

FBI: Effort made to lower Clinton email classification

WASHINGTON (AP) — A senior State Department official asked the FBI last year to help reduce the classification of an email from Hillary Clinton's private server, according to FBI investigative files made public Monday. It was to be part of a bargain that would have allowed the FBI to deploy more agents in foreign countries, according to the files.

It was not immediately clear whether the State Department official or someone at the FBI first raised the prospect of a bargain over the email's classification.

The bureau records, citing an FBI official whose name was censored, said Undersecretary for Management Patrick F. Kennedy sought assistance in exchange for a "quid pro quo."

But the FBI said Monday it was the now-retired FBI official who first asked Kennedy about deploying more agents overseas. The State Department said the same.

The FBI ultimately rejected the idea, which would have allowed the State Department to archive a message related to the 2012 attacks on the U.S. diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya, in the basement of its Washington headquarters "never to be seen again," according to the FBI files.

The email described reports in November 2012 that Libyan police were arresting suspects in the attack. It had been forwarded to Clinton's private email address by Jake Sullivan, one of her top aides and the department's director of policy planning, who was using his government email account.

Republicans seized on the report as collusion within the Obama administration to protect Clinton, now the Democratic presidential nominee.

CORRUPTION CONFIRMED: FBI confirms State Dept. offered 'quid pro quo' to cover up classified emails," read a tweet from Team Trump, retweeted by the candidate.

Clinton spokesman Brian Fallon said the campaign had never been part of any such discussion about email classifications.

Kennedy was a close aide to Clinton during her tenure as the nation's top diplomat between 2009 and early 2013. He had served in his position since November 2007 under President George W. Bush.

According to the FBI records, a bureau official said Kennedy "asked his assistance in altering the email's classification in exchange for a 'quid pro quo,'" and that in exchange, "State would reciprocate by allowing the FBI to place more agents in countries where they are presently forbidden."

"Although there was never a quid pro quo, these allegations were nonetheless referred to the appropriate officials for review," the FBI said in a statement Monday.

No evidence of 'rigged' U.S. elections

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Donald Trump has repeatedly warned of a "rigged" election, saying large-scale voter fraud is happening in the U.S. and suggesting it will affect the outcome of this year's presidential race. There is no evidence that such widespread fraud exists.

Trump's comments have alarmed voting rights experts and civil rights groups, who say they threaten to undermine faith in the nation's elections. Meanwhile, House Speaker Paul Ryan and other Republicans are expressing confidence in the voting systems, while state election officials are saying they are committed to conducting fair and impartial elections.

It's worth noting, too, that 29 of the nation's secretaries of state are Republican.

Here's a look at what Trump has been saying, along with historical data about voter fraud and what this could mean for Election Day.

What Trump has said

In recent weeks, Trump has repeatedly raised questions about the integrity of the nation's voting systems and called for his supporters to monitor polling places in "certain areas" to guard against voter fraud. He's made the comments during campaign stops in battleground states such as Michigan and Pennsylvania, singling out Philadelphia as a city to watch.

Recently, Trump sent a series of tweets in which he called Republican leaders "naive" for dismissing his claims of widespread voter fraud and saying the election is being rigged "by the dishonest and distorted media" for Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Trump's supporters appear to share his concerns. A poll last month by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found half of all those with a favorable opinion of Trump said they have little to no confidence in the integrity of the vote count.



AP Photo/Evan Vucci

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks to the Republican Hindu Coalition, Saturday in Edison, N.J.

Is voter fraud a widespread problem?

No. While there have been isolated cases of voter fraud in the U.S., there is no evidence of it being a widespread problem as Trump suggests.

The type of fraud that Trump appears to be talking about would involve people casting ballots who know they are not eligible to vote, as well as people impersonating others to cast ballots for their preferred candidate. Experts say this would be an inefficient way to rig an election, given the fraud would have to be conducted one voter at a time, and would only be effective in places where the race is close enough that the outcome could be swayed.

Studies have shown voter impersonation to be quite rare. In one study, a Loyola Law School professor found 31 instances involving allegations of voter impersonation out of 1 billion votes cast in U.S. elections between 2000 and 2014. Another study by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University Law School found many reports of people voting twice or ballots being cast on behalf of dead people were largely the result of clerical errors that suggested wrongdoing when none had occurred.

"Voter fraud is so incredibly rare that it has no impact on the integrity of our elections," said Wendy Weiser, head of the democracy program at the Brennan Center. "You are more likely to be struck by lightning, more likely to see a UFO, than to be a victim of voter fraud."

In Philadelphia on Monday, Republican election commissioner Al Schmidt dismissed the idea that election fraud could take place in the nation's fifth-largest city. "The real threat to the integrity of elections is irresponsible accusations that undermine confidence in the electoral process," he said.

