

Seeds, Herrera Indicted for Voter Fraud

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Dyon Herrera (left), Laura Seeds and Robert Seeds talk to an off-camera supporter on March 3, 2016, following Robert Seeds's District 1 City Council victory. The Attorney General's Office filed charges against the two alleging voter fraud in the 2016 election.

(SUNfile Foto)

Laura Seeds, and Dyon Herrera have been indicted by a Rio Arriba County grand jury on charges of voter fraud during the 2016 city of Española election.

The grand jury indicted Laura Seeds, the wife of city councilor and mayoral candidate Robert Seeds, on 13 charges of voter fraud, including two counts of making false statements relative to the municipal election code, conspiracy to violate the municipal election code and 10 counts of unlawful possession of an absentee ballot in a municipal election.

Robert Seeds is running for mayor on the “Move Española Forward” ticket, along with city council candidates John Ramon Vigil, Anthony Vandervossen, J.R. Trujillo and the unopposed Denise Benavidez.

Prosecutors with the Attorney General’s Office brought the charges, Wednesday (2/14) and filed them Thursday (2/15).

The grand jury indicted Herrera on two counts of falsifying election documents, conspiracy to violate the municipal election code and making false statements relative to the municipal election code.

Herrera was previously charged in Española Magistrate Court, June 7, 2016, with one count of tampering with an absentee ballot application and two counts of false voting. Those charges were later dropped, pending a grand jury indictment.

According to state law, Laura Seeds allegedly possessed 10 “executed or unexecuted” absentee ballots outside of the confines of the City Clerk’s Office and they were not hers.

Those possessions allegedly happened on Feb. 12, 17 and 19, 2016.

She also allegedly made “false statements,” twice, on an application for an absentee ballot, on Jan. 29 and Feb. 18, 2016.



According to court documents, Herrera allegedly tampered with the ballots of his grandparents, Lee Roy and Lenora Herrera. City Clerk Anna Squires disqualified those ballots.

Former deputy city clerk Therisa Aguilar said she had not been contacted by anyone about the case.

Aguilar testified that she witnessed Herrera go to a car in the City Hall parking lot and come back with a suspicious signature on a ballot, even though he claimed to her that he went to his grandparents' house to obtain the signature.

Former city councilor Cory Lewis challenged his loss to Robert Seeds in a civil case, based on 11 absentee ballots submitted for Robert Seeds. One ballot was allegedly not signed at all, while another 10 ballots were not signed by the voters whose names appeared on them, according to former forensic handwriting expert Thomas Van Valkenburgh.

It is unknown if those ballots are the reason for the 10 charges of unlawful possession.

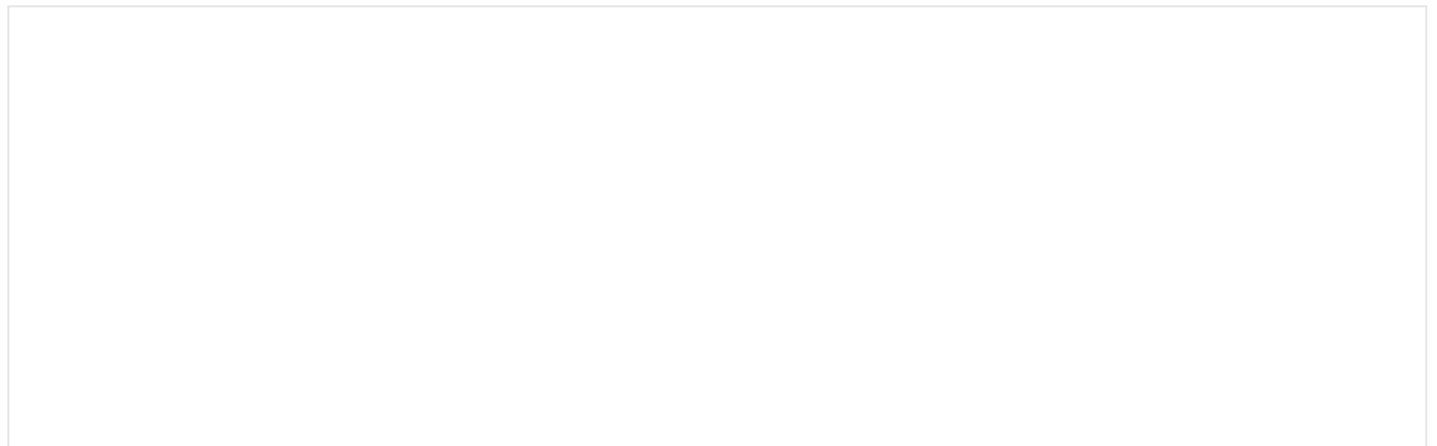
Former Santa Fe District Court judge Sarah Singleton ruled that there was not enough evidence to disqualify those 10 absentee ballots. The ballot Herrera allegedly forged was not counted.

She did rule that Squires should have disqualified the ballot of Pearl Torrez because the ballot envelope was not signed. She did not agree with Lewis's argument that the vote should have been taken from Robert Seeds and given to him, which would have resulted in a tie.

Attorney General Hector Balderas wrote in a statement that his office will continue to work with the Secretary of State's Office to ensure fair and just elections.

"I've brought criminal charges against two defendants who are alleged to have harmed the integrity of our election process, and I am committed to protecting the rule of law and rooting out corruption throughout our state," he wrote.

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