

Stu Soffer Incidents

2014

Residents call election commissioner controversial after public outburst

<https://katv.com/archive/residents-call-election-commissioner-controversial-after-public-outbreak> September 22nd, 2014

- "He made the allegation that my wife had a contract with the manufacturer with the voting equipment and she gave me access to the equipment to rig the election," Soffer said. "He lied about my wife and I didn't want him and if he did I was going to deal with him. 40 years ago I would have probably dealt with him right there..."
- "Racist is a label, loose cannon is a label. Unprofessional is a label. At any given time, any of us can be any of those things."

Former Pine Bluff mayor agrees to \$50 ethics fine

<https://www.arkansasnews.com/article/20141022/NEWS/310229914> October 22nd, 2014

- Redus, a Democrat, also said he believes Soffer, a Republican, filed the complaints against him for "partisan" reasons. "He's on the Arkansas State Election Board, therefore he's aware of what needs to be done, but he's not informing people. All he's doing is trying to catch people that are unaware of what needs to be done," Redus said.
- Soffer said Wednesday, "It is not the job of an election commissioner to tell candidates how to file. It's got absolutely nothing to do with the Election Commission." Soffer said Redus' "minions" have filed four complaints against him with the state Board of Election Commissioners and four complaints against him with the state Ethics Commission, all of which have been investigated and dismissed. "What I want Mr. Redus to understand is what's good for the goose is good for the gander, and as long as they keep taking their potshots at me, him and all of his ilk are fair game. I have plenty more material," he said.

2015

Foster seeking federal pardon

<https://www.pbcommercial.com/article/20150710/NEWS/307109944> July 10, 2015

- Former Pine Bluff Alderman Jack Foster has applied for a federal pardon and said Friday if he gets it, he might run for political office again.

Foster was convicted of attempted extortion in 2004 and sentenced to three years in federal prison. After an appeal of the conviction was denied by both the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals and the U.S. Supreme Court, he began serving his sentence in June 2006 and was released in January 2009.

Foster said he submitted the application to the Office of the Pardon Attorney, U.S. Department of Justice in March.

- Soffer said, "In my opinion, Jack Foster does not deserve federal clemency.

"All of his civil rights except being able to run for office and maybe get a hunting license have been restored, and if he gets clemency, he may be able to run for office," Soffer said. "Not that I think he would win, but I think that would be disruptive to the election process."

Soffer said that since Foster has been released from prison, "he has been a blight on the community and progress in the community."

As an example, Soffer said Foster "stood across from the courthouse with a bullhorn and violated the Civil Rights Act by urging people to vote for candidates based on race and color."

Soffer said he has communicated his feelings to the justice department regarding the issue,

Pine Bluff Mayor files lawsuit

<https://katv.com/archive/pine-bluff-mayor-files-lawsuit> *September 10th, 2015*

- "The Pine Bluff mayor is suing eight residents and the Jefferson County Election Commission. Mayor Debe Hollingsworth defeated Carl Redus in 2012; it is a four-year position. But Redus says the election cycle changed when the city's population dropped below 50,000 in the latest Census.

This is not Carl Redus' first attempt with that same argument. While in office, he was unsuccessful in adding two-years to his term. The court addressed the population change then too.

Mayor Hollingsworth says..."I have personally filed a complaint against Carl A. Redus Jr., the Jefferson County Election Commission, Ted Davis, Cynthia Sims, Loretta Whitfield, Will Fox, Lloyd Franklin, Stu Soffer, in addition to the Jefferson County clerk, Patricia Johnson."

This month, the majority of the election commissioners voted in favor of Carl Redus' request to hold a city election."

- Stu Soffer says, "I commend Mayor Hollingsworth for having the fortitude to stand up to these thugs."

Soffer is named among the quote, "thugs" because he is the Election Commissioner, but he voted against the early election. "I think the lawsuit is a righteous one, it is totally unnecessary and would not have been necessary if my two associate election commissioners had followed the law. I contend that both democratic election commissioners [Ted Davis and Cynthia Sims] violated the law. One of them knowingly, the other perhaps leadingly."

The election commission chairman, Ted Davis, named in the suit, was Carl Redus' chief of staff.

2016

Election commissioner grabs gun during altercation

<https://katv.com/news/local/election-commissioner-grabs-gun-during-altercation> April 1, 2016

- A Jefferson County Election Commission meeting came to an abrupt halt on Thursday, after commissioners say a resident would not follow their orders, eventually leading to a commissioner getting his gun out of his car.

