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# Virginia student heading to prison after registering dead voters for Democrats

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Andrew Spieles, a 21-year-old James Madison University student, is heading to prison for at least 100 days for registering deceased voters for Democrats during the 2016 presidential election. (Paul J. Richards/AFP/Getty Images)

A student from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, will spend at least 100 days in prison after admitting to registering deceased voters for Democrats during the 2016 presidential election.

Andrew J. Spieles, 21, pleaded guilty Monday in the U.S. District Court of the Western District of Virginia to submitting the names of dead voters to the registrar's office in Harrisonburg, [WTVR-TV reported](http://wtvr.com/2017/06/26/andrew-spieles-guilty-plea/) (<http://wtvr.com/2017/06/26/andrew-spieles-guilty-plea/>).

The student was working for Harrisonburg Votes when he committed the crime, according to U.S. Attorney Rick A. Mountcastle. Harrisonburg Votes, whose website has since been deleted, has ties to the Democratic Party.

The political organization was founded by former Harrisonburg Mayor Joe Fitzgerald, a Democratic activist who was in office from 2002 to 2004, [according to The Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/probe-looks-at-how-dead-virginians-came-to-be-registered-to-vote-in-harrisonburg/2016/10/05/8d07662e-872b-11e6-ac72-a29979381495_story.html?utm_term=.ce4a6613481e) ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/probe-looks-at-how-dead-virginians-came-to-be-registered-to-vote-in-harrisonburg/2016/10/05/8d07662e-872b-11e6-ac72-a29979381495\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.ce4a6613481e](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/probe-looks-at-how-dead-virginians-came-to-be-registered-to-vote-in-harrisonburg/2016/10/05/8d07662e-872b-11e6-ac72-a29979381495_story.html?utm_term=.ce4a6613481e)). Fitzgerald fired Spieles and disavowed his actions once the allegations were made public in August.

“In July 2016, Spieles’ job was to register as many voters as possible and report to Democratic campaign headquarters in Harrisonburg,” a spokesperson for the U.S. attorney’s office told WTVR. “In August 2016, Spieles was directed to combine his registration numbers with those of another individual because their respective territories overlapped.

“After filling out a registration form for a voter,” the spokesperson continued, “Spieles entered the information into a computer system used by the Virginia Democratic Party to track information such as name, age, address, and political affiliation. Every Thursday an employee [or] volunteer hand-delivered the paper copies of the registration forms to the registrar’s office in Harrisonburg.”

But Spieles was caught when one vigilant employee at the registrar’s office recognized one of the names he submitted — it belonged to the deceased father of a Rockingham County judge. The staffer called the police.

That discovery led the registrar’s office to unearth “multiple instances of similarly falsified forms when it reviewed additional registrations,” the U.S. attorney’s office spokesperson explained.

“Some were in the names of deceased individuals while others bore incorrect middle names, birth dates, and social security numbers,” the spokesperson continued. “The registrar’s office learned that the individuals named in these forms had not, in fact, submitted the new voter registrations.”

According to the news report, Spieles later admitted to committing the crime. He explained that he obtained the names, ages, and addresses of individuals from “walk sheets” given to him by the Virginia Democratic Party. From there, he would fabricate birth dates and social security numbers for the falsified voters before registering them.

In total, the JMU student said he created 18 fraudulent voter forms himself and said no one else participated in the crime.

This development is particularly noteworthy given President Donald Trump has often claimed widespread voter fraud is a major problem in the U.S. electoral system.

In May, the president [signed an executive order \(http://www.politico.com/story/2017/05/11/trump-voter-fraud-commission-238263\)](http://www.politico.com/story/2017/05/11/trump-voter-fraud-commission-238263) establishing a commission to examine potential voter fraud and voter suppression.

“The commission will review policies and practices that enhance or undermine the American people’s confidence in the integrity of federal elections,” a White House spokesperson said at the time, “including improper registrations, improper voting, fraudulent registrations, fraudulent voting and voting suppression.”

By creating the commission, Trump is making good on a promise he made on Twitter just days after he became president. He vowed to begin “a major investigation” into voter fraud, including the number of deceased people registered to vote.



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I will be asking for a major investigation into VOTER FRAUD, including those registered to vote in two states, those who are illegal and....

7:10 AM - 25 Jan 2017

26,180

130,289



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even, those registered to vote who are dead (and many for a long time). Depending on results, we will strengthen up voting procedures!

7:13 AM - 25 Jan 2017

18,935

107,489