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# **Seattle Man Pleads Guilty to Voter Intimidation and Identification Fraud for Letters Sent to Florida Residents in Conjunction with the 2012 Federal Elections**

WASHINGTON—James Webb Baker Jr., 58, of Seattle, pleaded guilty today to one count of voter intimidation and one count of identification fraud in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida. Prior to the 2012 federal elections, Baker created and sent 200 fake voter eligibility letters to Republican Party donors across Florida that questioned the recipients' citizenship status. During the plea hearing, Baker admitted that he intended the letters to look as if they were written by county elections officials and that his purpose in sending the letters was to intimidate the recipients and interfere with their right to vote.

According to the evidence presented in court proceedings and documents, in October 2012, Baker read about the efforts of the Florida governor and the Florida secretary of state to remove the names of voters from the official Florida county lists of eligible voters. Angered by what he believed to be an attempt to suppress voter turnout, specifically of Hispanic voters who would vote for candidates of the Democratic Party, Baker created "false" or "copycat" voter eligibility letters of the actual letters sent by county officials. Baker sent his letters, which questioned the recipient's eligibility to vote, to 200 Republican Party donors. The letters required the recipients to complete a voter eligibility form within 15 days or else their name would be removed from the voter registration rolls. Baker inserted a line of text in bold stating that a non-registered voter who casts a vote may be subject to criminal sanctions.

The letters looked almost identical to official county Supervisor of Elections letters and included the county official's name, letterhead, address, and contact information. During the plea proceedings, Baker admitted to making several changes to the original official letters in order to stress the threats that the recipients would lose their right to vote and/or be imprisoned if they did not first document their citizenship and right to vote in person to the registrar.

"Protecting the right to vote is one of the department's top priorities," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Jocelyn Samuels for the Civil Rights Division. "The Civil Rights Division is strongly committed to comprehensive and vigorous enforcement of laws that protect the rights of every American to vote free from intimidation, coercion, or threats."

"My office is committed to aggressively protecting the integrity of the election process," said U.S. Attorney A. Lee Bentley, III for the Middle District of Florida. "Each citizen must be able to vote without intimidation or discrimination and to have that vote counted. It is imperative that those who have specific information about intimidation, discrimination, or election fraud make that information available immediately to my office, the FBI, or the Civil Rights Division."

"This joint investigative effort is yet another example of the fortitude and commitment of our collective agencies to protect our citizen's individual and constitutional rights," said FBI Special Agent in Charge Paul Wysopal for the FBI Tampa Field Office.

"This case was complex," said Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Gerald Bailey. "It required the expertise and dedication of FDLE Executive Investigations, crime lab analysts, and intelligence analysts. Their efforts led to the identification and conviction of Baker. My thanks to each of them."

"Using the U.S. mail to threaten or intimidate voters will not be tolerated," said Inspector in Charge Brad Kleinknecht with the Seattle Division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. "The Postal Inspection Service, along with its law enforcement partners, will continue to investigate all cases of this nature to ensure the U.S. mail continues to play a key role our nation's election process."

This case was investigated by the FBI, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. It is being prosecuted by Special Litigation Counsel Mark Blumburg and Trial Attorney William E. Nolan of the Civil Rights Division, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert A. Mosakowski of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida.

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