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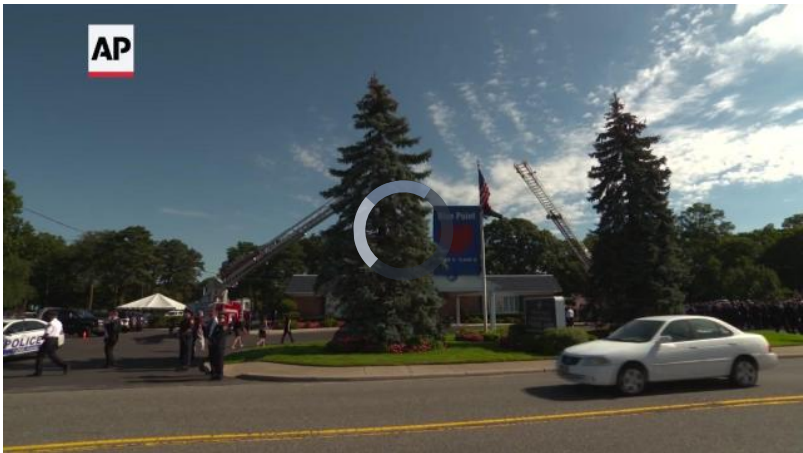
5 Lake County residents indicted on election-related charges

By JIM NEWTON

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With early voting under way for the March 20 primary election, officials have announced the indictment of five people on felony charges related to the November 2016 general election in Lake County.

The charges against the five local residents began with information uncovered by the Lake County Clerk's Office, and then the cases were developed through an investigation by the Lake County State's Attorney's Office.

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Assistant State's Attorney Fred Day said the cases all involve alleged crimes stemming from the Nov. 8, 2016 general election, and the lengthy time frame prior to charges included initial discovery of the alleged crimes by the clerk's office, followed by the need to interview both witnesses and those eventually charged in the cases as part of the investigation.

According to Day and court records, Marcelo Villaruz of Beach Park was charged with perjury for allegedly misrepresenting his citizenship prior to voting. His wife,

Gina Villaruz, was indicted on the same charges. Both are scheduled to be arraigned March 21, as are the other three defendants.

Yvette Yust, of Waukegan, was also charged with two counts of perjury for misrepresenting citizenship, Day said.

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Day said that Janet Pokryfke of Mundelein was charged with voting more than once, and perjury for allegedly casting both mail-in and walk-in votes in the general election.

Finally, Marvin Hershman of Riverwoods was charged with two counts of voting more than once and one count of perjury, according to Day.

All of the charges faced by the five defendants are Class 3 felonies, carrying a potential sentence of probation or 2 to 5 years in prison upon conviction.

The five defendants, who were indicted Wednesday by a Lake County Grand Jury, join three other defendants in more high-profile 2016 alleged election fraud cases.

Former Lake County Coroner Thomas Rudd faces five counts of perjury based on allegations that he signed several election petition pages for the 2016 primary without having collected the signatures himself. Rudd has said his signatures on the pages were a mistake and an unintended oversight.

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He is scheduled for trial May 21.

Also, Ellen Mauer, a member of the Libertyville-Vernon Hills Community High School District 128 Board, and Denise Zwit, secretary to the school district's Superintendent, Prentiss Lea, have been charged with perjury related to nominating petitions in the 2016 School Board election.

Officials said both Mauer and Zwit are in negotiations with prosecutors for potential plea deal resolutions to their cases.

Mauer allegedly affirmed in writing that she personally collected signatures on her candidate petitions for the April 4 District 128 school board election, while the state alleges she did not collect the signatures herself, Day said.

Zwit allegedly falsely signed that she was the circulator of several candidate petition signature pages for school board President Patrick Groody, according to prosecutors.

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