

# **MEDIA ADVISORY**

**Voter Integrity Project of NC**

**919-332-4129**

**[www.VoterIntegrityProject.com](http://www.VoterIntegrityProject.com)**

## **VIP-NC Issues Rebuttal to WRAL Web Article**

(Raleigh, NC)—SEP 21, 2012—Voter Integrity Project of NC, a non-partisan group advocating for free and fair elections, today has taken the unusual step of issuing a formal rebuttal to an article written by Mark Binker and posted on the WRAL website Tuesday, Sep 17.

While we normally ignore or privately correct stories that have minor inaccuracies by news organizations, Mr. Binker's story created so many false impressions that his work has merited a more public response.

For example, he "discovered" Carolyn Perry, whom VIP-NC researchers believed to be a dead voter. Her story is compelling, so Mr. Binker made her the focus of his narrative that people concerned about voter fraud are somehow bad people. We sincerely apologize for causing any anguish to Ms. Perry and her family. We recognize the error we made in this case, and have revised our procedures accordingly.

Mr. Binker missed the point that the overall data has revealed: the SBoE has been remiss in its "list maintenance" function, as mandated by Section 8 of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993. Had the SBoE done their job properly, there would be no need for citizen advocacy on the part of the Voter Integrity Project, or any other similar group. We believe Mr. Binker's article should have provided details on why such a widespread systemic voter list maintenance failure occurred and what can be done to assure it doesn't happen again.

Mr. Binker also failed to mention our research method that incorporates a proprietary computer program which searches the 6.4 million-person state voter roll, looking for exact matching of county, first name, last name and age of a known deceased NC resident.

Only two lead researchers in our organization have access to all public data, which is then stripped of any race, gender or party information before it is sent to "citizen auditors" who review the file and either approve or reject each computer match. We used this "blind" method in order to eliminate the chances of personal bias when the auditors review the data. Anyone who would accuse the matching protocol VIP-NC uses of being a tool for partisan or racially based decision-making is simply unacquainted with the facts.

Most alarming to the research team at Voter Integrity Project was Mr. Binker's misleading reporting of our results and the response to our research from the NC State Board of Elections.

For example, we only formally "challenged" the voting rights of 386 deceased Wake residents and after their own investigation, the Wake BoE agreed to remove 374 of them from the voter rolls. This was a 97% accuracy rate, and the Board agreed to allow more time for validating the remaining 12 voters to be confirmed deceased. At the challenge hearing, we also presented (without any formal challenges) 676 additional deceased voters who had passed away prior to 2008. Ms. Perry was included in this second group.

All told, VIP-NC has now given the Wake County BoE a total of nearly 1100 deceased voters from the 2002-2012 timeframe and at this time; all but 42 have been confirmed to be deceased. That translates to greater than 95% accuracy, yet judging from some of the reader's comments stemming from Mr. Binker's misleading treatment of those numbers, many had the impression that we missed 42 out of 148, which would be far, far below our actual matching accuracy rate.

Another aspect of what appears to be an agenda-driven reporting was Mr. Binker's claim that "some names were already removed through regular list maintenance procedures."

There are several problems with this statement that will require a careful review.

First, based on existing list maintenance procedures, the state's Department of Health and Human Services issues a monthly report to the SBOE which then notifies the various county Boards of Election so the names can be removed. This

# MEDIA ADVISORY

Voter Integrity Project of NC

919-332-4129

[www.VoterIntegrityProject.com](http://www.VoterIntegrityProject.com)

process, when effective, generally removes deceased voters within 90 days of their date of death. Failing that, a “back-up” procedure which removes deceased voters from the voting roll may take up to five years.

This back-up removal procedure is triggered when any mail from the local BoE is returned undelivered. The fact that many thousands of deceased voters who died in the period of 2002-2007 were still on the voter rolls unequivocally reveals that even the “back-up” list-maintenance procedure is not working very well.

With both the “regular” and the back-up list maintenance procedure, every single one of the 27,561 deceased voters identified by VIP-NC in North Carolina would still be on the voter roll this November, mostly coded as “active” or “inactive” voters.