Commissioner Stu Soffer tells Channel 7 News it was for fear of his own safety when he grabbed his gun, he adds that he did not point it at anyone. The man who reportedly started the verbal altercation, former chairman Ted Davis, confirms it according to a Pine Bluff Police Department report.

- Adam and Soffer called to end the meeting in a 2-1 vote; however, the situation escalated when Davis reportedly began an altercation outside.

"All of a sudden, he just turned, and it was like he started to either run. He was just going straight at Stu and when I saw that, it looked like to me that he was going to hit him, that's what it looked like," said Adam. "I thought he was going to punch him in the face or something like that, and I started running at him and I had my hands up and I'm screaming 'stop the assault, stop, stop.'"

About that time, Soffer said he took his gun out of his pocket.

"I became concerned for my safety and I took my hand out of my pocket...I didn't display it, and the reason why I took it out of my pocket, is it's got a hair trigger, and I didn't want to shoot myself if I had to pull it out in a hurry if the man was attacking me," said Soffer.

"At first, I was thinking that maybe it was brass knuckles or keys, or I couldn't figure out what it was, and then I saw the hammer of a gun and so it was at that point in time, you know, I was saying, 'Stu's got a gun, Stu's got a gun'," added McCray.

No arrests were made; however, the election commission says they're seeing if disorderly charges can be pressed against McCray for disrupting the meeting.

Video provided of Jefferson County Election Commission gun incident

<https://arktimes.com/arkansas-blog/2016/04/02/video-provided-of-jefferson-county-election-commission-gun-incident> // April 2, 2016

- The video was provided by Lawrence Walker, attorney for Davis, who has said he's considering legal action. Soffer has said he didn't point the gun at anyone, but retrieved

it from his car to have when matters grew contentious and pulled it from his pocket when Davis approached him.

UPDATE: Stu Soffer's smoking e-mail. Does it suggest trading votes for a job?

<https://arktimes.com/arkansas-blog/2016/06/23/update-stu-soffers-smoking-e-mail-does-it-suggest-trading-votes-for-a-job> *June 23, 2016*

- Now comes the case of the smoking e-mail, shown above. It's a product of a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit filed by Lawrence Walker of Little Rock, a lawyer and ally of one of Soffer's political opponents in Pine Bluff. Walker says Soffer didn't respond fully to his FOI request for e-mail related to his duties as election commissioner and as proof produced e-mails Soffer had been compelled to produce in the lawsuit between David Singer, another Republican Party official, and Singer's former employer, state Treasurer Dennis Milligan. Without getting into all that entanglement, suffice it to say that the e-mail above sounds an awful lot like a scheme to trade votes for a job for Singer. It's unknown whether that idea was ever attempted.
- Republican Party of Arkansas Chairman Doyle Webb appointed Stu Soffer to serve a second term on the State Board of Election Commissioners.

"Stu is one of the most knowledgeable election commissioners in the state. Because of his commendable service in the U.S. Army and his overwhelming amount of experience with elections worldwide, Stu is a great asset to the Republican Party and election commissioners across the state. I am pleased to appoint Stu to serve a second term on the State Election Board," said RPA Chairman Webb. "Stu is to be commended for his untiring work as in seeing that election laws are enforced to secure fair and honest elections."

ASP investigator testifies clerk admitted documents 'were false'

<https://www.pbcommercial.com/news/asp-investigator-testifies-clerk-admitted-documents-were-false> *July 20, 2016*

- In his opening statements yesterday, Johnson's attorney partially blamed Jefferson County Election Commissioner Stu Soffer for his client's legal issues.

Porter alleged that the charges brought against Johnson were a part of a political prosecution led by Soffer, who he claimed targeted her after Johnson's name appeared on the ballot for re-election in March of 2014.

“We have documents,” Porter said, reinforcing his position that Soffer came after his client with what he called “vengeance.”

On Wednesday, Soffer sent an e-mail to the commercial, rebutting Porter’s statements.

“I was incredulous in learning the county clerk’s attorney attributed her being on trial on criminal charges to my actions. To the best of my knowledge and belief, that is a bold faced lie,” Soffer wrote.

“In early 2014, I reported several of the more egregious election law-related violations committed by her office to the prosecuting attorney’s attention. However, I have never been contacted by his office about those issues or the Arkansas State Police investigator, Division of Legislative Audit, or the special prosecutor about this case.”

