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City Councilwoman Lydia Martinez Fined For Absentee Ballot Fraud

December 15, 2011 Analysis and Comment, City Politics

32 Comments



Lydia Martinez clipped \$500 for violating state election law.

City Councilwoman Lydia Martinez, the queen of absentee ballots, agreed last month to pay a \$500 fine for assisting a voter completing an absentee ballot during a primary for Martinez' council seat in 2009. Ironically, as Martinez was



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working through her issues with the State Elections Enforcement Commission, she was in the middle of a flurry of absentee ballot activity during the latest primary challenge against her in September.

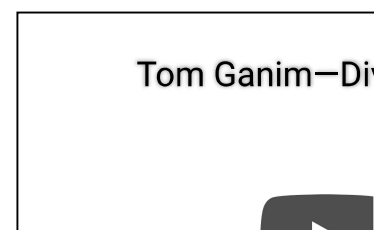
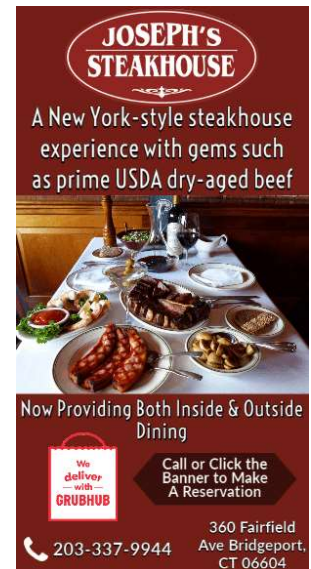
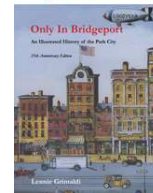
This is not the first time Martinez has been sanctioned by the SEEC. She was found “liable to pay \$664 to the Citizens’ Election Fund for the excess expenditures” her campaign committee made for her failed run for the State House in 2008. Maybe next time elections officials fine her they’ll make it four figures.

Martinez, according to a consent order she signed, assisted the voter at Harborview Towers, a high-rise senior housing complex on the city’s East Side that Martinez targets for absentee ballot votes. The complaint was brought by Rosemary Wong, a veteran city political operative. A section from the SEEC findings.

Upon investigation, the Commission finds that Respondent assisted an individual (hereinafter “Resident Doe”) who resides at Harborview Towers with an Application for Absentee Ballot (Form ED-9) for the Primary. Furthermore, the Commission finds that the data field and signature line pertaining to the assister’s name, residence address and telephone number on the aforementioned absentee ballot application were not completed.

16. The Commission finds that Respondent failed to sign and to print her name, residence address and telephone number on the absentee ballot application that she assisted Resident Doe with

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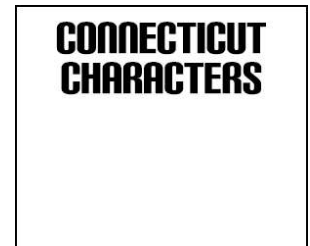
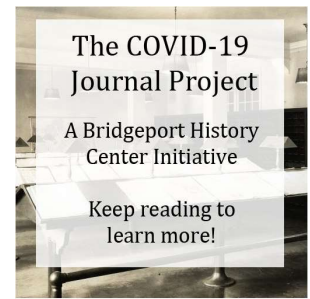
described in paragraph 16 above, as required by General Statutes § 9-140 (a).

17. Furthermore, the Commission finds that Respondent violated General Statutes § 9-140 (a) by failing to sign as an assister and complete the data field information including her residence address and telephone number on an absentee ballot application for the Primary as described in paragraph 16 and 17 above.

18. Complainant alleged, as detailed in paragraph 2 above, that Respondent, a candidate for the Primary, completed absentee ballots for Harborview Towers residents.

19. Upon investigation, the Commission finds that Respondent was at the apartment of Resident Doe at Harbor View Towers, when Resident Doe reviewed and marked her absentee ballot for the Primary.

20. The Commission further finds that Resident Doe was assisted by Respondent in completing the aforementioned absentee ballot, in that Respondent explained the use of the inner and outer envelopes of the absentee ballot to Resident Doe, and instructed Resident Doe regarding marking the ballot and sealing the absentee ballot into the inner envelope. Additionally, the Commission finds that Respondent instructed Resident Doe regarding sealing the inner envelope with ballot into the



outer envelope of the absentee ballot set and mailing it to the Bridgeport City Hall.

21. Upon investigation, the Commission finds that Resident Doe marked her absentee ballot, and used her absentee ballot set, at her dining table in her apartment at Harborview Towers, while the Respondent remained on a couch within approximately three feet from the aforementioned table while Resident Doe executed her absentee ballot for the Primary.

