

THE FLORIDA FIASCO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I am joined tonight in this 5-minute Special Order with the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) who, of course, has been very involved with this Florida situation. I wanted to just start out the evening to ask him, what is the gentleman's home county?

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I represent Volusia County, Orange County, and Seminole County, just above Orlando, in central Florida.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I think we are all learning where all the counties in Florida are located. Let me ask the gentleman this: Does the gentleman use the butterfly ballot in his county?

Mr. MICA. No, we do not.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, what kind does the gentleman use?

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, we use a simple ballot in which you have an arrow with a space in-between and you connect the lines.

Mr. KINGSTON. Now, the purpose of the butterfly ballot is what?

Mr. MICA. Well, the purpose of the ballot is the same as the ballot that we have; but let me tell the gentleman from Georgia, I sat in on the review of the ballots in Seminole County, Florida; and I have never in my life seen more ways to check a ballot in my life. It seems like a simple process to connect the lines, but people circle them, they X them, they cross from one to the other, and that is part of the problem we get into with some of these ballots. There are mistakes, and people submit improper completion of ballots, whether they are in my area or in Palm Beach County.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, we keep hearing about these 19,000 ballots that were thrown out. A point of clarification. Actually, those are only the number of ballots that were discarded, people who did do their ballot wrong to step out and say, I messed up, could you give me another one, that ballot gets thrown in this discarded bin and then they go back in there, and they could do that four or five times.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is correct. In fact, in Duval County, which is Jacksonville, they had over 20,000 ballots that were discarded, a higher number with a lower population and lower voting number.

Mr. KINGSTON. Okay. So Duval County, 26,000 were thrown out. Are the Gore people working Duval? I have not heard of the Reverend Jackson going down there.

Mr. MICA. No, but if we get into these court-ordered recounts, we can go on. We have 67 counties to choose from, and we can continue this for some time.

We see some of the problem, particularly this subjective evaluation of ballots after they have been counted several times.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to point out that in Palm Beach County, in 1996, 15,000 ballots were in the same situation.

Mr. MICA. The gentleman is correct.

Mr. KINGSTON. In 1996, 15,000, and this year, 19,000. Duval County, which leads Republican, actually 26,000.

We have, Mr. Speaker, a copy of the actual ballot that was used in Palm Beach County, Florida, and here it is. I will tell my colleagues, I know people get confused. However, when we think about Veteran's Day just passing and all of the people who have sacrificed their lives and died and been injured for the freedom of our country, one would think that the American electorate would at least take their time to fill out their ballot right and not do a lot of whining if they made a mistake. Here we have an arrow, George Bush for President; arrow, Patrick Buchanan, an arrow; and I understand it is absolutely legal to have the names on the right hand and the left-hand side of the arrow. AL GORE, an arrow. David McReynolds, an arrow, 6, 7; Harry Brown, an arrow.

I am really confused, Mr. Speaker, as to why this is so hard for people to understand. But then again, I know we get rushed on Election Day and people are entitled to make a mistake; but that is why they simply just walk out, say I made an error, I filled out the wrong arrow, give me another ballot; and that is what has, in fact, happened. I would ask the gentleman if that is not right.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, that is, in fact, what happened, not only in Palm Beach County, but in all of the 67 counties across Florida, that there were large numbers of ballots thrown out. Under our laws in Florida, one cannot vote for two people. Under our laws in Florida, one must indicate who one's choice is on the appropriate ballot. We have many different formats of ballots throughout the State.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I understand, however, ironically, that Mr. GORE's political operative here, William Daley, whose father, Richard Daley was notorious for ballot fraud, that is the word for it, in Cook County, Illinois, for so many years, his son, and I am not saying it is like father, like son, although others have; but his son is down here on behalf of Mr. GORE as his point man; and yet this is the same type ballot that they have in Illinois; is that not true?

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, that is correct.

MORE ON THE FLORIDA FIASCO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON), and maybe he could remain.

I just want to go over a few points today. I would say to my colleagues

that we do have an incredible process in our country. We all get to participate. Election day is an exciting day, and no American can be denied access to the ballot box under our laws. We want to make sure that everyone has equal access to the ballot.

There has been a great deal of confusion. Some of it has of course been in my State, even in my locale in central Florida. I have just returned from observing some of the process. In the Florida House of Representatives, I served on the ethics and elections committee and helped write some of the laws that we now work under, and some have been changed since I left there and came to Congress some years ago. But basically, under the laws of this State of Florida, and under the laws and the Constitution of the United States, there is one date set aside for the election of the President of the United States. Just look at article 2 of the Constitution and it is there, the method for electing the President. We all cast our ballots on that date.

In Florida, there was a vote taken, and the results of that vote are public record, and it is all submitted through the supervisor of elections to the State Secretary of State. In a close election, Florida law provides that where there is one-half of 1 percent difference, that there is an automatic recount. Neither side has to ask for a recount; a recount is ordered.

So in Florida we had under the Constitution and State laws a legal, valid election in which Governor Bush led. We had a recount. The Secretary of State gave them until Thursday at 5 p.m., last Thursday at 5 p.m., each county the right and obligation to submit a recount, and each one was to conduct that, and I believe the Secretary of State even gave some extra time. In my county, we stayed up until 4 a.m. in the morning, and we were the last, Seminole County, to report. All 67 counties in a recount reported under the laws of the State of Florida in proper order. Now we have gotten into recounts of the general election, recounts of the recount, and we are into this sort of fuzzy area.

Mr. Speaker, the law, and it has changed since I was in the legislature, allows for manual counts; but unfortunately, there are no guidelines for this. So what I saw over the weekend in these manual counts, even in Volusia County, is sort of disorganized; I do not want to say chaos, but it is sort of recounting the second time by the seat of your pants.

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And it is somewhat subjective. That is what we do not want in this case. We have two valid counts, and that is what we need to take.

The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON) pointed out that in Palm Beach County there were some 16,000 invalid ballots. We have also documented throughout the State, almost in every county we had invalid counts.