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Green Bay Clerk Violates Swing State Election Law Again

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Green Bay's law-bending elections chief is at it again, but this time City Clerk Celestine Jeffreys admits she didn't understand the election law she was breaking.

In response to a complaint filed by the Public Interest Legal Foundation on behalf of three Green Bay citizens,

Jeffreys “concedes that she has not been strictly adhering to the statutory requirements in Wisconsin Statutes … but the failure to do so was inadvertent and due to a lack of awareness of the statutory requirements.”

In short, the much-troubled clerk was ignorant, not willful, according to the legal response. It’s more of the same from Jeffreys, the former chief of staff for Green Bay’s far-left mayor in a city that made national news during the Zuckerbucks scandal of 2020 and turned punitive when its bumbling clerk previously twisted state election law.

The Law is Clear

Last month, PILF filed a complaint with the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) alleging Jeffreys ignored laws aimed at detecting abuse of the Badger State’s same-day registration process. Wisconsin is one of 20 states and the District of Columbia that offers election day registration, according to the National Conference of State Legislators.

The law is clear. The Elections Commission after each election is required to mail postcards to voters who registered on election day, part of its post-election audit demanded under state statute. Undelivered postcards are sent back to the clerk's office of the city of origin.

According to the law, for any postcard that is returned undelivered, or if the clerk is informed the voter resides at a different address than the one provided on election day, the election official must change the status of the voter "from eligible to ineligible on the registration list." Then the official must mail the voter a notice of the change, "and provide the name of the elector to the district attorney for the county where the polling place is located and the elections commission."

In February 2023, WEC "updated guidance regarding the handling and processing of Election Day Registration postcards returned to a clerk's office after an election," confirming the requirements are mandatory. Jeffreys failed to do this part of her job at every turn, according to the complaint.

‘Inactivated Zero Residents’

PILF’s lawsuit notes that Green Bay reported 3,497 Election Day registrations in the hotly contested 2020 presidential race in which Democrat candidate Joe Biden narrowly defeated then-President Donald Trump in the battleground Badger State. Of those, 170 were returned “undeliverable” to the clerk’s office. WEC’s Election Day Registrations report found Green Bay elections officials “inactivated zero registrants and referred zero registrants to the district attorney.”

That line — ‘inactivated zero residents’ — comes up again and again. The 2021 elections, the primary and general elections in 2022, in which Wisconsin Democrat Tony Evers and most leftist statewide officers won, and again in the 2023 spring election in which the far-left Wisconsin Supreme Court justice candidate claimed victory and turned control of the court over to leftists. In the latter contest, of the 672 election day registrants, 24 postcards were returned as undeliverable to Jeffreys’ office.

Instead of following the law, Jeffreys recorded the postcards as “undeliverable” in WisVote and took no further action. All the stuff she’s supposed to do — mark the voter as ineligible on the registration list, mail the voter an alert about the change, and alert the local DA and the elections commission of the possible fraudulent activity — Jeffreys isn’t doing any of it, according to the lawsuit.

Oops.

‘This is Bad’

In the response to the complaint, Green Bay Assistant City Attorney Lindsay Matther assures the Wisconsin Elections Commission that after receiving the complaint Jeffreys “began formulating a plan for addressing the undeliverable postcards going forward that algins [Sic] with both the statutory requirements and the guidance from the Wisconsin Elections Commission, and she will comply with both for all future elections.”

“Clerk Jeffreys was unaware that she was required to do each of these things, but plans to do so going forward, and is in the process of drafting written procedures for doing so. In the future, in accordance with statute and with the WEC guidance, Clerk Jeffreys will take the following actions when her office receives an undeliverable EDR postcard,” the response states.

But the damage has been done — in multiple election cycles.

“This is bad,” said Lauren Bowman Bis, PILF’s director of communications. “People need to have faith and trust in their elected officials. For her to not be following the law, not even knowing the law, … is unbelievable.” She added that Jeffreys’ failure to inactivate the individuals on the undeliverable list “could be easily used for fraud and abuse.”

“It’s not often you have an elected official admit she doesn’t know the law,” the spokeswoman said. “Wisconsin is a critical state. We’re going into the 2024 election. This doesn’t just affect the people in Green Bay or Wisconsin. We all want faith in our elections, that the rules are being followed. In Green Bay, that's not the case."

