences.

Reilly's report at TPM says that Small "worked for PinPoint, a company hired to register voters on behalf of the Republican Party of Virginia." In fact, PinPoint Staffing placed ads to hire workers for Strategic Allied Consulting in FL, VA and a number of other states, though [The BRAD BLOG](#) has learned that the company removed many of those ads once the scandal began to break in FL. They have since modified some of their newer ads to hide their ties to the Republican Party.

In response to queries we sent to Sproul late Thursday, his crisis spokesperson, David Leibowitz, attempted to distance his client from the arrest of the Republican Party worker in Virginia, claiming that "the only connection between Sproul and Pinpoint is that Nathan has, on occasion, used Pinpoint to hire some workers."

It was PinPoint Staffing, in fact, which reportedly hired the man Strategic blamed for the fraudulent registration forms turned in originally in Palm Beach. But while PinPoint continues to seek workers for GOP-related efforts around the country, and as Sproul's operations continue in "as many as 30 states", it is the Republican National Committee's response to the entire affair, including to the arrest today, that may be the most troubling...

### **The RNC 'firing' deception**

Colin Small, according to his LinkedIn profile, as [captured by the NotLarrySaboto blog](#) (which was the first to highlight the [initial report](#) of a man with PA license plates tossing a bag of Virginia Voter Registration Forms into a Harrisonburg dumpster), wasn't only working for the state GOP or for Strategic Allied Consulting or for PinPoint. He was working as a "Grassroots Field Director at the Republican National Committee," according to LinkedIn.

*[Update: [NBC News is reporting](#) this morning that RNC Communications Director denies Small was "directly employed by the RNC" and that he will be "told to take down that". Small is currently in jail and unable to respond to clear up the question, however.]*

Last month, several days after fraudulent voter registration forms collected by Strategic Allied Consulting and turned in by the Florida GOP began to be discovered by County election officials in Florida, the [RNC claimed to have fired Strategic](#).

Sean Spicer, the RNC's Communications Director, boasted that the party took "swift and bold action" after learning of the fraud, claiming they have "zero tolerance" for it or for those who commit it. However, as we summarized in [our very first report on this scandal](#), Sproul's

companies have a long history of workers being paid per Republican registration form and for being accused of destroying Democratic ones.

Despite that, they were hired once again this year by the RNC who, Sproul says, asked them to create the new company in June without his name on it to avoid it being tied to him. Not very bold or zero tolerancy of them. Though Spicer said he had no knowledge of that arrangement, Sproul told [The BRAD BLOG](#) he stands by his assertion.

Beyond that, last Thursday [we reported](#) that Sproul's firms, including what appeared to be a "clone" operation of Strategic Allied Consulting, calling itself Issue Advocacy Partners, were still found working for Republicans and Rightwing ballot initiatives in at least 10 states. Subsequently, on Friday, the [Los Angeles Times reported](#) that, in fact, Sproul was still "hiring workers for a voter canvassing operation this fall in as many as 30 states."

On Thursday, following Small's arrest, Sproul's spokesman Leibowitz hedged that number by telling us via email: "What we said on the record to various media outlets is that his companies are working in 'as many as 30 states.' That could mean 1 state. Or 2. Or 30. You get the idea, I'm sure."

We do. The idea is Sproul does not want to come clean about his ongoing operations and who it is that he continues to work for, preferring instead to live up to the "shady" adjective that's often applied to him in the media. Despite our follow-up request, Leibowitz did not identify the exact number of states that Sproul was still working in, or who was paying him to do so.

Strategic was said to have been hired by state Republican Parties, at the request of the RNC, for voter registration drives in five states (Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, Nevada and Colorado) and for "Get Out the Vote" campaigns in Ohio and Wisconsin. When both RNC and state GOP officials claimed to have fired them, it seems they didn't really mean it.

In Tanfani's report at *LA Times* late Thursday, Spicer confirms that, really, it may have only been Sproul who the party claimed to be "boldly" cutting ties with. The operations Sproul created for the Party beginning in August, the ones that led to fraudulent voter registrations in Florida and destroyed applications reported in Colorado and Nevada as well, are still in place.

"After Sproul was dumped," Tanfani reports, "the registration operation that he assembled continued working under the supervision of party officials, Spicer said. He said the workers will continue to do get-out-the-vote work until the election."

The firing of Sproul and Strategic Allied Consulting was a deception.

