



Local volunteer root of do-not-admit buzz

By Dave Roepke

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An "overzealous volunteer" created a list of 42 people to bar from attending President Bush's speech in Fargo, White House and state party officials said Thursday.

"It was the result of an overzealous volunteer," said White House spokesman Jim Morrell of the list. "We weren't aware of it here at the White House."

Republican Party officials and Morrell said they do not know the identity of the volunteer.

"I don't know if we'd ever be able to find out what overzealous volunteer it is or anything like that," said Jason Stverak, executive director of the North Dakota Republican Party. "We'll talk to people and stuff, but it will be impossible."

Morrell said do-not-admit lists are not standard practice for the White House.

"We regret that it happened," he said.

No one on the list was denied a ticket or entrance to Thursday's speech, Stverak said.

Despite being included in the rolls of those who were not to be admitted, Fargo City Commissioner Linda Coates walked through security gates at the Bison Sports Arena without incident shortly after 11 a.m.

With a crowd of protesters chanting "Go, Linda, go," Coates joked, "I'm shaking," as she neared the entrance.

Coates, who got her ticket from Fargo Mayor Bruce Furness, said the experience was chilling.

"I was shocked," she said. "I couldn't believe it. It was just bizarre."

Adam Hamm, chairman of the Cass County Republican Party, said he did not know anything about the list before reading about it in *The Forum* on Thursday.

Hamm, who helped organize volunteers for the event, said even if some of the people on the list had been considered security risks, there was a considerable police presence at the event.

"There could have been other ways to deal with that than to create this list," he said.

Besides Coates, the 42-person list includes a glass blower, university professors, the producer of a liberal radio talk show, two high-schoolers and the deputy campaign manager for Joe Satrom, the 2004 Democratic candidate for governor in North Dakota.

Many of those named in the list, which was leaked to *The Forum* Wednesday, joined Howard Dean's failed campaign for the 2004 Democratic nomination for president.

More than 75 percent -- 33 people -- are members of the Fargo-Moorhead Democracy for America Meetup Group, which formed in the wake of the Dean campaign.

Cara Taylor, 26, volunteered for the campaign before moving back to her native state of Maine in

December.

"I didn't realize that made me dangerous," she said of her involvement in the Dean campaign.

Taylor said many friends ribbed her Thursday about being on the list.

"I've been getting a lot of e-mails from friends who didn't know I was a terrorist," she said.

While she finds the incident amusing, Taylor said it is also troubling.

"Unfortunately, this is very characteristic of what I've noticed from the Bush administration," she said.

Brian Gibson, a planner with the Metropolitan Council of Governments, said he was also involved in the Dean campaign.

"I wear it as a badge of honor," Gibson said of being included on the list. "My crime seems to be wanting fiscally responsible, socially progressive government at all levels."

Others have no connections to the Dean campaign and are not sure how they ended up on the list.

The glass blower, Jon Offutt of Fargo, said his inclusion baffles him.

"I had a Satrom sticker on my van. Not even a Kerry sticker -- a Satrom sticker," he said. "I don't know whether to feel honored or deeply troubled."

News of the list spread quickly Thursday, receiving some national media attention and ending up on numerous Web sites, such as www.michaelmoore.com and www.buzzflash.com.

Coates said Thursday afternoon she was getting many calls from reporters from out-of-town publications like Harper's Magazine.

"It's been an interesting little side show with some troubling implications," she said.

Hamm said he understands why the list troubles some.

"If the role was reversed and I was on a list like that, I would be pretty upset as well," he said.

Forum Reporter Mary Jo Almquist contributed to this report. Readers can reach Forum reporter Dave Roepke at (701) 241-5535