22. Connecticut General Statutes § 9-140b, provides in pertinent part:

(e) No (1) candidate or (2) agent of a candidate, political party or committee, as defined in section 9-601, shall knowingly be present when an absentee ballot applicant executes an absentee ballot, except (A) when the candidate or agent is (i) a member of the immediate family of the applicant or (ii) authorized by law to be present or (B) when the absentee ballot is executed in the office of the municipal clerk and the municipal clerk or an employee of the municipal clerk is a candidate or agent.

23. It is concluded that Respondent, as a candidate at the Primary, violated General Statutes § 9-140b (e) by being present while Resident Doe executed her absentee ballot for the Primary in which Respondent was a

candidate as described in paragraphs 21 through 22 above.

Read entire ruling and consent order here:

seec.ct.gov/e2casebase/data/fd/FD_2009_101.1.pdf



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LYDIA MARTINEZ

« There's No Holiday Like A City Primary
UB Urges Volunteers For King Day »

32 COMMENTS

Zena Lu says:

December 14, 2011 at 5:41 pm

Wow, it must feel liked she stubbed her toe. PULEEEAZE.



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Bridgeporteur says:

December 17, 2011 at 10:29 am

Lydia and Evette Brantley are the new co-chairs of the Economic, Environment and Community Development Committee. FYI.



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BEACON2 says:

December 14, 2011 at 5:58 pm

Failure to follow the letter of the regulations or law takes a while to be noted, reported, reviewed by appropriate authorities and for consequences to be dealt out according to this posting. 2008 political activity = \$664 fine. 2009 political activity = \$500 fine. No State office in 2008. City Council seat in 2009. Some people would see positive trends in reading this. I have no opinion on this subject but it does cause me to think about Council stipends and the secrecy in which they flourish today.

The Council approves an amount each budget year for the stipend line item. For years that account shows annually at \$180,000. The City regulations then tell us this amount is divided by 20 Council persons equally to be distributed as REIMBURSEMENT quarterly for appropriate expenses. That leaves up to \$9,000 available per person per budget year. There is no guidance for what type of expense is appropriate or how it should be reported to the public since the public bears the expense and might possibly be interested in the effect of their tax investment.

My hat is off to Bob Curwen for wanting to review this item at this time. I am not sure why Bob wanted to deal with the subject now, but I would like the Council to become open, accountable and transparent with this relatively small sum each year. To inform the public of what the money does to advance our City legislative interests? To better inform and communicate with the public? To research and gain assistance to independently come to governance conclusions? Etc.

So I am doing a little homework on the subject, in the interest of advancing open, accountable and transparent activity and maybe Lennie will allow a posting of the research next week. My holiday gift to readers.

Maybe it could become a group gift? If anyone has a suggestion on the subject of the City Council stipend, like maybe there is room to share taxpayer pain, and cut the total amount from \$180,000 to \$90,000? Or anything else that comes to mind. All of us are learning how to do more with less. Or at least how to do less, with even less. Do we have examples of the City doing that? Of the Council pushing that activity? Time will tell.



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Chosen 1 says:

December 14, 2011 at 6:22 pm

Off topic

Anybody notice another rat jumped ship? Robert Henry, best known for costing the taxpayers 50 large for sexual harrassment ... is hangin' 'em up as of Jan 31st. Of course he's taking SIX weeks vaca, so his office is cleaned out. Another of Johnny Ramos' suck-ups who has to run away without the Super's protection.



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Mojo says:

December 14, 2011 at 6:36 pm

*** A costly vote for Ms. Martinez, no? *** A mere drop in the political game of ABs in Bpt. ***



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Ron Mackey says:

December 14, 2011 at 7:02 pm

I'm shock!!! Not.



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Sue says:

December 14, 2011 at 7:16 pm

If she just received a longevity check, it shouldn't hurt too much.

[www](#)

[.bridgeportct.gov/OfficeofPolicyMgmt/Documents/2011%20budget/PENSIONS%202011.pdf](http://www.bridgeportct.gov/OfficeofPolicyMgmt/Documents/2011%20budget/PENSIONS%202011.pdf)

Unless she's already spent the money.



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Mojo says:

December 14, 2011 at 7:25 pm

*** As far as stipends are concerned, \$180,000 a year divided among 20 councilmembers who wish to partake in the \$9,000 process is cheap. \$2,250 every 3 months, which is taxed by the feds, state and S/S, etc. leaving about \$1,800 total. In which (if done right and enforced) the councilmember is responsible for \$2,250 worth of paid receipts of only those items approved of and listed on the recording documents and must be submitted before receiving the next quarterly stipend sum. Money for a direct phone or web access to the councilmember for council business, mailings, gas, training seminars, political

lobbying trips, independent studies or legal council, health and welfare items (funeral flowers, cards, etc.). There's much more waste to be found in the yearly city budget than \$180,000. for council stipends, no? Time is money if used correctly for the right reasons. *** Small Potatoes ***



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BEACON2 says:

December 15, 2011 at 3:39 pm

Mojo,
"Small Potatoes," eh? Well when it comes to City financial facts you need to start where you can get a certain level of factual information. And then drill into that. Thanks for outlining some of the taxable and non-taxable expenses that may be reimbursed. Why are there Council people who take no money? Is that a measure of their care for the taxpayer dollar? Or their lack of attending training seminars or political junkets? How could we tell whether the municipal meetings out of town have value for the taxpayer currently? The answer is we can't.

