

LA Times: Voter-fraud shocker?! On behalf of ... the GOP?

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Republicans' current crop of "voter security" laws are Democrats' "voter suppression" laws.

For several years now, Republican-led legislatures have been loud in their concerns about what amounts to a solution in search of a problem: massive, organized voter fraud in order to steal elections. Real verified instances of organized, deliberate voter fraud can likely be counted in the scores at best, and Republicans have been ardent about using the specter of the now-disbanded ACORN group to raise a national warning.

Most spectacularly, South Carolina Republican Gov. Nikki Haley roused the troops at the Republican convention in Tampa, Fla., in August by repeating the completely boneheaded and inapt trope about the voter I.D. law of the sort her state approved (and which, like many such laws, is being challenged in federal courts).

"If you have to use picture I.D. to get onto a plane," she said, "it is common sense that you would use picture I.D. to protect the integrity of the voting process."

Another proof that common sense isn't that common. Getting on a plane is a commercial transaction. Voting is a constitutional right. No resemblance whatsoever.

So get a load of what's just happened.

There has emerged some potential voter fraud – possibly by a group hired by Republicans themselves, which puts me in mind of the verse in Matthew, in the Gospels, "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" which essentially means, who are you, Mr. Pot, to call the kettle black?

The controversy surrounds a Republican political consulting firm whose chief operated a voter registration project that was investigated by the Justice Department and several state officials in 2004 on fraud allegations; charges were never filed, and in this 2012 instance, GOP officials, including the Republican National Committee, have been scrambling to fire the consulting firm to contain the political fallout a little over a month before the elections.

This new dip into the same political hot water concerns a new group headed by the same man whose group is facing [questions about suspicious](#) voter registrations in swing states including [Florida](#) and Colorado. The GOP was paying the firm a reported \$2.9 million to register voters. Several states, including North [Carolina](#), are now [looking](#) more closely at voter registrations submitted by the group's workers.

In the swing state of Colorado, a Fox News station reported on a young woman registering voters in Colorado Springs. In a [video](#), she said that "We're out here in support of Romney, actually," and then, when she was asked who she works for, risibly claimed – after a long pause -- to be working for the county clerk's office. The consulting firm at issue, Strategic Allied Consulting – love those innocuous, meaningless-sounding names, don't you? -- was formed under that name just this year, but it is headed by former Arizona state GOP executive director Nathan Sproul. He's a veteran of about eight years of voter registration efforts paid for by GOP interests, efforts that have drawn scrutiny in several states, [North Carolina](#) among them.

Interestingly, Sproul has put forth the same argument about voter registration drives that opponents of voter I.D. laws use: that if there's any problem, it's just with a few bad apples. There's no fraudulent intent.

I was rather expecting a double-down argument, the deep conspiracy "sting" defense, that those people registering voters were, hey, after all, just patriotic Americans submitting these phony registrations to see whether government officials would notice and do their duty, and so we were just being good and vigilant citizens, not committing a federal crime, because our hearts are pure.

Since the questions about suspicious voter registrations arose over the last few days, the company has been fired by Republican Party organizations in several of the swing states it's been operating in.

This is the backdrop for my colleague Patrick McGreevy's [story](#) about what's happening in the Inland Empire. Riverside County is seeing a surge in GOP voter registrations – in some cases, by people who didn't want to register Republican.

Democrats have taken scores of formal complaints to the Secretary of State's office from a Riverside County state Senate district where voters say someone registered them as Republicans without their knowledge or consent in a district that's recently reported a surge of 27,000 new Republican voters, something that's drawn attention to the Golden State Voter Participation Project and its chief donor, GOP activist Charles Munger Jr., as well as a number of business groups.