

Activists Charged in GOP Damage

Written by Robert ID750

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The sons of a first-term congresswoman and Milwaukee's former acting mayor were among five Democratic activists charged Monday with slashing the tires of vans rented by Republicans to drive voters and monitors to the polls on Election Day.

Sowande Omokunde, son of Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Wis., and Michael Pratt, the son of former Milwaukee acting mayor Marvin Pratt, were among those charged with criminal damage to property, a felony that carries a maximum punishment of 3 1/2 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

The activists are accused of flattening the tires on 25 vehicles rented by the state Republican Party to get out the vote and deliver poll watchers Nov. 2.

Also charged were Lewis Caldwell and Lavelle Mohammad, both from Milwaukee, and Justin Howell of Racine.

The GOP rented more than 100 vehicles that were parked in a lot adjacent to a Bush campaign office. The party planned to drive poll watchers to polling places by 7 a.m. and deliver any voters who didn't have a ride.

Some Republican officials have criticized Milwaukee County District Attorney E. Michael McCann, a Democrat, for taking more than two months to bring charges.

McCann said FBI agents were involved in interviewing witnesses in four states: Georgia, Virginia, Maryland and New York.

"We asked the FBI knowing that this probably wouldn't be their first priority," he said.

Rick Wiley, state GOP executive director, discovered the vandalism on the morning of Election

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Day.

"It was unbelievable that people could stoop this low in a political campaign," he said. "I figured it had to be someone from the opposition. But I didn't think someone on the paid (John) Kerry campaign would do this."

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel quoted sources Sunday as saying the five were paid staffers.

Wiley didn't say whether the vandalism prevented anyone from voting, but said poll watchers were about two hours late.

Moore did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

[Source](#)