Soffer continued: “I was a strong supporter of Ms. Johnson until she certified [former mayor] Carl Redus for a nonexistent election, then violated her oath of office by changing and back dating her political practices pledge after the filing period closed. Regardless of the trial’s outcome, Jefferson County voters will be better served when the newly elected clerk takes office on 1 January.”

Lawsuit claims voter intimidation, interference by Jefferson Co. election commissioner

<https://katv.com/news/local/lawsuit-claims-voter-intimidation-interference-by-jefferson-co-election-commissioner> *November 2, 2016*

- A Jefferson County election commissioner and the Republican Party of Arkansas were named in lawsuit announced on Wednesday that accuses the two parties of voter intimidation and interference.

The ten-page lawsuit filed Tuesday afternoon was filed by the Democratic Party of Arkansas on behalf of Victor Johnson, a Jefferson County voter, and Jefferson County Clerk Patricia Johnson.

- The lawsuit comes a little over a week after the republican-majority Jefferson County Election Commission held an emergency meeting alleging County Clerk Johnson was

violating voter rights by setting up the county's early voting location not in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Election commissioner in Pine Bluff accused of voter intimidation

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2016/nov/03/election-commissioner-in-pb-accused-of->
/ November 3, 2016

- "Mr. Soffer stood in the doorway of the early-voting location and told voters to shut up and go home," Burks said. "This is deeply troubling to the voters of Jefferson County and also to the election administrators whose job it is to administer the elections free of fear and intimidation."

Soffer referred questions Wednesday to attorney George Ritter, who represents the Republican Party of Arkansas, another defendant in the suit. Ritter did not respond to a message left on his phone.

2018

Stu Soffer off state Election Commission

<https://arktimes.com/arkansas-blog/2018/03/23/stu-soffer-off-state-election-commission>
March 23, 2018

- Chris Burks, attorney for the Arkansas Democratic Party, says Judge Phillip Green ruled in Jefferson Circuit Court today that Stu Soffer, a White Hall Republican, couldn't serve on both the Jefferson County and state election commissions.

According to Burks, Green said Supreme Court precedent dating to 1966 held that there was a conflict of interest between the two positions. Because Soffer already held the county position when he was appointed to the state board, he must resign from the state board, according to Burks' interpretation of events.

Ex-county chief in Arkansas investigated for election actions

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2018/may/08/ex-county-chief-investigated-for-electi/>
May 8, 2018

- The Jefferson County prosecuting attorney is reviewing an investigative file received Monday alleging possible criminal action by former County Judge Henry "Hank" Wilkins IV.

The Arkansas Board of Election Commissioners forwarded Monday its investigation into a complaint about last fall's school board elections to the prosecutor after validating a complaint that Wilkins, apparently with the help of two others, changed locks on the county election commission's office, which prevented commissioners from entering during election preparation stages.

- During his tenure as county judge of Jefferson County, Wilkins frequently clashed with Jefferson County Election Commissioner Stu Soffer, a Republican. Each man spent several minutes Monday complaining about the other during separate phone interviews with the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

"The man had no regard for the law," Soffer said.

Wilkins noted that Soffer resigned from the State Board of Election Commissioners earlier this year after a judge ruled, he was ineligible to serve on both county and state election boards, which Soffer had been doing for years.

"In the meantime, he has tried to create havoc for me," Wilkins said, accusing Soffer of retaliating against him because he had denied Soffer's request for payment for some election work.

In 54 counties, voting machines new for election

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2018/sep/23/in-54-counties-voting-machines-new-for-September-23,2018>

- Based on Jefferson County's projected tax revenue for 2019, it would be "almost impossible" for the county to pay half of the cost of new equipment, said Clemons, who is a former state representative.

Jefferson County Election Commissioner Stu Soffer said, "Jefferson County has had financial difficulties for the past few years as a result of declining tax revenues related to population loss and other factors, so the money isn't available.

"I seriously doubt even in good times it would have been," Soffer said.

2019

Panel balks at hiring of election coordinator

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2019/nov/08/panel-balks-at-hiring-of-election-coord/>

November 8, 2019

- Election Commissioners Michael Adam and Stuart Soffer said a coordinator isn't needed and that the commission has no legal obligation to provide a coordinator with any duties.
- Soffer said that, according to state law, the county judge's role regarding the election commission is limited to hiring, approval of disbursement of funds for payment of invoices and oversight of county property used to conduct elections.

"He doesn't get to fine-tune a darned thing," Soffer said. "As far as me getting paid, the attorney general has opined that doing so is legal."

In an opinion written in 2016, Attorney General Leslie Rutledge addressed the subject of whether county election commissioners could be paid for performing election-related tasks during primary elections.