'Contrary to Law'

Jeffreys has a history of trouble with election law. In December, the state elections commission found that Jeffreys violated election law in the 2022 spring election when she accepted multiple absentee ballots brought in on behalf of voters. Resident Matt Roeser alleged that he and two other witnesses saw the clerk "accept, many times, multiple absentee ballots from an individual voter," according to Green Bay's WBAY News.

The city fired back with an indignant response, insisting Jeffreys acted within the law and that the city of Green Bay "ran a fair, free, and accessible election on April 5, 2022 in compliance with state and federal law." Furthermore, the city "fulfilled its equal protection obligation to accept ballots on behalf of voters who were unable to personally deliver their own as a result of a disability or impairment."

WEC didn't see it that way. In its ruling, the commission determined that Roeser had shown probable cause that Jeffreys violated Wisconsin election law on ballot harvesting. The commission found Jeffreys abused her discretion in accepting the ballots on behalf of voters who were said to have been "sick." Those with a confirmed disability may receive ballot return assistance under Wisconsin law.

"Sickness alone may or may not constitute a disability, and thus it cannot be a qualification to receive ballot return assistance," WEC said in its decision, adding that Jeffreys "should ensure that voters who qualify for ballot return assistance under the Voting Rights Act are able to receive such assistance."

"The Commission hereby orders Celestine Jeffreys to amend the policy described in the Response or any current or future policy in a manner consistent with this decision," the ruling states. "Accordingly, to the extent that the Respondent's policy accepted ballots from voters who are 'sick,' but not disabled, it is contrary to law."

Oops.

The city responded with an “our bad” mea culpa, but insisted there was “significant confusion” in the April 2022 spring election about receiving absentee ballots. It also claimed to have corrected the mistakes.

Center of Zuckerbucks

Jeffreys was tapped to serve as city clerk following the contentious 2020 election. Jeffreys replaced Christine Teske after the longtime Green Bay clerk resigned amid the embedding of leftist activists in the clerk’s office.

Green Bay was one of the “Wisconsin-5” cities that signed a contract with and received millions of dollars in election administration grants from the Center for Tech and Civic Life. The Chicago-based CTCL was launched by far left, former Democrat operatives. The group used hundreds of millions of dollars from Mark Zuckerberg, founder of conservative-silencing Facebook.

Teske grew increasingly frustrated by the meddling of former Democrat operative Michael Spitzer-Rubenstein's meddling in Green Bay's election administration, according to emails obtained by Wisconsin Spotlight. Spitzer-Rubenstein was with the National Vote at Home Institute, one of the left-wing organizations in CTCL's network that the Wisconsin-5 cities were told to work with under the terms of the grant agreements.

Among other legally suspect actions, Spitzer-Rubenstein offered to "cure" or correct absentee ballot information. Teske repeatedly objected to Green Bay's Democrat mayor, Eric Genrich, and to Jeffreys, his chief of staff, in the months leading up to the 2020 presidential election. She complained the "grant mentors" didn't know Wisconsin election law and that their "help" likely was illegal.

"I don't understand how people who don't have knowledge of the process can tell us how to manage the election," Teske wrote in one email in late August.

The mayor's office applied pressure.

“The grant mentors would like to meet with you to discuss, further, the ballot curing process. Please let them know when you’re available,” Jeffreys demanded of Teske.

Teske threw up her hands just weeks before the election, taking a leave of absence before officially resigning at the end of the year.

‘Retaliatory’

In January, a Brown County Circuit Court Judge tossed out the city’s disorderly conduct citation against election observer and attorney Janet Angus, calling the city’s action “retaliatory.” Jeffreys, again, was in the middle of the matter.

Angus had confronted Jeffreys about election integrity concerns, but did not do so in a disorderly manner, Judge Tammy Jo Hock said.

“I don’t have to address the other concerns and arguments that are made about election integrity because I don't find that Miss Angus' behavior was disorderly, but I will observe that it does appear the municipal citation was retaliatory due to the Wisconsin Elections [Commission] complaint that was filed," Hock said, according to court transcripts obtained by The Federalist.

The judge's finding is a damning statement on how the city of Green Bay, with Genrich at the helm, conducts business, particularly against political enemies. And it's a reminder that, contrary to the left's breathless cries about elections officials and poll workers being under assault, actual government-led attempts to silence conservative election observers are happening in cities like Green Bay.

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