



Coates on do-not-admit list

*By Mary Jo Almquist and Teri Finneman
The Forum - 02/03/2005*

Fargo City Commissioner Linda Coates is among more than 40 area residents included on a list of people barred from attending President Bush's speech today in Fargo.

Among the 42 area people on the do-not-admit list: two high school students, a librarian, a Democratic campaign manager and several university professors.

White House spokesman Jim Morrell and Don Larson, a spokesman for the North Dakota governor's office, say they don't know anything about such a list.

"This is the first I'm hearing of it," Morrell said when contacted Wednesday.

But two sources close to Tuesday's ticket distribution confirmed the list exists and includes a handful of names of people who were not to receive tickets to today's event at North Dakota State University's Bison Sports Arena.

The list was supplied to workers at the two Fargo distribution sites, along with tickets and other forms citizens were asked to fill out upon receiving them. People who handed out tickets had copies of the list at their tables to determine if anyone should be denied access, both sources said.

The list contains a wide range of people. Several wrote opinion page letters to The Forum criticizing Bush or the war in Iraq. Others wrote letters in support of gay rights or of Democratic policies.

It's not clear if any one issue links the names together, but several are found on a Web site of a local progressive organization.

Coates, for one, said she has no idea why she would be on a list other than the fact she's outspoken about her left-leaning beliefs.

"I thought that was democracy," she said.

Coates said she was shocked and "creeped out" Wednesday to learn she was on the list. Now she's outraged.

"To me, this is very revealing as to what this administration is all about ... someone who doesn't want disagreement," said Coates, whose husband, Mike, is also on the list. "That's not healthy."

Coates said she originally wasn't planning to go to the 11:30 a.m. speech but was able to get a last-minute ticket Wednesday night from Fargo Mayor Bruce Furness, who offered tickets to all city commissioners.

Coates said she now plans to attend. If she's denied access, she'll demand to know why.

Morrell said the White House is not directly involved in the ticket distribution. Rather, it works with state and local officials to coordinate the process.

"I'm not aware of any list or of anyone being denied," he said.

Hoeven's Larson echoed that statement.

"I don't know anything about the list," he said. "No one was denied tickets."

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