



Shelby County Election Commission

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SCEC OFFICIALS RESPOND TO LATEST LEGAL ACTION FILED BY TBVP

Oct. 23, 2018 (Memphis, Tenn.) Earlier today the Tennessee Black Voter Project (TBVP) filed an amendment to its lawsuit against the Shelby County Election Commission (SCEC).

The amendment contains a number of baseless allegations, including intentionally not processing some of the thousands of voter registration applications dumped on SCEC immediately preceding the Oct. 9 deadline.

“To the extent there is a problem, it is one created by the TBVP,” said Linda Phillips, administrator of elections “It certainly appears that they intentionally withheld the forms until the deadline in an effort to create chaos.”

Many of the applications submitted were duplicate applications. Yet other forms were incomplete.

Thousands of rejected applications were submitted by convicted felons who have not had their voting rights restored. “It is a State Law. There is a process, which begins with forms available through the court system, by which felons may have their voting rights restored, and we have given sessions on how to do this at public libraries, and in other places. The voting right restoration process is also outlined clearly on our website.”

Another point in the amendment addresses is forms that are considered incomplete because the salutation selection has been omitted. Tennessee State law requires gender identification as it is part of the process of identifying a voter at the polling location. The registration forms used by SCEC, the State issued form, makes clear the requirement for gender identification. TBVP chose to use a different version of the form.

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Months ago, when representatives of TBVP talked to officials at SCEC about its voter registration efforts, SCEC offered to buy the group WiFi-enabled tablets to register people. Using them would not only have made the registration process faster, but the tablets would not allow the submission of deficient applications. TBVP refused the offer.

Another demand is that SCEC create a process to allow those with incomplete applications to cure the deficiencies and allow them to vote on a machine. There is already a system in place and it is working.

When someone appears, who has an unprocessed application, one with a deficiency, or the person's name does not show up in the state system, the poll worker calls a specially designated help desk number at the Ops Center. The person's name is looked up either manually or on the central computer at the Ops Center. Once located, the person is given the opportunity to cure the deficiency and the registration form is processed immediately. The voter is sent to a machine to vote. This process will continue through the end of Early Voting.

As of yesterday, out of nearly 60,000 early voters, 73 of them had cast provisional ballots.

On Election Day, people whose applications contain deficiencies will be required to vote on provisional ballots by directive of the Coordinator of Elections, Mark Goins.

Phillips said there is a simple explanation. "As a practical matter, polling places are not connected, and there would be no way for one polling place to convey to others that a person has already voted." Phillips said. "

All remaining forms are due for completion prior to Election Day, Nov.6.

Another issue raised is the open records request submitted on Oct. 5.

"Of course, we comply with these requests. However, as stated on the web site, during an election cycle, there may be a delay in fulfilling these requests," Phillips said. "To expect immediate response to a request submitted less than two weeks prior to early voting is unrealistic."

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