Quarterly Report
October 2021

Secretary of State’s Office Addresses AL Voter Fraud Conspiracies

*Secretary Merrill explaining to Mike Lindell about why Alabama is the gold standard for elections in the U.S.

Voter Fraud Reform Task Force
NASS Summer Conference 2021
NASS Medallion Award Ceremony
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Due to the overwhelming amount of false, unsubstantiated information that has plagued the media these last few weeks regarding Alabama’s 2020 General Election, Secretary John H. Merrill would like to provide some factual information to help those who are confused by the latest conspiracy theories.

First of all, the Alabama Secretary of State stands as Alabama’s Chief Elections Official, which means that the person holding this position has the authority to oversee the state’s elections and voter registration activities. The office is comprised of a competent team of employees who report directly under Secretary Merrill, and throughout the last six years and nine months, the office has taken great strides each and every day to ensure that Alabama’s elections are secure and that voter registration is as simplistic and accessible as possible. Therefore, this office is and should always be the number one trusted source in the state to answer questions and provide information on the state’s elections. It is very disheartening and disappointing to see that several well-intentioned but misguided people are so quick to believe a plethora of falsehoods from unqualified sources.

In mid-August, Mike Lindell, known as the creator of “My Pillow,” hosted a three-day cyber symposium to discuss claims of voter fraud in the United States’ 2020 Presidential Election, and he falsely stated that Alabama alone had more than 100,000 flipped votes. Each state maintains and follows a separate protocol for elections administration, and Secretary Merrill was confident from the very beginning that Alabama had not been compromised in any capacity. Unfortunately, many Alabama citizens and even non-citizens took it upon themselves to contact Secretary Merrill’s office with a myriad of colorful vocabulary to express their disappointment in the office’s nonexistent support for the businessman’s questionable opinions.

Fast forward to August 21, 2021, which was the day that former President Donald Trump visited Cullman, Alabama for his “Save America Rally.” While awaiting the start of the event, Secretary Merrill crossed paths with Mr. Lindell. As a result, Secretary Merrill took the opportunity to introduce himself and inform Mr. Lindell that his claims about Alabama’s elections were inaccurate. Mr. Lindell was receptive to the information, and Secretary Merrill invited him to the Secretary of State’s Office in Montgomery to discuss any additional concerns. Mr. Lindell later accepted the invitation and met with Secretary Merrill and his team on September 17, 2021.

This meeting was arranged in order to help alleviate the concerns of Mr. Lindell, his team, and the people of Alabama, and as always, Secretary Merrill and his Elections and Legal staff were more than accommodating. Mr. Lindell seemed satisfied with the meeting’s outcome and even stated that Alabama was the gold standard for elections in the country. Then shortly afterwards, he released a video inaccurately claiming that Alabama still had 100,000 compromised votes in the 2020 General Election. Also, the Secretary of State’s Office was under fire from the public yet again, but this time, the citizens were enraged that Secretary Merrill met with Mr. Lindell.

Here are some facts that will hopefully bring clarity to these issues:

1. It is physically and technically impossible for Alabama’s voting machines to be hacked. The state does not use the Dominion voting machines, and Alabama’s voting machines are custom-built and therefore completely void of any Internet, Bluetooth, or Wi-Fi capabilities. How can someone hack a system that cannot connect to the Internet? The answer is simple: it cannot.

2. Mr. Lindell was not and will not be given access to any sensitive information that is not already available to the general public. He purchased a voter registration list for $30,000, which is available for purchase by anyone who is willing to spend $0.01 per name.

3. Due to Alabama’s voter registration protocols, it is relatively impossible for a person to fraudulently vote as someone else. That is why the state has a photo voter I.D. law. A person cannot vote without verifying his or her identity at the polls, and their name and picture must match what is on record with the registrant’s Board of Registrars Office. It’s a very simple and straightforward process. Furthermore, voting absentee is easier and safer than ever due to the state’s photo voter I.D. laws, and it is even more difficult to attempt to introduce a fraudulent application or ballot.

4. The Alabama Secretary of State’s Office cannot perform an audit on any election without the authority of the Alabama Legislature. If the House and the Senate pass a bill to approve an audit, then the Secretary of State’s Office may proceed. This is in accordance with state law. In 2020, the SOS Office introduced a bill to create an audit as a component in the administration of the elections process, and like so many other bills in the 2020 Session, this bill was killed by Covid. In 2021, the state’s legislature passed a limited election audit bill (SB 45), which will allow the SOS Office to audit the 2022 Election results in three counties, followed by a report to the legislature in 2023.