1 election commissioner files criminal complaint against another; special prosecutor named

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2019/nov/21/election-commissioner-files-criminal-complaint-aga/> *November 21, 2019*

- A special prosecutor has been named to look into a criminal complaint filed by one Jefferson County Election Commissioner against another.

According to Prosecuting Attorney Kyle Hunter, Jason Barrett was named by the Office of the Prosecutor Coordinator in Little Rock, to look into allegations that Election Commissioner Stuart Soffer, 78, of White Hall intimidated and threatened Election Commissioner Theodis "Ted" Davis, 75, of Pine Bluff during a meeting of the Election Commission last month.

- According to a complaint Davis filed with the prosecuting attorney's office on Oct. 29, at the previous night's election commission meeting, Soffer "became angry doing (sic) the

meeting stood up from his seat and in a shouting threatening voice, daring Commissioner Ted Davis to go outside to settle this."

Davis said in the affidavit that he did not respond to Soffer. He added in the affidavit that shortly after the meeting adjourned, Soffer followed him outside the building while issuing threats and gesturing in a threatening manner.

2020

Member of county's election panel quits, cites 'corruption, racism, hostility, and blatantly self-serving agendas'

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2020/jan/17/member-of-county-s-election-panel-quits-1/?elections> *January 17, 2020*

- Things reached a head on Oct. 29 when Davis, 75, of Pine Bluff, who has been the Democratic member of the three-member commission, filed a criminal complaint with the Jefferson County prosecuting attorney's office. Davis said that at the previous night's Election Commission meeting, Republican Commissioner Stuart Soffer, 78, of White Hall stood up from his seat and in a shouting, threatening voice, dared Davis "to go outside to settle this."

Davis, who is black, said in the affidavit that he did not respond to Soffer, who is white, but shortly after the meeting adjourned, he said that Soffer followed him outside the building, issued threats and gestured in a threatening manner.

Early vote hits snag with error on ballot; machines in Pine Bluff had wrong race

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2020/feb/28/early-vote-hits-snap-with-error-on-ball/?news-arkansas> *February 28, 2020*

- Election Commissioner Stuart "Stu" Soffer said that Election Systems & Software, the vendor for the iVotronics touch-screen voting machines used by Jefferson County, was notified and began preparing new media to be overnighted so the ballots can be corrected and the machines reprogrammed in time for Election Day.

According to Taggart, 152 people in those precincts had voted early before the error was reported and 15 absentee ballots for the Democratic primary had been mailed out with the incorrect race.

Although Soffer tried to downplay the seriousness of the error, a special meeting Thursday evening had the commissioners, Soffer, Ted Davis, and Chairman Michael Adam, facing a tense, angry group of about 25 people, including Burrell and Elliott, and assorted other candidates, elected officials and concerned citizens.

"What I'd like to know, and I think what everybody else would like to know," said Pine Bluff City Council candidate Glen Brown, "is how did we get here? And I will come back up if I don't get a good answer."

"Human error," Soffer replied. "The four precincts did not correctly migrate to Senate race 27. The work was double-checked, it was double-checked by [Election Systems & Software], and the three commissioners and the administrator sat at this table and tried to verify it. We had 171 precincts and I don't know how many races, so the short answer is human error. If you want to blame someone, blame me."

Jefferson County election official walks out on meeting

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2020/mar/16/jefferson-county-election-official-walks-out-meeti/?news-arkansas> *March 16, 20120*

- After nearly two hours of wrangling over issues related to the logistics of conducting a primary runoff election in Jefferson County while awaiting word on whether the election can be postponed by a court order due to the covid-19 crisis in Arkansas, a longtime local election commissioner abruptly quit and walked out about an hour-and-45-minutes into the meeting as it was about to conclude.
- Later Monday night, when contacted by phone, Soffer said he had not definitely decided to resign, but that he will take a hiatus from the commission until after the election while he mulls over whether he wishes to continue.

"For right now they can just sink or swim, I've had it," he said. "Tonight was totally unnecessary. Davis is posturing on everything. He's well intended, but I've just had it. I can't tell you how many hours I've spent on this thing and the governor's been no help,

the state board has been no help. People who don't have a clue are giving recommendations and those of us in the trenches are being left to sink."

Soffer said the logistics of trying to notify 12,000 voters to encourage them to vote absentee, get applications mailed out and back from those voters before the March 24 deadline, then get ballots mailed out and returned in time to be counted by March 31, are nearly insurmountable.