

Did voting felons give Democrats the Senate?

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Was Minnesota's junior U.S. Senator Al Franken elected by felons who voted illegally? That's the contention of a conservative watchdog group that compared convict records with polling place sign-in sheets.

It took six months and multiple appeals before the Minnesota State Supreme Court to turn the Saturday Night Live comedian from New York into a U.S. senator from Minnesota.

However, his election was vital to the political agenda of Barack Obama since it gave the Democrats the 60 Senators needed to break any Republican filibuster.

After all appeals protesting his questionable election were exhausted in a six-month battle, he finally was seated on July 7, 2009, prompting the *Wall Street Journal* to proclaim that "Franken now goes to the Senate having effectively stolen an election."

The final official count showed Franken beat his Republican opponent, Norman Coleman, by 312 votes. In the initial vote, Coleman had won by more than 700 votes.

Minnesota Majority, a conservative watchdog group, found that at least 341 convicted felons in largely Democratic Minneapolis-St. Paul voted illegally in the 2008 Senate race. Volunteers matched publicly available lists of convicts with voting records. Over 18 months, the group matched conviction lists with poll rosters, where voters sign in before going into the voting booth, and matched them by hand.

Their findings have been ignored by both the Democrat-controlled U.S. Congress and the Minnesota legislature.

Franken was born in New York City. He spent several years while growing up in St Louis Park, a suburb of Minneapolis. Until he decided to run for the Senate, he had lived in California and New York his entire adult life.

Franken had infrequent roles on the NBC-TV satirical variety show "Saturday Night Live" for nearly two decades, starting in 1979.

Unlike fellow Saturday Night Live players such as Dan Akroyd, Chevy Chase, Mike Myers, Tina Fey and Steve Martin, he failed to parlay his time into a successful movie or film career. His one starring film role was in the 1995 movie *Stuart Saves His Family*, which he also wrote and helped produce. The film was a commercial disaster that was panned by critics. It was certified "rotten" on the movie review website Rotten Tomatoes, scoring only 28 percent positive out of a possible 100.

His career has been that of a vulgar stand-up comedian, radio host for the liberal Air America network and writer for *Playboy* magazine. He is known mostly for his anti-conservative talk and coarse humor.

He has called conservatives “nasty, hateful people.” In the 2008 election campaign, Franken’s rudeness, vulgarity and coarse style led critics to ask about whether he alienated himself from the important undecided swing voters.

On Franken’s website there is the admonition “Anybody who deliberately propagandizes with lies should be held up to scorn and ridicule.” Throughout his books he has held himself to “impossibly high standards” to tell the truth about those he has written about. Author Alan Skorski researched two of Franken’s books, *Rush Limbaugh is a Big Fat Idiot* and *Lies and the Lying Liars who Tell Them*, and found an extensive pattern of lies, misstatements and factual inaccuracies.

Among those were:

- Accusing columnist Ann Coulter of “lying with footnotes” by “citing a source and misrepresenting what it says.” However, he produced no evidence.
- Accusing President George W. Bush of treason.
- Claiming that a physical collision between Bush foreign policy advisor Richard Armitage and UPI news reporter Helen Thomas broke both her hip and jaw. Thomas herself said the incident never happened.
- After this came to light, Franken later added a footnote in the paperback version of the book that “the Helen Thomas thing is a joke.”
- Franken often claimed that he is “compared to Rush Limbaugh” when on the air, despite the fact that by the time he left his Air America show to run for the U.S. Senate, his radio network had been reduced to just over 40 stations as a result of severely low ratings. The radio network ultimately went into bankruptcy. Limbaugh plays on more than 600 stations with an average daily listening audience of 22 million.
- Franken claimed on June 1, 2005 that Limbaugh made up a quotation by Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Limbaugh had told listeners that Ginsburg said “replacing ‘Mother’s Day’ and ‘Father’s Day’ with a ‘Parent’s Day’ should be considered.”. In fact, in a 1974 article written by Ginsburg, she advocated creation of a “Parent’s Day” to replace both Mother’s and Father’s Days.
- Franken claimed John Murphy of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce was lying when he took a position endorsing the proposed Central American Free Trade Agreement on public TV’s “Lehrer Report” on July 27, 2005. Murphy stated “we’ve seen unemployment fall to 5.0 percent today, which is lower than it’s been in decades.” Franken actually took the unemployment figures under the Clinton Administration by the month (rather than by the year as the Bureau of Labor Statistics does) and distorted them to make it appear Murphy was lying.

His public comments are often filled with obscenities, making him difficult to quote in a family publication. However, among his classics are:

- “Republicans are shameless [deleted]s. No, that’s not fair. Republican politicians are shameless [deleted]s.
- “Nobody likes getting an abortion. Except perhaps, rape victims.”
- “How big a [deleted] Brit Hume is, and how shameless, how [deleted] shameless these people are, these people are so [deleted] shameless.”

