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Tom Noe: a dealer in rare coins and top Ohio Republican fundraiser, now under Federal investigation.

firms that manage OFCW funds is only the *publicly reported* amount that was given to the Republicans statewide. There was also more given to candidates on a national level. However, we will now turn to showing that once these skimming channels had been established and opened wide, many millions of dollars more may have been ripped off from Workers' Compensation, and channelled *illegally* into the Bush-Cheney 2004 election campaign.

Rove's Man in Ohio

The man at the center of the Bureau investment scandal is Tom Noe and his "Vintage Coin and Collectibles" business operation. Noe is facing multiple Federal and state investigations, including a probe into whether he laundered money for the Bush-Cheney 2004 re-election campaign.

Noe, who had built a power base in Lucas County, Ohio (where the major city is Toledo), and was a national fundraiser for the 2004 Bush-Cheney campaign, became Karl Rove's man in Ohio. Noe chaired the Bush-Cheney campaign in northwest Ohio. The April 28 *Toledo Blade* reported, "As a regional chairman of the campaign, Mr. Noe had frequent contact with Karl Rove, the architect of the President's re-election. And Ohio, it turned out, was the pivotal state in the election, narrowly pushing President Bush to victory."

At one point, Noe was chairman of the Lucas County Republican Party, and during the 2004 elections, his wife was both the chairman of the Republican Party and chairman of the county Board of Elections. And Lucas County was the site of some very strange happenings around the November elections.

On Oct. 11, a few weeks before the election, the Lucas County Democratic Party headquarters was burglarized, and three computers, including the party's main system, were stolen. The Oct. 12 *Toledo Blade* reported, "The computers contained highly sensitive information, including the party's financial information, names and personal phone numbers of hundreds of party members, candidates, and volunteers. The

computers also stored e-mails from candidates that included discussion about campaign strategy."

And before the election, it was discovered that the county's Diebold voting machines were malfunctioning. Still, these Diebold machines were set up to be used in the November election in Lucas County, and some malfunctioned on Election Day, depriving people of their votes.

There were also a large number of provisional votes that were disqualified in Lucas County, because the voter had allegedly "voted in the wrong precinct," and others were disqualified for other reasons. After the election, it was determined that at least a third of those disqualified on grounds of voting in the wrong precinct, had in fact voted correctly.

Three of the four Lucas County Board of Election members were forced to resign after the election.

Playing With State Assets

In 1998, Noe's Vintage Coin and Collectibles got a contract with the Bureau to manage \$50 million of OWCF funds. In late May-early June 2005, Noe's attorneys told authorities

Voter Suppression in Ohio

On Jan. 5, 2005, Rep. John Conyers (Mich.), the ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, issued a 102-page report detailing the status of his investigations into vote suppression and fraud in the 2004 Ohio Presidential elections. The report, entitled "Preserving Democracy: What Went Wrong in Ohio," found intentional misconduct and illegal behavior, and numerous violations of the Voting Rights Act.

"We have found numerous, serious election irregularities in the Ohio presidential election, which resulted in a significant disenfranchisement of voters," the report states. "Cumulatively, these irregularities, which affected hundreds of thousands of votes and voters in Ohio, raise grave doubts regarding whether it can be said that the Ohio electors selected on December 13, 2004, were chosen in a manner that conforms to Ohio law, let alone federal requirements and constitutional standards."

"In many cases these irregularities were caused by intentional misconduct and illegal behavior, much of it involving Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell, the co-chair of the Bush-Cheney campaign in Ohio," the report charged.

Documented instances in which votes were suppressed and voters disenfranchised, include:

- The misallocation of voting machines "that disenfranchised scores, if not hundreds of thousands, of predominantly minority and Democratic voters."

that \$10-12 million of the \$50 million in state assets were missing. Recall that the 1996 law contained an unusual provision specifically authorizing the Bureau to invest in rare coins. In fact, the *Toledo Blade* reported that it had not found an instance in any other state in which state investment in rare coins is allowable. Possibly the 1996 law's provision had been written with Noe in mind.