Moreover, as [The BRAD BLOG detailed on Tuesday](#) the company's mailing address, according to [documents released \[PDF\]](#) by the FL Dept. of Law Enforcement upon announcement of [their statewide criminal investigation of Strategic](#) (the firm is also being [criminally investigated in CO](#)), was registered as a corporation last June out of the same law office run by top-level Republican National Committee election attorneys where both Karl Rove's American Crossroads Super-PAC and the Koch Brothers' Americans for Prosperity are also based.

Despite Spicer's attempt to downplay the VA incident on Thursday --- "He made a mistake and he's being charged with it, which we fully support" --- as he similarly did for the FL incidents previously, it's become clear that the RNC's deceptive and often illegal registration and canvass operations are toxic, widespread, and very high-reaching.

Ironically, or perhaps not at this point, Romney, who hired Sproul late last year as a "political consultant" for some \$71,000, appears to have [committed both voter registration fraud and voter fraud himself](#) in Massachusetts, when he voted in the January 2010 U.S. Senate Special Election between Scott Brown and Martha Coakley. While he owned houses in both California and New Hampshire at the time, he did not own a MA home until July of that year. Instead, he used the basement of his son's Belmont, MA home as his own registration address in apparent contravention of Massachusetts state residency laws. [*See our still-growing list of other [very high-profile GOPers recently involved in apparent election fraud crimes.](#)*]

### **Trashed registration forms in Virginia**

According to FEC filings obtained [by CBS 6 in Richmond](#) last month, the Virginia Republican Party reportedly paid some \$500,000 to Strategic for registration work before the state GOP claimed to have fired them, several days after the fraudulent forms collected by Strategic and submitted to county Supervisors of Elections by the Florida GOP began to surface in the Sunshine State. As we now know, only Sproul was fired. The voter registration operation itself continued.

Small, the man arrested on Thursday and charged with 8 felony counts and 5 misdemeanors after allegedly having been found to have tossed at least 8 registration forms into a dumpster in Harrisonburg, VA (Rockingham County), was reportedly working for an operation named PinPoint on behalf of the Virginia GOP, according to Reilly at TPM.

In an [earlier report on the matter at TPM](#), before Small's arrest later in the day, Reilly noted that "Virginia does not register voters by political party, so it would be difficult for someone to discard forms from their political opponents."

Not really.

Reilly's assessment does not take into account the very specific and purposely deceptive process used by Sproul's companies --- and, as suggested by evidence we've collected, perhaps other Republican-based voter registration outfits across the country --- to identify and register *only* Republicans to vote, while attempting to filter out Democratic-leaning voters.

In an investigative report earlier this month, [The BRAD BLOG detailed](#) video-taped and other evidence from nearly half a dozen states, demonstrating a deceptive, national Republican voter registration strategy where voter registration workers purposely misrepresented themselves as pollster to potential registrants.

Essentially, as detailed in video clips and other testimony in that report, the GOP voter registration workers hired by Sproul were trained to pretend to be taking a poll and to ask voters

if they supported Mitt Romney or Barack Obama. If the answer was "Obama", the potential registrant was thanked and sent on their way. If the answer came back as "Romney", they were given the opportunity to register to vote. In that way, the thousands of workers employed by Sproul, the former head of the AZ Republican Party and Christian Coalition, kept many Democratic-leaning voters from registering to vote at all.

In one [YouTube video that went viral last month](#), a young Colorado registration worker --- who, it turned out, had been working for Sproul's Strategic Allied Consulting on behalf of the state GOP --- is seen doing exactly that. Another video [posted by Las Vegas ABC affiliate Action News 13](#), shows a worker there playing out the same pollster scheme in Nevada. Sproul shared an email with [The BRAD BLOG](#) in which he had boasted to other company officials that the Vegas video tape captured their worker carrying out her training "perfectly".

In Virginia, where the Pennsylvania man working for the state GOP was arrested Thursday, Chesterfield County's General Registrar Larry Haake was seen [explaining to Richmond's CBS 6](#) in late September that he had received complaints of Strategic employees discovered doing the same thing in a library last month.

"They were responsible for people that appeared in some libraries in Chesterfield County, supposedly to conduct voter registration drives," Haake said, "but they were asking voters for whom they are going to vote."

Haake says he informed the GOP of the incident at the time, but, apparently, no action was taken.

If, in fact, Small, or the workers he is said to have supervised, were using the same technique of misrepresenting themselves to voters about being a pollster, rather than being a registration worker, it's likely he would have been able to glean whether those registrations he was allegedly seen tossing into a dumpster were for Democratic or Republican-leaning voters.

