Small town election shenanigans have mostly been overlooked by state and federal officials, but things may change as the problem grows to a level that it could affect some of those officials.

I recently wrote about how Mississippi Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann noticed the curiously high number of absentee ballots being cast in many counties, and I explained how manipulating the absentee process has been a problem in Yazoo County for some time.

A challenge filed last week by a supervisor candidate in Holmes County should add momentum to the effort for some real election reform in Mississippi.

Leonard Hampton alleges, among other things, that voters were enticed with alcohol and illegal substances and driven by bus to the polls. That sounds strange, but so does the response of election winner Norman Cobbins Jr, a veteran Holmes County Supervisor.

“"I would say that anything he says I did, he did the same thing,” Cobbins told The Clarion Ledger.

The old “I didn’t do anything he didn’t do,” is one that I’ve been told off the record by candidates several times over the years covering elections here in Yazoo County and throughout the Mississippi Delta.

“It was just as fair as it’s ever been,” Cobbins later said, an apparent admission that fraudulent activities are nothing new in Holmes County.

Hampton’s challenge also predictably includes allegations that absentee ballots were misused with voters being improperly influenced. This is an area where many political candidates are openly abusing the system because they know they can get away with it. Anytime one person brings in numerous voters to cast absentee ballots it’s highly unlikely that they’re just doing it out of the kindness of their hearts. Here in Yazoo City we’ve seen such activities rewarded with the creation of taxpayer-funded jobs.

The need for reform is clearly evident.

Hopefully the recent headlines that have resulted from all of the evidence that real problems exist will inspire some action. Problems have been ignored for far too long.

The people of Mississippi deserve to have fair elections. We shouldn’t be forced to settle for “as fair as it’s ever been.”

.....

Jason Patterson is the editor and publisher of The Yazoo Herald. He can be reached at 746-4911 or by email at jason@yazooherald.net