

Thompson Says Walker Shifted on Voting Probe

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United States Atty. James R. Thompson assailed Daniel Walker yesterday, charging that the Democratic candidate for governor has made an about-face on vote fraud in Chicago.

In a Federal Building press conference Thompson said he was "astounded" by charges Walker made Tuesday with Mayor Daley, that the federal grand jury vote fraud probe was nothing more than a Republican "campaign of vilification" to intimidate voters and the Democratic Party. Walker had suggested that downstate election fraud should be investigated.

Thompson disclosed that Walker made three emotional pleas to him to curb Cook County vote fraud. These included a frantic midnight call to his home on primary election eve.

The Republican appointed prosecutor said he hoped Walker would retract the charges. He angrily asserted that the probe was his personal effort and not a Republican campaign.

"So long as I hold this office, no one will wrongfully question our integrity and go unanswered," Thompson said.

The grand jury investigation, which has already resulted in 40 indictments, was sparked by Tribune Task Force disclosures of scores of irregularities found in the Board of Election Commissioners office records.

Walker, who was campaigning downstate, released a statement thru his press aide, Ken Pierce, denying that he criticized Thompson. Pierce said Walker's remarks were directed at the Justice Department's refusal to act on alleged vote fraud downstate and the Watergate bugging incident.

At midnight on the primary's eve, Thompson said Walker telephoned him to complain that the West Side Chicago wards had not reported yet and that "they're going to steal it [the election] from me." Thompson said he assumed "by they, he meant the Daley organization which was supporting Mr. Walker's opponent, Paul Simon."

Thompson said he told Walker the request was not "practical" and promised to meet with Walker the next morning and pursue the matter if Walker lost the nomination.

On Oct. 6, Thompson said Walker and his research director, William Goldberg, commended Thompson on his investigation. He said on Wednesday [while Thompson said he was reading reports of Walker's attack on the federal office], Walker or his aide requested a probe into overregistration in downstate counties.

Thompson said the list of counties supplied by Walker for the proposed probe did not fall in his jurisdiction so he forwarded the information to the appropriate prosecutors.