



Tribune Photo by David Nyström

Wesley Spraggins and Dorothy Baker at a press conference. She is holding some of the 20,000 signatures demanding federal marshals in the Chicago election.

20,000 Seek U.S. Marshals in Polls

BY GEORGE BLISS AND WILLIAM CURRIE

The signatures of 20,000 Chicago voters demanding federal marshals for the city's polling places will be presented at the White House Friday, leaders of a West Side coalition group announced yesterday at a press conference.

Despite a pressure campaign against independent volunteers, they said, petitions were spread thru black wards calling for a bipartisan election in the precincts.

Wesley Spraggins, spokesman for Power, which represents 21 community groups, charged that the workers were "threatened, beaten, harassed, and intimidated," by "organized groups in the community, some of which may be political."

The conference in Power headquarters, 802 S. Pulaski Rd., came in the midst of a Tribune Task Force series documenting the demise of bipartisan elections in Chicago's black wards, and presenting evidence of blatant vote fraud.

"The Tribune has a fantastic amount of evidence," Spraggins said. "We can attest to this because we are in the black community.

"Vote fraud is a way of life on the West Side. I'm sure that every black person in Chicago has had money offered for his vote at one time."

Leaders of other politically independent organizations in Chicago expressed similar hopes for some sort of federal

support during the November Presidential election. The organizations are:

- Independent Voters of Illinois: Michael Shakman, state chairman of the voters' group said, "If we can't get adequate protection thru prosecutions or thru court suits, we'll have to try to get a federally supervised election. It's worth the effort if we have to."

- Operation Push: Thomas Todd, executive vice president said, "If a federally supervised election will do the job, then we should have that. We should have federal watchers and administrators to watch the election day activities."

- Chicago Urban League: James W. Compton, president, said, "I would say that based on the apparent evidence, there is a basis to have federal supervision of the upcoming election. I think it would be greatly helpful because of one of the most often noted reasons for apathy we find among unregistered voters is that votes are so often miscounted or uncounted."

- Better Government Association: J. Terrence Brunner, executive director, said, "We think it would be a fine thing [federal intervention in the election], but we don't know how it can be done under existing law. We need an election code which would allow such action to be taken, at least by a state board."