In conclusion, Alabama has been recognized by multiple sources as the gold standard in election administration. Secretary Merrill and his office are urging people to be careful with the information that they choose to believe, especially when that information cannot be substantiated. As always, the Secretary of State’s Office is available to answer any questions or concerns.
On September 30, 2021, the Alabama Secretary of State’s Office hosted the first Voter Fraud Reform Task Force meeting, which was created to address appropriate penalties for those who are found guilty of committing voter fraud in the state. The task force is comprised of 15 members with diverse backgrounds and political persuasions, which include Secretary of State John H. Merrill, Senator Sam Givhan (R), Senator Bobby Singleton (D), Representative Matt Simpson (R), Representative Merika Coleman (D), Bullock County Probate Judge James Tatum, Houston County Circuit Clerk Carla Woodall, Montgomery County Sheriff Derek Cunningham, District Attorney for the Fourth Judicial Circuit Michael Jackson, Reid Harris of the Attorney General’s Office, retired Circuit Judge John England, Matt Clark of the Alabama Policy Institute, Southern Poverty Law Center founder Morris Dees, Rachel Williams of Eagle Forum, and Dillon Nettles of the American Civil Liberties Union. Each member was carefully selected by Secretary Merrill.

From April 7, 2015 to September 29, 2021, the Secretary of State’s Office has processed 1,618 voter fraud complaints, which resulted in six convictions, two overturned elections, and the removal of one public official. 129 cases were referred for possible prosecution to the Attorney General and local District Attorney, 38 were referred for investigation to the County Sheriff or the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency, 57 were referred to the Alabama Ethics Commission, and 1,394 were closed by withdrawal, lack of information, the dispatchment of the SOS response team or Federal Elections Commission, or general closure. One case is currently pending.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, October 14th from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in Room 123 at the Alabama State House and will continue for the next eight weeks or more. All meetings are open to the general public for viewing purposes only. Secretary Merrill will be happy to answer any questions or concerns at the conclusion of each meeting. Live streams are unavailable to non-members.
The National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) held its 2021 Summer Conference in Des Moines, Iowa from August 13th through 16th. Secretary Merrill and select staff members from his Executive, Elections, Government Support, Business Services, and Information Systems teams were present and participated in a variety of engaging meetings, panels, and workshops. The Cybersecurity Committee and closed workshop, Elections Committee, Election Integrity Implementation and Post-Election Audit meeting, Voting Processes for Emergency Responders workshop, and Business Services Committee were just a few of the many great, educational opportunities that were open to the conference’s attendees.

“We had a tremendous few days in Des Moines, Iowa finding new ways to improve our elections and business practices,” Secretary Merrill stated. “It is always a pleasure to meet with other fellow Secretaries throughout our country to better understand the processes and protocols followed by other states, as well as learn new ways to enhance Alabama’s election, business, and cybersecurity procedures.”

The NASS Winter Conference will take place in Washington, D.C. from January 27th through 30th in 2022. The next Summer Conference will be hosted in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in July 2022.
On September 17, 2021, Secretary Merrill presented four additional National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) Medallion Awards to four staff members for their outstanding service to the people of Alabama. The ceremony was held in the State Capitol Building’s Old House Chamber on the second floor.

Name: Clay Helms
Title: Elections Director / Deputy Chief of Staff

Name: Grace Newcombe
Title: Former Communications Director

Name: Karen Guthrie
Title: Executive Assistant

Name: Hugh Evans, III
Title: General Counsel
The Alabama Secretary of State’s Office teamed up with Legendary Singer and Songwriter Jimmy Buffett to help launch the last set of posters and television advertisements for the office’s 2021 photo voter identification and voter registration promotional efforts. A native of Pascagoula, Mississippi, and resident of Fairhope, Alabama, Mr. Buffett joins the list of other renowned Alabamians who have helped to spread awareness about the state’s free voter ID provisions and encourage those who are eligible to register to vote. In previous years, the office produced materials featuring Alabama Head Football Coach Nick Saban and former Auburn Head Football Coach Gus Malzahn in 2015, Heavyweight Boxing Champion Deontay Wilder and former NBA Star Charles Barkley in 2016, Miss Alabama 2017 Jessica Procter and former NASA Astronaut Dr. Mae Jemison in 2017, American Idol Season Five Winner Taylor Hicks and Radio Talk Show Stars Rick and Bubba in 2018, Country Music Artist Jamey Johnson and Alabama’s first Governor William Wyatt Bibb (actor portrayal) in 2019, the Women of the Alabama Legislature and Alabama Veterans Commander Lee Allen Hallman, Dr. Regina Benjamin, and Captain Gary Michael Rose in 2020, and Country Music Artist Riley Green in 2021.
Quarterly Accomplishments

- As of September 24, 2021, 1,917,483 people have registered to vote since Secretary Merrill took office on January 19, 2015, which sets the total to a record-breaking 3,606,179 registered voters.

- Secretary Merrill visited the Wilcox County Commission in Camden, AL on September 13, 2021 to introduce several cost-saving measures in election administration.

- The SOS Office released a publication that combats election misinformation on August 12th, which can be accessed on the website here.

- Many Alabama counties transitioned from the AutoMark electronic ballot marking machines for disabled voters to the ExpressVote machines in July 2021. This plan allows 59 counties with outdated machines to upgrade to ExpressVote. Counties that do not have the new machines may use remaining HAVA funds and the residual costs to be subsidized by the SOS Office.
Stay up-to-date with all the latest news from the Alabama Secretary of State’s Office.

Don’t Miss Volume 7 Issue 4, Coming January 2022!