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D.A. investigates mishandling of ballots

Volunteer for 68th District Assembly candidate Van Tran delivers filled-out ballots to the Orange County Registrar.

Alicia Robinson
Daily Pilot

The Orange County District Attorney's office is investigating the mishandling of ballots by a volunteer for Van Tran, a Republican candidate for the 68th Dis-

trict Assembly seat.

The Tran campaign called the situation "an innocent mistake," but political opponent Mark Leyes said it is evidence of farther-reaching voter fraud.

On Feb. 9 and 10, a representative of Tran's campaign delivered

a number of absentee ballots to the Orange County Registrar of Voters' office along with letters from the voters requesting new Republican ballots for the primary, assistant registrar of voters Suzanne Slupsky said.

He also brought six absentee ballots that had been filled out by voters, she said. State election codes state that only election officials or poll workers can receive voted ballots, Slupsky said.

"What we told the representative is that there is a statute that stipulates that voters will only return their ballots to a poll worker or the Registrar of Voters," she said.

Absentee voters who have declined to state party affiliation can request ballots for the Republican, Democratic and American Independent parties in primary elections, Slupsky said. The Registrar of Voters would

mail the requested ballot to the voter after receiving a request in writing or in person.

Her office referred the matter to the Orange County District Attorney on Feb. 13, she said.

The volunteer was asked by some voters to deliver their ballots and their requests for Republican ballots, said Tran campaign consultant Wayne Johnson.

"The clerk told him, 'No, you can't do that; they have to bring it

in themselves,'" Johnson said of the voted ballots.

"It was an innocent mistake and in every other respect we're completely complying with the law," he said.

Leyes called a press conference on the issue Friday afternoon outside the Registrar of Voters' office to ask the U.S. attorney's office to investigate the issue.

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BALLOTS

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Leyes said he's heard numerous times about people asking Vietnamese voters for their absentee ballots, offering to deliver them or actually vote for them. "That's not fair, that's not right, it's not legal," Leyes said.

Leyes considers the incident reported by the Registrar of Voters as tangible evidence of voter fraud.

"It lends a lot of credence to the idea that this is occurring," Leyes said.

Orange County Assistant District Attorney Douglas Woodsmall confirmed his office had been contacted by the Registrar

of Voters office about the ballots and added that it's not uncommon for his office to receive such information during election season.

"There's a possibility that the attorney general might be the one that ends up reviewing it, so we'll contact them and find out if they think it's more appropriate for them to review it," he said.

The matter could be referred to the state attorney general because Orange County District Attorney Tony Rackauckas has endorsed Tran, Woodsmall said.

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