The reason we pushed for them to be coded as “removed” involves its greater difficulty for identity thieves. One of the little known secrets about North Carolina’s weak election laws is that a “removed” voter has to re-register in order to vote, but an inactive voter can still vote. More to the point, when a voter is classified as “inactive,” anybody can walk into an early voting location and announce the name and address of that inactive voter and cast a vote . . . not on a provisional ballot, but a “regular” ballot that gets counted without question.

Thanks to the dedicated volunteer researchers we have in this organization, it will be harder for anybody to exploit that loophole in NC election law.

Section 8 of the National Voter Registration Act requires biennial audits to assure deceased voters have been removed. It also prohibits “systemic audits” within 90 days of an upcoming election.

So, [why did Veronica DeGraffenreid of the SBOE send out a spreadsheet of deceased voters to all 100 county Boards of Election on August 14](#), well within the 90 day prohibition period? Did Mr. Binker ask that question? Did he ask why that audit covered the same ten years of data for deceased voters that VIP-NC had obtained from the NC Department of Public Health? Did he ask if it was in response to the work done by those at VIP-NC, or just an unlikely “coincidence”? Did he ask what information the SBoE can produce to show the exact date they initiated this audit? Again, that is an important question because [Section 8 of HAVA stipulates that list maintenance programs “not be undertaken within 90 days of a federal election.”](#) In their haste to clean up the voter rolls after they realized the impact of the VIP-NC deceased-voter audit, did Ms. DeGraffenreid actually violate federal law? It appears that Mr. Binker either failed to ask those questions, or upon hearing the responses, chose not to reveal them to his readers, thereby denying them a fully factual account.

We hope there are honest, unbiased journalists who will ask the SBOE such probing questions and fairly report them. Additionally, they might ask the SBOE some other pointed questions:

- 1) How many deceased voters did they find in their August 14 audit?
- 2) Before that, when was the last SBoE audit undertaken?
- 3) What was the time period covered in their last audit?
- 4) How many deceased voters did they find at that time?
- 5) When was the last time the NC Board of Elections did a ten-year audit? (One long-time county BoE employee told us that she had never seen a ten-year audit, ever!)
- 6) When was the last time they conducted any systemic audit less than 90 days before a Presidential election?
- 7) What process improvements does the Board plan to undertake as a result of their audits.

While we appreciate Mr. Binker’s examination of the difficulties that citizen groups face in undertaking such an enormous task as we have recently completed, we deeply resent the implication of racism that was conjured up for his story in order to criticize the honest efforts of dozens of researchers who devoted hundreds of hours in pursuit of a cleaner voter roll; something that benefits ALL North Carolinians -- regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity, or party affiliation.

# **MEDIA ADVISORY**

**Voter Integrity Project of NC**

**919-332-4129**

**[www.VoterIntegrityProject.com](http://www.VoterIntegrityProject.com)**

Having no data or quotes from us to support his erroneous opinion, he simply let Ms. Perry make the inference for him . . . and for some, it no-doubt worked.

We hope a thoughtful public will appreciate that efforts to remove ineligible voters from our rolls is in everyone's interest, and that failure to do so can have devastating consequences. If there is anything, anything at all, about the work of VIP-NC which is racist or partisan, we challenge WRAL and Mr. Binker in particular, to bring it forward. Failure to do so will prove such innuendo is baseless and calls into question the objectivity of both Mr. Binker and his employer, WRAL.

We will soon be opening a detailed FAQ section on our website ([www.VoterIntegrityProject.com](http://www.VoterIntegrityProject.com)) to address Mr. Binker's (and any other legitimate questions) directed toward us and sincerely hope that a thoughtful public will see beyond the half-truths and the out-and-out distortions put forth by Mr. Binker and WRAL.

Our ultimate goal is for the public to understand the hard work of the dedicated volunteers who make up the Voter Integrity Project in their proper context: Fellow citizens working for free and fair elections for every lawful voter . . . because every time a vote is stolen, somebody else's legitimate vote has been disenfranchised.