What is election fraud?

Other types of fraud are possible, such as voting machines being intentionally manipulated to report false results. So-called "ballot stuffing" would be considered election fraud, rather than voter fraud, because it would be orchestrated by someone involved in administering the election or someone who has gained access to the election administration system.

Experts say federal elections would be much more difficult to influence this way because of the broad, decentralized nature of the nation's voting systems. There are

more than 9,000 election jurisdictions and hundreds of thousands of polling places.

That also holds true for any effort by hackers to influence this year's presidential election. Experts say it's unlikely a hacker could change votes, but one might be able to delete voters from registration files, triggering confusion and long lines at the polls.

What measures exist to protect against fraud?

State election officials have several measures in place to protect the integrity of their voting systems, and both political parties have a vested interest in making sure the outcome is fair.

Voting machines are not connected to the internet, and the vast majority of ballots will be cast on systems that allow for a paper record to verify electronic results.

The process of counting the votes is not done on systems connected to the internet and tabulation systems are not connected to a single network, according to the National Association of Secretaries of State.

As in past presidential elections, individual campaigns, political parties and special interest and civil rights groups will have operations designed to assist voters and monitor for any problems at the polls.

Does voter ID combat voter fraud?

There have been efforts in recent years, largely in Republican-led states, to pass laws requiring voters to show photo identification at the polls. Supporters say such laws are needed to combat voter fraud, while critics argue the laws disproportionately affect minorities and the poor who may face challenges obtaining a government-issued photo ID.

Courts have recently agreed. In striking down parts of a voter ID law in North Carolina this year, a federal appeals court judge wrote they "target African Americans with almost surgical precision."

State battles are hot; election isn't just about White House

By DAVID A. LIEB
Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Years of losses have left Democrats at historic lows in state legislatures. But now they're seeking to wrest control of as many as a dozen chambers from Republicans, a key step in gaining more influence in redistricting.

The battle for state-house control is playing out in more than half the states with tens of millions of dollars of planned political spending before the Nov. 8 general election. Democrats are hoping the turmoil surrounding Donald Trump's presidential campaign can boost their fortunes in down-ballot races, although Hillary Clinton remains unpopular in many Republican-leaning regions.

"When you go district by district, when you look at where all these races are, we're in a highly competitive environment," said Matt Walter, president of the Republican State Leadership Committee.

"A volatile environment" is how it's described by his counterpart Jessica

Confident Clinton expanding her campaign into 'red' states

WHITE PLAINS, New York (AP) — Hillary Clinton is advancing into states the Democrats haven't won in decades, confidently expanding her offensive against Donald Trump and aiming to help her party win back control of Congress.

There's a new \$2 million push in Arizona, aides said Monday, including a campaign stop in Phoenix by first lady Michelle Obama, one of Clinton's most effective surrogates. An additional \$1 million is going into efforts in Missouri and Indiana, both states with competitive Senate races, a small amount of TV time is being bought in Texas and media appearances are scheduled in Utah.

Post, executive director of the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee.

Money spent on TV advertising for state House and Senate races is up more than 50 percent compared with the same point in 2014, according to an analysis conducted for The Associated Press by the Center for Public Integrity of data from the media-tracking firm Kantar Media/CMAG.

With gridlock in Washington, states increasingly are where policies are adopted on major issues such as gun rights, marijuana use, minimum wages and the regulation of businesses

in the new economy, such as ride-sharing services and online fantasy sports.

Also at stake is redistricting control. The party that controls legislatures and governorships during the 2020 Census will have the upper hand in

redrawing congressional and state legislative districts in those states. Controlling those boundaries can ensure a political advantage for the next decade.

Republicans now control 69 of the 99 state legislative chambers — their most ever. (Nebraska is the only state with just a single legislative chamber.)

That GOP advantage also means more seats to defend.

National Democratic and Republican groups are particularly focused on 27 states where they hope either to flip control of a chamber or cut into the opposing party's majority with an eye toward greater gains in the future.

The Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee says it expects to win control of between eight and 12 new chambers and has highlighted 52 "essential races," including many in presidential battleground states.

The GOP's Walter acknowledges Republicans may see a slight overall decline, but he says they still could win several new chambers, including the Kentucky House, the lone Democratic-led chamber in the Southeast. The Republican State Leadership Committee has been running TV ads portraying Democratic Kentucky House Speaker Greg Stumbo as a Clinton ally intent on putting coal miners out of work.



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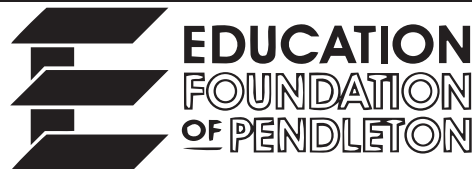
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