

Dead Voters Casting Ballots From Beyond The Grave

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SEATTLE -- Voting from beyond the grave was suppose to be a thing of the past, but an extensive KIRO Team 7 Investigation discovers it's not only happening here, but nationwide. Investigative Reporter Chris Halsne, with help from outside experts, used some sophisticated computer software to match up the Social Security Administration's master death file with active voters in Washington.

Halsne: Edward Hanel was a proud military veteran, and, despite the fact he was wheelchair-bound in his final days, made sure his wife Hazel got him down to that voting booth each election. Records from the Washington Office of the Secretary of State show that Edward cast his last ballot on Nov. 6, 2007. However, according to his wife, Hazel, Edward passed away in July of 1996 - more than 12 years before that.

Halsne: "Any explanation of how he voted in 2007?"

Hazel Hanel: "Uh, who was running then? Oh no. He couldn't have because he had died before then. No way. No way he could have. Absolutely no way he could have."

Halsne: "Impossible?"

Hazel: "Absolutely impossible."

Hazel says (and the state election database confirms) that her husband was not getting absentee ballots mailed to her house. That means someone must have voted for him in person. Whether intentional or a mistake, it shouldn't even be possible. Hanel was supposed to be purged from the active voters' database years ago. Hazel Hanel told Investigative Reporter Chris Halsne, "I'm glad you're doing things like that. I'd like to see a honest program, an honest election where there isn't always doubt. I don't want there to be two or three recounts, both here in our state and well as in our federal government."

KIRO Team 7 Investigators found more than 100 dead voters still on Washington's active voter rolls, with 15 of them actually casting "ghost" ballots.

That's a relatively low number, compared to some other states. We partnered with Cox Television affiliates nationwide to hunt for fraudulent voters.

From around Atlanta, Ga., our data analysis shows 1,636 dead people are still registered to vote, and 42 cast a ballot from the cemetery already -- a clear sign of fraud.

In Dayton, Oh., our affiliate partners found 3,856 dead voters on the rolls, 22 of which voted.

In the nine counties surrounding Oakland, Calif., 5,982 deceased voters materialized, 232 of which voted after they died.

In Florida, in just eight populous counties, 2,765 active voters are dead and 27 voted from beyond the grave.

Washington Secretary of State Sam Reed launched a new elections fraud computer system two years ago, purging tens of thousands of dead and duplicate voter registrations.

"I mean, it's probably as clean as we've ever had in Washington," said Reed.

That system will make for the fewest ghost voters ever, but Reeds says there are always a few hitches in a tight race.

"What I found is that when you get a virtual tie, and they use that magnifying glass, you're going to find human error, and the largest number of errors was from the voters themselves not following directions. The second came in the counties not following the best practices and some of them required practices that we had. We tightened up considerably on the counties," said Reed.

Tightening up the rules on all fraudulent ballots is something Hazel Hanel would love to see, adding "There's so much hanky-panky going on."

We provided a list of 127 active voters that appear to also be dead to the Secretary of State about a month ago. That office went to work to flag, and then figure out, each case. Fifty-four voter registrations have been canceled so far, including Edward Hanel's. The rest are still under investigation.