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Grand jury releases voter probe results ✓

SANTA CRUZ — Another list of questionable voter registrations was released by the county grand jury as the jury's investigation into voter fraud in the county drew to a close.

The list is broken into categories that includes 14 persons who registered at addresses that did not exist, to 1,014 person who were registered where they no longer live.

The latter group didn't vote, so no law was broken.

No names are given in the report, just the numbers of questionable registrations by category.

In January, the grand jury came up with 472 votes they believed were illegally cast at the four precincts on the UCSC campus. Most of those, the jury said, were by people who registered at the university, but didn't live on campus.

The finding resulted in a court challenge to the November City Council election.

Superior Court Judge Harry Brauer found that 110 votes were illegally cast, but that number didn't change the position of winners and losers.

It would have taken 182 discarded votes to do that.

The decision probably will be appealed by conservatives who, using the grand jury's information, pressed suit in the hope that enough votes will be thrown out to change the city's progressive council majority to one that's more conservative.

In its new list, the jury reports that 14 people have registered at vacant homes, 29 at non-existent addresses (14 voted), 32 registered at business addresses (7 voted), 32 registered where there are "a questionable number of residents" (2 voted), and 56 registered at illegal addresses (10 voted).

Also, 1,021 registered where they no

longer live. Seven of those voted.

The jury said some persons could be listed in more than one category.

On the positive side, the jury found no evidence to support the traditional complaint that "bus loads of students were being brought in to vote in local elections."

The other major complaint the jury dealt with was that a great number of business people were registering in the precincts where they had their business, rather than where they resided.

"While some cases were found to exist (32), it proved not to be nearly as serious as had been suspected," said the news release.

The jury states, "There are many apartments above and to the rear of business addresses which could account for people voting from those locations."

The investigation spanned five months and the jury says it checked out 90 percent of the precincts and visited 200 addresses.

Jury Foreman Julius Defosset said, "Illustrations such as these have convinced the grand jury that serious problems do exist in Santa Cruz County. How widespread it may be, it is still unknown."

Among the problems was a business address where 13 persons were registered and three voted. One worker at the place said, "Oh, a lot of people use this place for their address," according to the grand jury report.

One address had 30 persons registered and all had moved away. Two people voted from a residence where they hadn't resided for seven years.

Defosset says existing laws should be tightened, but that also the jury feels there is a general "lackadaisical approach to the whole voting process.

"It needs to be changed," he says.