

Macomb County Nursing Home Employee Pleads Guilty in Attempted Election Fraud Case

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LANSING - Forged signatures on absentee ballot applications that led to criminal charges against a Centerline nursing home employee has resulted in a guilty plea and jail time, Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel announced today.

Last year, Trenae Myesha Rainey, 28, was charged with the following in Macomb County's 37th District Court:

- three counts of election law forgery, five-year felonies; and
- three counts of forging signature on absentee ballot applications, five-year felonies.

Wednesday afternoon before District Court Judge Michael Chupa, Rainey pleaded guilty to three misdemeanor counts of making a false statement in an absentee ballot application.

Because the convictions were for misdemeanors, the Court had the authority to do an immediate sentencing. Judge Chupa sentenced Rainey to two years' probation, with the first 45 days to be served in the Macomb County Jail.

"I appreciate our partners at the Department of State and Michigan State Police who brought this case to us," Nessel said. "These collaborative investigations assist in maintaining the integrity of our elections, and this case highlights the scrutiny applications and ballots undergo throughout the election process to weed out instances of attempted fraud. We will not hesitate to prosecute anyone - regardless of political party - who attempts to undermine our elections."

In October 2020, the Centerline Clerk contacted the Michigan Bureau of Elections after a stack of roughly two dozen absentee voter applications were dropped off for processing. While crosschecking the signatures on the applications with voter signatures in the Qualified Voter File, the clerk noticed the signatures did not match.

A team of Department of Attorney General investigators began examining the matter in November 2020.

The applications came from an assisted-living facility in the area - Father Murray Nursing Home. It was further determined the applications were for residents who had not yet told staff if they wished to vote in the 2020 General Election.

Instead, investigators determined Rainey, who worked at the nursing home, did not contact the residents as set by procedure and instead filled out the applications and forged the residents' signature to each application. She then turned the applications over to another employee who was instructed to deliver the applications to the Centerline Clerk. Ultimately, the Department charged her on three of the applications.

Rainey's case was announced alongside two other election-related cases last year. Defendant Carless Clark, who was charged in connection to forging her grandson's signature on his absentee ballot envelope, pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor last month and was sentenced to 12 months' probation and ordered to perform 19 days of community service. Defendant Nancy Williams, a guardian who developed and implemented a plan to obtain absentee ballots for legally incapacitated persons under her care, faces trial in four Wayne County cases. Those are set for a final conference on May 9. A fifth case filed against her, which is in Oakland County, is scheduled for preliminary examination March 23 in 46th District Court.

Last month, the Michigan Court of Appeals sided with Nessel in a **criminal case involving Southfield City Clerk Sherikia Hawkins** connected to the November 2018 election.

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