- When asked, “Ever tempted to run for office yourself?” Franken replied, “Oh, no! First of all, if I took one vote away from a serious candidate, it would be a sin. If I put myself on the ballot and even 50 people voted for me, it would be a travesty.”
- “I think ‘under God’ probably shouldn’t be in the Pledge of Allegiance. It wasn’t put in there since, like the 50’s, but it’s not that big a deal to me. ‘In God we trust’ probably shouldn’t be on the coins. I don’t care.”

During his 2008 campaign, it was discovered that Franken had not paid state taxes in 17 states he earned money over the last four years. Franken blamed it on his accountant and said he would pay interest and penalties for a total of \$70,000. Franken is yet to supply proof that the taxes have been paid.

In the course of researching irregularities in Minnesota’s 2008 General Election, Minnesota Majority obtained records from the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension listing all persons under the supervision of the Minnesota Department of Corrections.

“From these records,” says Dan McGrath, Minnesota Majority’s executive director, “we extracted a list of individuals charged with felony crimes at the time of the 2008 election.

“We then compared this list of felons to voter history records from the Secretary of State’s statewide voter registration system.

“From this comparison, we compiled a list of 2,803 felons who potentially voted in the 2008 General Election. The highest concentration of the suspected fraudulent votes was found in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties, so additional research was focused in these areas.”

“We verified sample matches with court documents. We also examined polling place roster signatures and voter registration cards. After completing these verifications, we had a high degree of confidence that we had detected hundreds of fraudulent votes cast by ineligible felons in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties.

“If this information is accurate, it’s certainly possible that these felons cast illegal votes. It’s equally possible that they cast votes that gave Al Franken the victory.”

Minnesota Majority submitted affidavits alleging that 1,359 suspected ineligible felons had voted. On October 14, 2009, Ramsey County Attorney Susan Gaertner announced that 23 felons had been charged with registering illegally, but did not pursue any charges of voter fraud. Hennepin County charged three felons with fraudulent voting.

Additionally, it has been alleged that there is a 40,000-ballot discrepancy between the numbers of ballots handed out and the number of people listed on polling place login sheets.

Silence from the media

Minnesota’s newspapers have largely ignored this scandal.

“We aren’t trying to change the result of the last election. That legally can’t be done,” said Dan McGrath, Minnesota Majority’s executive director. “We are just trying to make sure the integrity of the next election isn’t compromised.”

A spokesman for both county attorneys’ offices have belittled the information, saying it was “just plain wrong” and full of errors, which prompted the group to go back and conduct an in-depth look at the records.

“What we did this time is irrefutable,” McGrath said. “We took the voting lists and matched them with conviction lists and then went back to the records and found the roster lists, where voters sign in before walking to the voting booth, and matched them by hand.

“The only way we can be wrong is if someone with the same first, middle and last names, same year of birth as the felon, and living in the same community, has voted. And that isn’t very likely.”

The Minnesota Majority report said that in Hennepin County, which includes Minneapolis, 899 suspected felons had been matched on the county’s voting records, and the review showed 289 voters conclusively matched to felon records.

Felon lists checked

The report says that in Ramsey County, 460 names on voting records were matched with felon lists, and a further review found 52 were conclusive matches.

“Prosecutors have to act more swiftly in prosecuting cases from the 2008 election to deter fraud in the future,” McGrath said, “and the state has to make sure that the existing system, which flags convicted felons so voting officials can challenge them at the ballot, is effective. In 90 percent of the cases we looked at, the felons weren’t flagged.”

“If the state had done that,” he said, “things might be very different today.”

“Convicted felons and ACORN-driven voters handed the wacky ‘Saturday Night Live’ guy a slim win in the 2008 election in Minnesota,” writes columnist Gary Larson. “Allegations of voter fraud are stonewalled by county prosecutors and ignored by liberal local mainstream media. Why are we not at all surprised at all the tomfoolery?”

Were election laws flouted?

“Talk about making a difference: At least 341 convicted felons quite possibly voted illegally in 2008 in Minneapolis and St. Paul alone, says an 18-month study of Minnesota voting in the ‘08 election.

“Besides this frontal assault on election laws, untold thousands of ACORN-recruited, one-time, rent-a-voters cast ballots in that same election, most for the first time ever, to decide a race for the United States Senate.

“In the end, Al Franken ‘won’ a contested election for the U.S. Senate seat by just 312 disputed votes. Do the math.

“Prosecutors have to act more swiftly in prosecuting cases from the 2008 election to deter fraud in the future,” McGrath said. “And the state has to make sure that the existing system that flags convicted felons so voting officials can challenge them at the ballot is effective. In 90 percent of the cases we looked at, the felons weren’t flagged.”

“If those two Twin Cities’ urban counties had flagged them, to say nothing of questioning the government-subsidized, highly partisan ACORN’s vote-getting campaign for Franken, things might be quite different today in Washington, D.C.

“Now it’s a great ‘What if?’ of history, a stunning example of how some folks are thrust into ‘greatness’ of a U.S. Senate seat. But when a coveted seat is decided by convicted felons, coupled with steered votes of a non-profit, partisan ACORN, something is seriously amiss.

“Ends justify means?” asks McGrath. “Win at any cost, Saul Alinsky style? Politics trumps law? Truths don’t matter? In this case, even the idea of the rule of election law is flouted.”