The Bridgeport stipend per legislator is the largest among Connecticut municipalities by a good amount. Again, does that help us understand what value it has? And when it is used for charity donations, why is that permitted as these have nothing to do with City business, do they?

And Mojo, begin pointing out where the waste is beyond phantom position padding to a number of departments where unfilled positions are budgeted, but the money for salary and benefits is

spent elsewhere out of the sight of the public and beyond the review of the Budget and Appropriations review process??? Help Budget Oversight Bridgeport-2012 begin to review budgets in the coming year by alerting us to “waste” in advance, please. Time will tell.



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Mojo says:

December 15, 2011 at 5:57 pm

*** My comments were strictly about the councilmember stipend, nothing else! Each member is different and chooses whether to take the stipend and how to spend it. Examples of some uses and value of DC trips; one year an outside legal firm was hired to oversee and critique the yearly budget process to seek improvements. A visit to C. Shays’ office in DC got me \$240,000 to make the Middle St. Post Office handicapped accessible; a training seminar showed me how to go about applying for the money! There are pluses and minuses in the system depending how and what the money is used for. Finding the hidden pots of gold is the key! ***



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BEACON2 says:

December 16, 2011 at 3:17 pm

Mojo,

Thank you for discussing this issue.

Because, as you originally identified, such a monetarily small sum of taxpayer money in a nearly \$500 Million budget, it is easy to question “why bother?”

My point is the public has a right to understand and needs to ponder how their money is spent, so they can come to a judgement as to worth or not. Right? If the trip is to Las Vegas where the Municipal education sessions are held, but Council persons are in the casino or attending shows, where is the benefit to the City?

A visit to the Congressman’s office in Bridgeport could have been even more productive if it produced the funds you mention. Where other than OIB did you have the opportunity to indicate how the money was spent? Who knew? Hidden pots of gold are illusory ... it seems to me ... in that they are paid by someone’s tax dollars today or for the next 30 years. And it seems easy to spend other people’s money without clear overall goals and specific timed objectives.

Four years ago when Mayor Finch posted his initial goals December 7, 2007 he ranked education as an upper priority. Did he put a financial price tag on that? I did not see one. Did he follow through? He promoted flat budgets. Plus talk and minus

action causes the public to distrust.

Knowing what you know about
Council person information,
knowledge and practices:

* What added training would you
recommend if any? Or do you think
any elected man or woman who
brings with them routine common
sense, municipal background and
understanding of public integrity is
equipped to represent the public
well?

* I am under the impression the City
Council has had no specific Ethics
training during the Finch years. Is
continuing education about public
ethics, CT statutes and specifically
conflicts of interest necessary for
Council persons?

* How would you cause stipend
records to become public? Regularly
quarterly? With reports for travel
expenses and seminars about
subjects and "takeaways?"

* New Haven municipal legislators
have and use a number of legislative
aides. How is our legislative
assistant in Bridgeport used and
what areas might the \$100,000
other expense legislative budget be
used to fund, if necessary, learning
and research for the Council???

* What permanent effect did the
consultant group in 2007 (or
thereabouts) have in making the City
budget process stronger, more
accountable and transparent, since
you raised the subject?

It will be interesting to see what Blum Shapiro indicates in terms of the 2011 Legislative Budget and how that compares to City recordkeeping currently available. What percentage of \$180,000 will have been called on? Who will have received it? What will it have been spent upon? And if only 50-60% is required yet again, will the overall budgeted amount decrease next year, or will the excess from Council non-use be one added source of dollars that can be spent anywhere the administration wishes, without regular accountability, open reporting or transparent communication with the public?

Time will tell.



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Ron Mackey says:

December 16, 2011 at 9:31 pm

BEACON2, that \$180,000 might be used for hiring an attorney to represent the City Council.



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flubadub says:

December 14, 2011 at 7:57 pm

How often does someone have to get caught before they receive a serious fine or penalty?



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Vigilante says:

December 15, 2011 at 8:29 am

BP ... don't hold your breath. Martinez has been doing this for years and just got caught. This all shows the weakness of the Election Enforcement Commission in Hartford. They are only looking for absolute violations and are willing to take a minimal fine from an offender as they can get more offenders and show a lot of convictions. They do this rather than actually pursuing substantial offenders like Martinez that would force them to create a substantive case (translation ... work).



