

## Watauga SO Called To Enforce Vote Ruling-WCS Responds

Written by Steve Frank

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There were some lines of voters casting ballots this morning in Watauga—and some drama, as the Watauga Sheriff's Office had to be called to deal with carrying out a poll ruling. Watauga Election Supervisor Jane Hodges said that she was contacted by her Judge at the precinct at Green Valley School about students being kept in the gym, and she ruled that state law would allow only voters and those helping with the vote to be there, "The gym teacher did not like my ruling, and he informed us that he would have to continue with the way he was doing with the students. And I did ask him as nice as I could several times to please not do that. So he chose to defy me and chose to—he just said he was going to do what they had done for years. And so I informed him if he could not abide by the rules, by the General Statutes, that I would call the Sheriff's Department." Hodges said that as deputies arrived, the person involved left the gym and that the matter resolved, but Watauga School officials, including all principals, were in a meeting and apparently unaware of the incident. Watauga School officials responded to our inquiry about the matter, saying it was not a gym teacher, but principal Phillip Griffin, who was the person who was speaking with the Board of Elections representative at the site. They got on to say that the students were not in the bleachers in the gym, they were being led from buses through the gym to the cafeteria, and that the procedures followed by the school this morning (in regard to students being in the gym) are the identical procedures used at the school in previous elections dating back to at least 2002. No concerns were expressed about those procedures in prior years.

Hodges also said that some 16,000 voters cast ballots in the early voting period in Watauga...not quite as many as in 2008, when over 17,000 voters cast early ballots, and she blamed weather for not breaking the 2008 total. State-wide, 2.55 million voted early by late Saturday, the N.C. State Board of Elections saying that early voting exceeded the record 2.4 million votes cast in the 2008 election. And there's weather today—more snow flurries—but so far, not enough to impede voting. Polls are open until 7:30, and voters who are in line at that time can vote.