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Election law infractions are charged

By CHARLES PATTON
 Pasco Times Staff Writer

NEW PORT RICHEY — A letter charging infractions of election laws in Tuesday's primary election in Pasco County is expected to be filed today with Circuit Clerk Miller Newton.

The complaints were filed orally Thursday by Ron Mathews, 23 Marshfield Drive, Holiday.

Mathews' wife Lana was an unsuccessful candidate for the Democratic nomination for the District 3 seat on the Pasco County Commission.

MATHEWS told Newton that at many polls a special sheriff's deputy was not out front as required by law. He alleged that people inside polling places told voters how to cast their ballots, that some people apparently were allowed to vote although their name did not appear on the precinct books, that some of his wife's pool watchers were not allowed access to the polling places or given the final machine totals at the end of the day and that campaign literature was being passed out at the door of some polling places.

Mathews said the fact that his wife was a candidate was only coincidental to his complaint action. He said his concern was for the voters of Pasco County.

"The handling of the election was the worst I have ever seen," he said. "Enforcing of rules was very lax. It should never happen again in Pasco County."

WHILE he said he has taken the matter of possibly filing a formal protest "under advisement," Mathews said he has hired no attorney but has consulted with qualified legal advisers.

Mathews said his complaints were all filed with Newton and election officials by phone Tuesday.

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Protests (Continued from Page 1)

Newton said he can take two possible courses of action after he receives Mathews' certified letter dealing with the protests.

He said that if Mathews' letter indicates he feels the alleged infractions changed the outcome of the election, the complaint will be forwarded to the secretary of state, who acts as secretary to the state's ethics committee on elections.

Newton said that if the complaint does not deal with the matter of effect on the election's outcome, copies of the document will be forwarded to the state attorney and to the supervisor of elections.

MATHEWS said he was not sure whether the problems had an effect on the voting outcome.

Newton said Mathews' election-day complaints did not go unattended. The clerk said both he and Elections Supervisor Mary Morgan have taken steps to correct some of the problems.

"Mrs. Morgan had roving inspectors in the field who found and corrected some of the problems," Newton said, adding that it would be physically impossible for the supervisor to have staff inspectors at every precinct throughout the day.

He also added in her defense that "schools" for election workers had been conducted in an attempt to explain both the election laws and the mechanics of the operations.

"THE THING that most concerns me in the complaints is that of people inside the polls telling voters how to cast their ballots," Newton said. "That is a clear affront to the democratic process and the rights of the individual."

"I am also concerned whether the people involved in that allegation were poll workers or just other persons who were waiting in line to vote."

Newton, a landslide victor Tuesday in his bid for election, also took the occasion to criticize state election laws and to chide the County Commission.

He said the state election laws make no provisions for enforcement and leave the private citizen with little recourse in solving a problem other than long and costly civil court actions.

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<http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=40klAAAAIBAJ&sjid=THkDAAAIBAJ&pg=2403,2325526&dq=miller-newton+election&hl=en>