



# Nasty Campaign Tactics: Phony Voting Instructions



By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press  
MIAMI October 30, 2012 (AP)

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With a week to go until Election Day, the nasty campaign tactics are coming out.

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People in Florida, Virginia and Indiana have gotten calls falsely telling them they can vote early by phone and don't need to go to a polling place. In suburban Broward County, Fla., a handful of elderly voters who requested absentee ballots say they were visited by unknown people claiming to be authorized to collect the ballots.

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And there's a mysterious DVD popping up in mailboxes that purports to be a documentary raising questions about the true identity of President Barack Obama's father.

It's one more indication of just how close this presidential election is. Voting rights advocates say reports of political deception and underhandedness are on the rise.

"Unfortunately it seems like the shadowy individuals that want to prevent people from voting are doing things earlier," said Eric Marshall, legal mobilization manager at the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. The organization is part of a coalition called Election Protection that is monitoring voting access and rights nationwide, including a toll-free hotline set up to take complaints.

"Each American's vote matters. It's important to them and it's important to the community," Marshall said.



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This handout photo provided by Joel Gilbert,.... [View Full Caption](#)

Indiana's secretary of state launched an investigation of the phony voting instructions being phoned to homes in that state, and Virginia officials issued a warning to voters there asking them to report any such calls.

In the Broward County, Fla., case, elderly voters "were told, 'I'm an official and I'm here to pick up your absentee ballot,'" said Alma Gonzalez, a senior Florida Democratic Party official working on voter protection efforts. "There is no official who picks up your ballot."

In addition to those cases, garish billboards warning that voter fraud is a crime punishable by jail time and fines were put up in minority neighborhoods in Ohio and Wisconsin. They were recently taken down amid

complaints they were aimed at intimidating African-American and Latino



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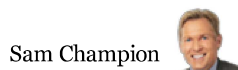


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voters. The people behind the billboards have not come forward.

"It's hard to believe that these were just public service announcements," Marshall said. "Those neighborhoods were specifically targeted."

"It doesn't pass the smell test."

Independent Florida voter Jane Bowman smelled something bad, too, when she recently discovered a DVD in her mailbox questioning the identity of Obama's father.

"I think it's just a dirty trick. It just astonished me," said Bowman, a Jacksonville resident who says she plans to vote for Obama as she did four years ago. "I think they're doing everything they can to win Florida. It's a sorry situation."

The DVD's director, who says he has mailed some 7 million copies to homes in swing states, says that he is unaffiliated with political campaigns or their supporters and that the film reflects his own painstaking research into Obama's family background.

The DVD, "Dreams from My Real Father," posits that the president's true father was a communist agitator, author and poet living in Hawaii named Frank Marshall Davis — not the Kenyan man who shares the president's name. Both men are now dead.

The title is a reference to Obama's book about his family history. That book does mention a poet named "Frank" who was a friend of Obama's maternal grandfather.

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