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TRASH PATROL Marion County Constables David Capps and Tashia Wilson examine trash strewn along SH 49 east of Jefferson. Constables investigate and when possible charge people for illegal dumping. In this case Capps said he was able to determine who might have been responsible for the litter. That person said the trash must have blown out of his truck and has agreed to clean it up.

Marion Registrar Axes Order to Verify Citizenship Of Five Voters

By BOB PALMER, Jimplecute News Editor

Marion County's share of the 95,000 Texas voters the Secretary of State's office wanted local registrars to verify last week as citizens was five. Then, it was none.

"On first day we had five," Marion County Registrar Karen Jones said. "Then we got the email from ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) asking us to think about it before we do anything."

Of the five, Jones said three had never voted and the two who had voted had Anglo names. One voter she knew personally. Marion County has more than 7,000 registered voters.

"This is a small county," Jones said. "Everyone knows everyone else."

If this was a test, Jones thought she knew the answer.

"I don't believe they were truly non-citizens," she said.

Then came the order to stand down.

"We did get a call from the Secretary of State's office, and they wanted us to not process (investigate) anyone with a particular source code. These five had that source code," Jones revealed.

Jones explained the source code identified where the voter had registered. All five had registered through the Texas Department of Public Safety when they received their driver's licenses.

If the request from Austin had remained in force, Jones said she would have had trouble complying.

"We have no way to investigate citizenship," Jones said.

When a person registers to vote, the county office does verify the identity of the person with a photo ID. The citizenship verification is handled by the Secretary of State's office.

"The person wanting to register has to go through a life check," Jones said. "They have to provide a Texas driver's license number or identification number, or SS number. What happens is when we enter into the system and the state does a life check and runs through several different sources and proves they are a citizen."

Each office must depend on others in the system to do their part.

"We have to rely on DPS to do its due diligence," Jones said.

The registrar also questioned why someone would risk voting illegally.

"I heard of one man in Tarrant County who was sentenced to eight years in prison and then was to be deported," Jones said.

Some now question whether the Secretary of State's office had properly vetted the 95,000 names before sending them to county registrars.

State Rep. Rafael Anchia, who chairs the House Mexican American Legislative Caucus, said he asked Secretary of State David Whitley if the Secretary knew for certain that any of the 95,000 people on the list had voted illegally.

"No," Whitley answered, according to what Anchia told reporters. "And I said, 'Well, isn't it the protocol that you investigate and, if you find facts, you turn it over to the AG?'"

Despite the sketchy evidence, Gov. Greg Abbott and President Donald Trump hailed the discovery.

"Thanks to Attorney General Paxton and the Secretary of State for uncovering and investigating this illegal vote registration. I support prosecution where appropriate. The State will work on legislation to safeguard against these illegal practices. #txlege #tcot https://t.co/UwtyXijVwK," Abbott tweeted.

"58,000 non-citizens voted in Texas, with 95,000 non-citizens registered to vote. These numbers are just the tip of the iceberg. All over the country, especially in California, voter fraud is rampant. Must be stopped. Strong voter ID! @foxandfriends," Trump put on Twitter.

According to published reports, the Secretary of State's office used a controversial cross check of voter lists and driver license data to develop the 95,000 names. Both Colorado and Florida had tried similar procedures with poor results.

A group of Latino voters has filed a lawsuit in Corpus Christi federal court alleging the citizenship checks violate their rights.

Constables Wage Fight Against Trash, Dumpers

You can see it just about everywhere you drive in Marion County.

A sack of household trash appears pitched into a ditch beside a rural road.

Pieces of furniture can be spotted along highways.

If you haven't noticed the litter, Marion County's two constables, David Capps and Tashia Wilson certainly have.

"One area is not worse than others," Capps said. "It's all over the county." He did note remote roads do appear to receive more than their fair share of garbage.

In Precinct 2, Wilson knows of one area to watch.

"The worst part in my precinct is a little area where people from Louisiana are coming in and dumping trash," Wilson said. "There is a back way you can go to Louisiana."

Both constables agree enforcement may be difficult but not impossible.

"In my precinct it is not as bad as it used to be," Wilson said. "I started to enforce it. My constituents would go through the trash and find information for me before I could

get out there."

