

Don't Let Election Officials Suppress the Vote

The following press release was issued by Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) on Jan. 6, titled "In Response to Serious Concerns Over Presidential Vote in Ohio, Lautenberg Announces Measure to Prevent Partisan Activity by Election Officials: Ohio Sec. of State Ken Blackwell Was Also Co-Chairman of Bush/Cheney '04 Campaign."

WASHINGTON, D.C.—During the debate today in Congress over concerns about the electoral process in the critical state of Ohio during the recent Presidential election, United States Senator Frank R. Lautenberg (D-N.J.) announced plans to introduce legislation to ensure that those State officials in charge of supervising the certification of votes for federal elections are not also affiliated with the campaigns of those persons running for federal office.

“Allowing a state official to oversee a federal election while serving as a campaign official for one of the candidates in that election is a blatant conflict of interest,” added Lautenberg.



KEN BLACKWELL

OHIO SECRETARY OF STATE

State-Wide Appeal
Urgent Action Requested
Personal Attention Please

Dear Friend,

As the Co-Chairman of Bush/Cheney '04 in Ohio, I want to say thank you for helping deliver the great Buckeye State for George W. Bush.

Without your enthusiasm, generous support and vote, I'm afraid the President would have lost...

...And an unapologetic liberal Democrat named John Kerry would have won.

Thankfully, you and I stopped that disaster from happening!

My friend, not only would a Kerry victory have been a terrible result for Ohio -- it would have been a horrible outcome for the families and taxpayers of America.

That's why in the late hours of Election Night, I was truly pleased to announce President Bush had won a critical and clinching victory here in Ohio, on the belief that it was statistically improbable for Senator Kerry to recover.

I have no doubt the strong campaign we helped the

Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell's fundraising letter.

Senator Lautenberg's Federal Election Integrity Act (FEIA) of 2005, to be introduced later this month, would prohibit Secretaries of State and other state election officials with supervisory authority over the administration of federal elections from participating in the political campaign or management of a candidate running for federal office in their state. The Secretary of State is the chief election official in 39 States.

In a letter sent out on stationary that appeared to be official Ohio Secretary of State letterhead, Blackwell stated, "As the Co-Chairman of the Bush/Cheney '04 in Ohio, I want to say thank you for helping deliver the great Buckeye State for George W. Bush. Without your enthusiasm, generous support and vote, I'm afraid the President would have lost. . . . And an unapologetic liberal Democrat named John Kerry would have won. Thankfully, you and I stopped that disaster from happening." Mr. Blackwell's entire letter is attached to this release.

"Those officials in charge of certifying elections in the State must not be allowed to serve two masters. The will of the voters must come before the personal politics of those who oversee elections," said Lautenberg.

A fact sheet of Sen. Lautenberg's legislation is below:

Federal Election Integrity Act of 2004

Senator Lautenberg's Federal Election Integrity Act (FEIA) of 2005 would prohibit Secretaries of State and other state election officials with supervisory authority over the administration of Federal elections from participating in the political campaign or management of a candidate running for Federal office in their state. The FEIA creates a direct prohibition on State election officials from taking part in political campaigns by amending the Federal Campaign Act of 1971.

This is not a Democratic or Republican issue. Rather, this is an issue that concerns the preservation of the American people's faith and confidence in the election process. Simply put, an election official responsible for ensuring fair and accurate federal elections should not be connected with any of the candidates in that election.

Conflict of Interest

There is an inherent conflict of interest when an election official charged with supervising the administration of an election, and ensuring the fairness and accuracy of the results has a direct role in the campaign of one of the candidates running for Federal office.

In the 2004 Presidential election, Ohio Secretary of State Ken Blackwell was co-chairman of Bush/Cheney '04 in Ohio. On December 6th, 2004, Blackwell certified President Bush as the winner in Ohio.

This is the second presidential election that presented such a conflict of interest in a critical state. In the 2000 election, Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris served as co-chair of President Bush's Florida campaign. President Bush's narrow victory in Florida gave President Bush the state's 25 electoral votes necessary to win the presidency.

Authority

Congress has the right to set the rules for fair Federal elections. Thus, Senator Lautenberg's bill does not affect state elections, but only elections for Federal offices, such as President, Vice President, U.S. Senator and U.S. Representative.