

Commission denies request for election funding

Written by News Desk

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By BRIAN HODGE □

On Monday the Elmore County Commission denied Probate Judge John Enslen's request to hire an election specialist; a decision Enslen believes could produce an elections disaster.

Enslen made a request at the July 22 meeting of the Elmore County Commission for additional funding to hire an Election Specialist as a county employee under Enslen's direction. The commission tabled the issue until this week. On August 12 the commission denied Enslen's request. The motion to deny was made by Commissioner David Bowen and seconded by Commissioner Mark Hragyil.

Cindy Mann previously held the position as Election Specialist, as a contractor, rather than an employee of the county. Mann resigned in April. Commission Chairman Joe Faulk said that Enslen expressed to him that he would rather have an Election Specialist as an employee rather than a contractor. Enslen says most counties in the state use an employee for this work.

"My recommendation to Judge Enslen was that he go through an election cycle with Ms. Mann, evaluate the process, and make the position an employee after the next election. He did not want to do it that way," Faulk said.

After Mann resigned, and after Representative Barry Mask took a job as CEO of Alabama's Realtor association, Faulk said he spoke to Enslen again, this time accompanied by Commissioner Mark Hragyil.

"We asked him, 'what are you going to do if Barry Mask resigns from his House seat and you must conduct a special election?' He (Enslen) told us that he could handle it without any problems. I think his words were, 'It is not rocket science,'" Faulk said.

Faulk said that prior to the August 12 commission meeting, Enslen sent e-mails to some county employees refuting Faulk's quotes and denying the meeting between Enslen, Faulk and Hragyil

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took place.

According to Alabama law, the judge of probate is the chief elections official of the county.

Age of Pollworkers

Faulk said that there is another issue regarding Enslen and elections that has troubled him. Faulk

said that Enslen has indicated he would like to limit the age of poll workers at 70.

"I could not believe what I was hearing when he told me that. There are a lot of retirees that work polling places. I agree we need more younger people involved, but I can not say I have ever heard of telling someone they were too old to work at a polling place.

At a July 22 commission meeting Enslen said he was concerned about the high average age of poll workers, and said some of them should be "retired."

"The average age our current poll worker is over 70 and some are in their 90s. They have done an outstanding job, but it is time for some of them to be retired and younger people be included," Enslen said.

****UPDATE****

Enslen spoke to The Millbrook Independent on August 16, after this article was published. He says that since comments were taken out of context. He explained that he is not in favor of banning or restricting anyone from being a pollworker based on their age. Rather, he said he encourages younger people to be interested in working as pollworkers. Enslen said he is in

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discussion with Superintendent Jeff Langham of the Elmore County School system to encourage high school students, who are age to work polls, to do so on election day.