Once Noe received the contract to manage \$50 million of the Bureau funds, his level of campaign contributions increased, and his profile in the state increased. Noe was appointed chairman of the Ohio Turnpike Commission, and a member of Ohio's Board of Regents. One source reported to *EIR* that it is quite rare to be appointed a member to both prestigious state institutions at the same time. In the 2003-04 period, Noe became a "Pioneer" for Bush-Cheney, having packaged between \$100,000 and \$200,000 in contributions to the Bush-Cheney 2004 election campaign. He also contributed \$10,000 to Arnold Schwarzenegger's bid to become Governor of California in 2003.

However, questions were surfacing about Noe's contribu-

tions. The May 27, 2005 *Toledo Blade* reported that on April 27: "Federal authorities confirm[ed] that the FBI is investigating Noe for possible violations of campaign contribution laws. Federal agents are probing whether Mr. Noe gave people money in order for them to give to the Bush re-election campaign, allowing him to exceed Federal spending limits." An individual may give a maximum of \$2,000 to any Presidential candidate's campaign. Trying to skirt that limit by giving money to someone else in order for them to contribute to a candidate, is illegal, a practice called "conduiting." Subsequent *Toledo Blade* editions reported that the Federal probe focussed on one way Noe may have skirted campaign limits: giving money to individuals for them to purchase seats at a table at the Oct. 30, 2003 fundraiser in Columbus which generated \$1.4 million for the Bush-Cheney campaign.

Ohio press reports that a Federal grand jury has been convened on the above probe.

Simultaneously, the state undertook action. On May 26, the state Prosecutors of Franklin and Lucas counties, Ron O'Brien and Julia Bates, respectively, executed a search war-

- Blackwell's restrictions on provisional ballots, which also "resulted in the disenfranchisement of tens, if not hundreds of thousands of voters."

- The Ohio Republican Party's "selectively targeting 35,000 predominantly minority voters for intimidation."

- The Ohio Republican Party's use of thousands of partisan challengers, concentrated in minority areas.

- Blackwell's refusing to allow voters who requested, but did not get, absentee ballots, from receiving provisional ballots.

- Widespread instances of intimidation and misinformation on election day.

- Lack of uniformity in the standards for the recount.

- The Triad computer company providing "cheat sheets" to numerous counties, which "informed election officials how many votes they should find for each candidate," and how they could manipulate the sample recount to match the machines, thus avoiding conducting a full hand recount as mandated by state law.

DNC Report

On June 22, 2005 the Democratic National Committee (DNC) released a report, "Democracy at Risk: The 2004 Election in Ohio," based on a comprehensive study of the November 2004 general election in Ohio, undertaken in December.

The summary findings are that 28% of Ohio voters reported problems in voting, including ballot problems, locating proper polling place, and/or intimidation. But the portion of African-American voters reporting problems was much higher, at 52%, compared to 25% of white vot-

ers. Voters in counties using DRE/touch-screen machines experienced far more problems than voters in other counties—56% vs. 28%. This was particularly acute in Franklin County (Columbus area), where 70% of voters reported problems.

Because of the shortage of voting machines in minority areas, Blacks waited an average of 52 minutes before voting; whites waited an average of 18 minutes. Sixteen percent of black voters reported experiencing intimidation, as compared to 5% of white voters.

Seventy-one percent of whites are confident their vote was counted correctly, vs. 10% of blacks. Overall, nearly one quarter of Ohio voters reported that their experience in 2004 has made them less confident about the reliability of elections in Ohio.

DNC Chairman Howard Dean was asked about the report on the PBS News Hour on June 22. "We did not find widespread fraud," Dean said. "What we did find was widespread voter suppression. That means essentially reducing or tactics aimed at reducing the number of voters. African-Americans were the biggest victims of this, but it also was young voters. Young voters and African-Americans were disproportionately asked for IDs, which is illegal in Ohio. The waiting lines for African-Americans were three times as long as they were for white voters. So we don't know that this would change the outcome of the election, but we do know there was a concentrated effort, or at least that was the outcome to reduce African-American votes and to a lesser extent young votes—the two groups which voted in the highest percentage for John Kerry."