

WEST GETS THE RECOUNT HE WANTED, DEFICIT INCREASES TO 2146 VOTES, STILL NO CONCESSION

[youtube]<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GqWyzn4-xI>[/youtube]

Displaying the logic that saw him “retire” from the military with a \$5000 fine for torture that in effect served as a plea deal to allow him to avoid up to eleven years in a military prison, proclaim that 78 to 81 Democratic members of Congress are communists (as seen in the YouTube) and to conduct a Town Hall meeting where he had radio host Nicole Sandler arrested for daring to ask a question he didn’t like, Allen West finally got St. Lucie County to recount all of the early ballots from the election he narrowly lost to Patrick Murphy in Florida’s newly drawn 18th Congressional District, only to continue not to concede, even when his vote deficit increased from a margin of 0.58% of votes cast to 0.65%. With the revised figures from St. Lucie County, West now trails Murphy by 2146 votes and the margin is well outside the 0.50% margin or less that is needed to trigger a legally mandated recount.

Of course, since this is Florida, the “recount” didn’t exactly proceed normally. The county was required to submit its final vote totals by noon on Sunday, but did not finish the recount until mid-afternoon. As soon as the noon deadline passed, the Murphy campaign declared victory because Florida law states that if a county misses the deadline for certification, the preliminary numbers become final. The West campaign initially considered applying for an emergency exemption to the noon Sunday deadline, but the Miami Herald noted that the results of the recount make that unlikely:

Before the county finally released the results of the recount, West's attorneys toyed with trying to ascertain an emergency prevented the timely filing, a tall task given the way the law is written. Because Murphy made a net gain of 274 votes, the issue was likely moot. But West's campaign showed no immediate sign of backing down or offering a concession.

Going back to the Palm Beach Post article, we see that there are additional irregularities:

The results from one precinct could not be fully uploaded during the recount, said St. Lucie County Commissioner Tod Mowery, a canvassing board member. Even though the data were manually entered and the rest of the results were sent to state officials, the board could not certify the results because of the problems with the single cartridge.

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[West campaign manager Tim] Edson had his own questions. Among them: Preliminary totals showed 900 voters cast ballots in Precinct 93, where only seven voters are registered, Edson said. Another lingering concern is the West team's request to view the poll sign-in sheets from Election Day. Edson said they had received some sign-in sheets from Palm Beach County but none from St. Lucie County. West's campaign wants to compare the number of signatures on the poll sign-in sheets to the computer tabulations.

"Today's actions cast an even greater cloud of suspicion over the results of St. Lucie County than existed before," Edson said in a statement. "This election is far from over."

No explanation has been offered for the 900 votes showing up from a precinct where only 7 voters are registered, but that seems to me to be very likely the result of errors by poorly trained poll workers. A precinct with only 7 registered voters certainly would not have its own polling station, so it seems likely that poll workers gave incorrect ballots to voters from adjacent precincts who voted at the same polling place. In fact, they may have even done this in desperation if the supply of ballots for another precinct ran out.

The additional drama underlying all of the recount madness in St. Lucie County is that the County Supervisor of Elections is hospitalized. Again from the Palm Beach Post:

Noticeably absent Sunday was Gertrude Walker, the St. Lucie County supervisor of elections. Walker was hospitalized last week amid legal wrangling over whether the ballots should be recounted.

West's only option for continuing the fight at this point from a legal standpoint appears to be a formal "contest" of the election, but no announcement has been made as of this writing.

There is one further note that ties the West imbroglio to other current headlines. In January of last year, a strange Op-Ed appeared in the Wall Street Journal calling for David Petraeus to get a fifth star. I did a bit of digging, and found that the people behind this push were from a group called Vets for Freedom, who pushed a number of military veterans for public office. The headliner of their group of candidates at that time was Allen West, but the push by this group to get Petraeus a fifth star certainly looked to me that the move was seen by them as a part of their overall plan to eventually prepare Petraeus for a presidential bid. Interestingly, the website for the group shows the candidates they supported in the 2010 election, but shows nothing for 2012. I'm guessing that they have moved on to working under another name. And now

both of their headliners are languishing in humiliating defeats, so they face huge obstacles of rehabilitating their "best" candidates.