Capps also noted the efforts of local volunteers.

"We do have volunteers who walk up and down the road," Capps said. "They pick up trash on their own and they find these things and they will call it in."

Discovering who dumped the trash may be messy, but can find leads in the culprit's trash.

"If we find trash bags we'll go through them and find out who it belongs to and track down those people," Capps said.

Furniture is a different story.

"On furniture it's hard to find out whose it is," Capps said. "You need someone who has seen them throw it out. Most of the time there aren't any witnesses."

Wilson said the penalty can be severe if the offender is caught.

"It usually is a \$500 fine," Wilson said. "They are issued a citation and they have to go before the judge."

Wilson made it clear she finds the offense offensive.

"I think it makes the area look filthy,"

Wilson said. "I don't like it. I can't tolerate it."

Capps observed the problem was larger than just Marion County.

"It's kind of state-wide," Capps said.

Nearly a half-billion pieces of visible litter pile up along state-maintained highways each year, costing taxpayers \$35 million to clean up, according to the Texas Department of Transportation. Small trash, including napkins, fast food wrappers and cigarette butts make up 70 percent of the litter found along Texas roads.

With the state's population rapidly growing, the "Don't mess with Texas" campaign reminds new and long-time Texans that littering not only is unsightly, but also is unlawful. Fines for littering range from \$500 to \$2,000.

According to a survey conducted by the anti-litter campaign, some Texans haven't gotten the word.

About a third of Texas residents still admitted to littering in the past month, with millennials (16-34) having a much higher incidence of littering compared to older adults.

Beto Says He's Excited at the Prospect of Running for President, Will decide This Month.

By PATRICK SVITEK Texas Tribune

Beto O'Rourke said Tuesday he will decide whether to run for president by the end of the month, signaling his closely watched deliberations over a 2020 run are entering their final stages.

The former Democratic congressman from El Paso and U.S. Senate nominee made the comment during an interview with media mogul Oprah Winfrey, who pressed him on his long-awaited decision — and whether he's given himself a deadline.

"The serious answer is really soon," O'Rourke replied. "Before the end of this month."

The topic of his presidential ambitions came up repeatedly during the interview, and even his acknowledgment that he was thinking about running drew long applause from the audience inside Times Square's PlayStation Theater. He went on to say that he was so "so excited at the prospect of being able to play that role" — a presidential candidate — but made clear he is still grappling with the potential toll on his family.

"For me, it will really be family" that determines the final decision, said O'Rourke, who has a wife and three young kids.

O'Rourke's interview with Winfrey was taped Tuesday afternoon in New York City. Their talk was one of several Winfrey recorded as part of her "SuperSoul Conversations from Times Square," which were also set to include interviews with

actors Bradley Cooper and Michael B. Jordan; philanthropist Melinda Gates; and Lisa Borders, president and CEO of Time's Up, a group focused on women's safety, equity and power at work.

The O'Rourke interview will air at 7 p.m. Feb. 16 on Winfrey's OWN TV network. It will also be available on her "SuperSoul Conversations" podcast.

Winfrey tried several times to nail O'Rourke down on his 2020 decision to no avail. In a parting message, she said, "You seem like you're getting ready to run."

In the interview, O'Rourke also reflected on the lessons of his Senate campaign last year and the meeting he had with former President Barack Obama in the wake of the race. O'Rourke said Obama did not encourage him to run for president but that they discussed 2020 more generally — and the strain a White House bid can put on a family.

"He said, 'Look, just to be really clear, this is one of the most intense' experiences one can go through, 'and so know that going into this,'" O'Rourke recalled.

It was during his recollection of the Obama conversation that O'Rourke paused to take in the meteoric rise in attention he's received over the past two years.

"It's hard to believe that I'm saying I met with Barack Obama — and I'm saying it to Oprah Winfrey," O'Rourke said.



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EDITOR'S NOTE: During his 2018 run for the U.S. Senate, Beto O'Rourke visited Jefferson and was interviewed three times by the Jimplecute. His Republican opponent incumbent Sen. Ted Cruz campaigned in Jefferson and interviewed with the Jimplecute as well.



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