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town committee says:

December 15, 2011 at 8:27 am

It's too bad Lydia only got fined for one violation, there were probably a few hundred violations. Overall a good portion of the ABs submitted by the machine are questionable.

While Mojo maybe right that \$90K is small potatoes compared to the overall budget, if you look at all the small

amounts we waste and hand out it soon becomes apparent the amount wasted is huge. The council yearly goes to these training sessions around the country at our expense and have they learned anything? NO!!! They are still a bunch of lemmings who do what they are told to do by the administration.



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Celia Cruz says:

December 15, 2011 at 8:29 am

Once again she is found of wrongdoing and yet, despite that, she is currently vying and some are even entertaining the idea she will be endorsed for Registrar of Voters ... smh ...



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Grin Reaper says:

December 15, 2011 at 9:09 am

Someone should challenge the 137th Town Committee and see if Lydia has learned a lesson or if it will be business as usual.



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yahooy says:

December 15, 2011 at 9:16 am

La Diabla has wrecked any future this city may have had. She is a miserable excuse for a human being. But she is one of Mario Testa's best operatives.



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yahooy says:

December 16, 2011 at 11:22 am

Lydia Martinez is arrogant She claims to be invulnerable. She knows what it takes to get people elected and gets them elected every time. As the article indicates, this is not the first time she has been caught violating the election laws. My question is—Why is she allowed to be anywhere near an election process or allowed to hold public office? Is Mario Testa that powerful he can ensure La Diabla can stay in place doing anything he wants?



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Grin Ripper says:

December 15, 2011 at 9:41 am

Sounds like a good case for the People's Court!



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Jim Callahan says:

December 15, 2011 at 10:07 am

I'm relieved to see apparently everything was on the up and up with absentees in the September primary. I guess St. Lydia of the Pequonnock Fields was pure as poppies in that one.



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Bob Walsh says:

December 15, 2011 at 10:39 am

Time will tell. This complaint goes back to 2009. Must be a heavy backlog up at the state elections enforcement.



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Jim Callahan says:

December 15, 2011 at 10:14 am

Off-topic but interesting nonetheless. There's a lecture tonight at the Black Rock Library on various witch trials in Connecticut in the 1600s. It looks like Bridgeport's getting shorted to Hartford again! You guys can't even hang witches and get publicity.



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LennieGrimaldi says:

December 15, 2011 at 10:19 am

I still cannot figure out how they survived those stakes through their hearts 350 years ago and came back as city pols.



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Fluckarella says:

December 15, 2011 at 11:16 am

When Goody Knapp hung, all Fairfield came to see. As soon as the victim had been cut down, Goodwife Staples went to the body and handled it very much. "taking ye Lord's name in her mouth," she said to Mrs. Lockwood, "These are no Witches Teats."

From: pg 798 Witches in Connecticut
books.google.com/books?id=2-0aAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA800&lpg=PA800&dq=roger+ludlowe+goodie&source=bl&ots=G9fnZmHig7&sig=zMZv0G_ly2_XO1OAvNblre wWrG8&hl=en&sa=X&ei=1hfqTuCICYbn0QGnqrjFCQ&sqi=2&ved=0CB8Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=roger%20ludlowe%20goodie&f=false



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Grin Ripper says:

December 15, 2011 at 2:37 pm

It's because they were eating those steaks with two forks.



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Hector A. Diaz says:

December 15, 2011 at 2:14 pm

Jim, if I'm not mistaken I believe there were some witches hanged where the Burroughs Center now stands.



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flubadub says:

December 15, 2011 at 3:15 pm

I believe it was the aforementioned Goody Knapp.



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Jim Callahan says:

December 15, 2011 at 2:48 pm

HECTOR: I think you are right, but honestly I forget. I'm pretty sure Mary Witkowski at the library Downtown or John Soltis at the BR Library will have it off the tops of their heads.

And that's really cool, Fluckarella!

We ought to have a Goody Knapp day around Bridgeport to commemorate our history. Maybe with an authentic recreation. Any suggested candidates for hanging?



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Grin Ripper says:

December 15, 2011 at 2:56 pm

Happy Birthday, Jim!



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Vigilante says:

December 15, 2011 at 11:48 pm

This fine is like a fart in a windstorm.



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Bridgeport Now says:

December 16, 2011 at 12:37 pm

Jim, thanks for the heads-up on the event at Black Rock Library lecture last night on witch hunting. It was very interesting and lot of people came. Great job whoever is organizing those events. On B'port Now program will be running a segment on Goody Knapp. Was execution at the Burroughs center in Black Rock, even though according to records, the area was Indian grounds until 1681? Execution was in 1653. Was witch accusation land grab from this

widow? We know Knapp had a lot of land as can still see today in FFLD at Knapp's Green.



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