### **The 'PinPoint' piece of the puzzle**

In that [same story on the Sproul/RNC voter registration deception](#), we cited a [9/28/12 report by the Los Angeles Times](#) that tied PinPoint Staffing to Sproul.

The article quoted William T. Hazard, the Strategic employee said by the company to have turned in the original fraudulent registration applications in Palm Beach County, FL. He says he "did nothing wrong", but told the paper that he was trained "to approach people and ask whom they supported in the presidential election. When people answered with President Obama, he said, he wished them a good day. If someone said Mitt Romney, he asked if they were registered to vote. If not, he handed them forms to fill out."

He says that it was a help wanted ad placed by PinPoint that led him to the work for Strategic, Sproul, and the Republican Party.

"He got the voter registration job after responding to a Craigslist ad placed by a company called PinPoint Staffing seeking people to do 'voter surveys'," the *Times* reported at the time. "The ad specified that all applicants had to be registered Republicans and active voters."

Further, the paper says, "Although he reported to a PinPoint Staffing office in West Palm Beach, he said, 'I thought I was dealing with the Republican Party.'"

PinPoint was key to Sproul's operations. So who are they?

Over our three-week long investigation of Sproul and the GOP Voter Registration Fraud Scandal, we had collected dozens of help wanted ads posted by PinPoint Staffing that were nearly identical to others published on behalf of Strategic. Some of those ads placed in North Carolina had proved instrumental, originally, to the [BlueNC blog's Greg Flynn](#) in late August when they were key to his uncovering Sproul's previously-secret ownership of Strategic Allied Consulting.

Many of the PinPoint ads on Craigslist and other sites --- seeking "VOTER REGISTRATION SUPPORT" by "REPUBLICAN PARTY SUPPORTER(S)", for example --- were hastily removed from the Internet at nearly the same time that Sproul and Strategic were being outed and supposedly fired. [The BRAD BLOG](#) captured many of them before they were taken down, some with the message: "This posting has been flagged for removal."

We discovered ads by PinPoint Staffing in dozens of cities, in VA, NC, and Washington D.C., as well as all across Florida, from Pensacola in the panhandle, down to Palm Beach County where the [first fraudulent registration forms were discovered](#) in late September.

More recently, PinPoint ads for "Political Jobs" or "Campaign" or "Canvassing" operations began to no longer include references to "Republican Voters" or "Romney" or the "Republican Party". Instead they might read "ARE YOU LOOKING FOR YOUR BIG BREAK INTO POLITICS?". Such ads have been found this month in VA, WI, NY, AZ and FL.

During our research on our report last week detailing the [state's where Sproul was confirmed to still be working](#), we found evidence of his continuing operations under the names Issue Advocacy Partners and Grassroots Outreach in Alabama, California, Georgia, Louisiana, Oregon, Wisconsin, Iowa, Virginia, New York, New Jersey and, possibly, Ohio (where the RNC had previously admitted that Strategic had been scheduled to do "Get Out the Vote" work this year before the "firing".)

At TPM, Reilly reports that "A man who answered the phone at Pinpoint and only gave his name as Ryan said he was not allowed to comment. 'I really want to stay out of it,' he said."

Ads for Strategic placed in late Summer by PinPoint in Alachua, FL, and in September in Winston Salem, NC, told perspective employees to "Contact Ryan."

The phone number given on the ads was from Phoenix, AZ. Sproul's main operation is based just outside of Phoenix, in Tempe.

"Let me be as unequivocal as possible. Nathan Sproul and his businesses have no ownership interest in Pinpoint," his spokesperson Leibowitz, hired by Sproul to manage the crisis several weeks into it, insisted to [The BRAD BLOG](#) late Thursday. "He doesn't control it, nor is he affiliated with it."

"The only connection between Sproul and Pinpoint is that Nathan has, on occasion, used Pinpoint to hire some workers."

When we followed up to ask if Sproul had used PinPoint to hire workers in FL, VA or anywhere else, whether any of his current companies are still using them, and for what services he has used them in the past, or if he has since stopped, Leibowitz demurred.

"Given that Nathan's companies have no connection to the Pinpoint-related story you cited earlier, we see no need to go into any further detail."

- [Deborah Newell Tornello](#) contributed research to this report.

*CORRECTIONS: We've updated the piece above to reflect new information made available since publication early this morning. Included in the updates: TPM corrected its [report from last night](#) to say that "The Rockingham County Sheriff office originally said Small was 31 years old. The agency later corrected that information to say he is 23"; Small was charged with 8 felony counts and 5 misdemeanors, not 13 felonies as we'd initially described.*