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Pasco water bond issue vote challenged

By CHARLES PATTON
St. Petersburg Times Staff Writer

NEW PORT RICHEY — The results of last week's Pasco County water bond referendum have been challenged in a protest filed late Monday.

Ronald Mathews, 23, of Holiday, filed the suit with Circuit Court Clerk Miller Newton and Elections Supervisor Mary Morgan.

In the complaint, which Mathews said he prepared without an attorney's aid, he asks that the returns "be investigated, examined, checked and corrected" by the Elections Canvassing Board.

MATHEWS' COMPLAINT was based on contentions that some persons were not allowed to vote because they were not property owners, that voting machines were out of order in one precinct, that insufficient numbers of voter-signature slips were available in some precincts, that the availability of absentee ballots failed to meet state guidelines and that the wording of the referendum question on the ballot did not conform with state law.

His complaint on the ballot wording was that it failed to state the maximum interest rate in actual figures at which the proposed general-obligation bonds were to be sold.

THE REFERENDUM asked voters in 14 Southwest Pasco precincts to approve the sale of up to \$3-million in general-obligation bonds by the Pasco County Commission. The money would be used to finance construction of a pipeline and related facilities needed to bring fresh water to the saltwater-plagued Holiday area.

The official canvassing board results show that the proposition was approved by a 341-vote margin.

Mrs. Morgan said she would welcome a court ruling on the bond question. She said some voters apparently were not allowed to vote because a precinct clerk misunderstood how to determine if a voter was qualified to participate in the referendum.

All qualified voters living within the district, whether they owned property or not, were eligible to vote on the referendum question, she said.

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<http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=2iEMAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=UF0DAAAAIIBAJ&pg=4354,121954&dq=miller-newton+election&hl=en>