



CRIME & COURTS

Wichita man pleads guilty to voter fraud

By Stan Finger

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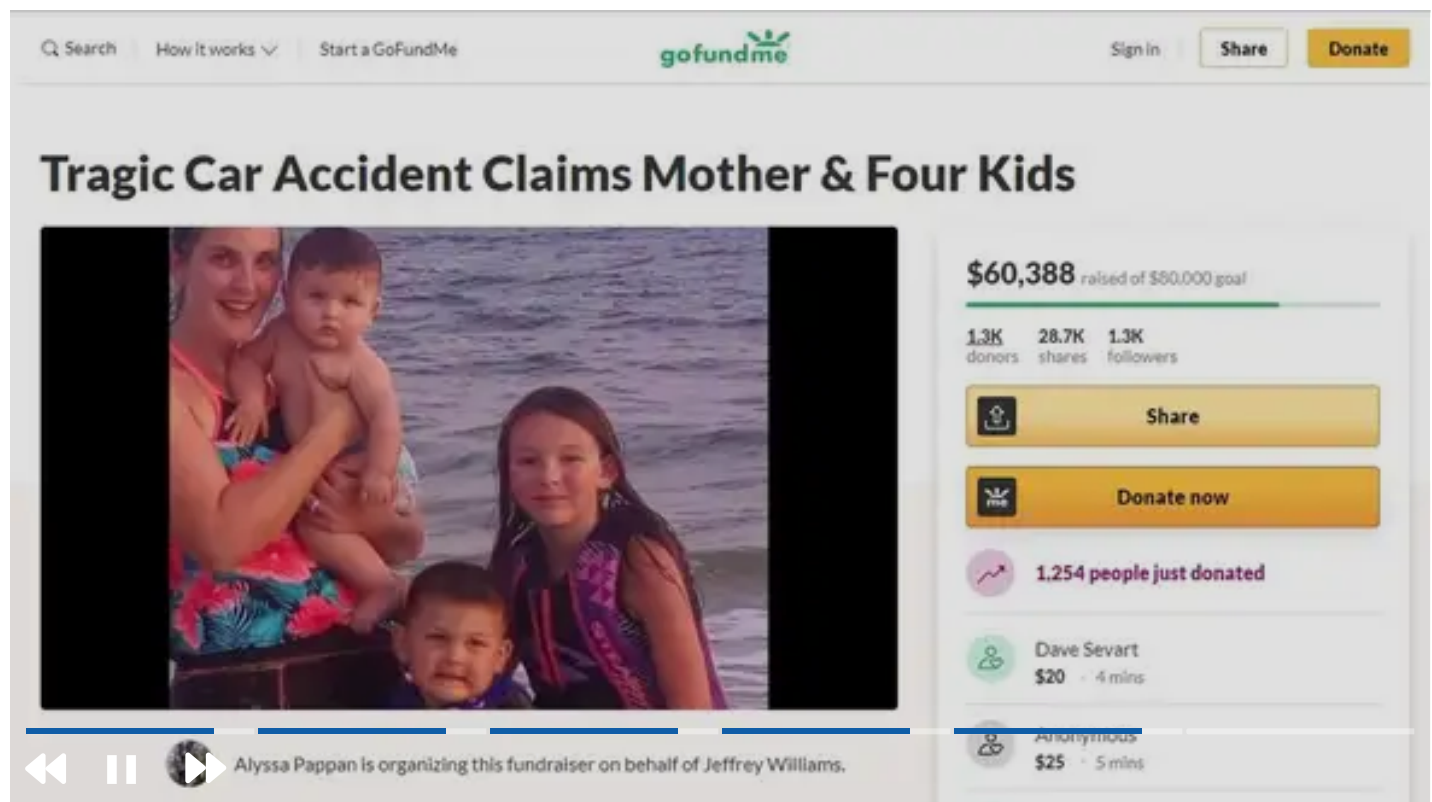
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A native of Peru has pleaded guilty to voter fraud, Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach announced on Wednesday.

Victor David Garcia Bebek of Wichita pleaded guilty last week in Sedgwick County District Court to three counts of voting without being qualified. Bebek voted in a 2012 special election, the 2012 general election and the 2014 general election, Kobach said in a statement.

Under the terms of a plea agreement, Bebek was placed on unsupervised probation for up to three years and must pay a \$5,000 fine. His probation will end once the fine has been paid.

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In an interview Wednesday afternoon, Kobach said officials learned of the voter fraud after Bebek became a naturalized citizen of the U.S. in February. At the

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When Bebek filled out a registration card, officials discovered he had been on the voting rolls since 2011, Kobach said. He had registered to vote when he went to the Department of Motor Vehicles office to get a driver's license.

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The case “illustrates how hard it is to detect the crime of noncitizen voting,” Kobach said.

There was no law requiring proof of citizenship in Kansas at the time, Kobach said, or Bebek would have been stopped from registering in 2011.

The Bebek case is one of 25 in Sedgwick County involving a noncitizen who voted or who attempted to register after a new law went into effect in 2015, Kobach said. At the time the crimes were committed in the Bebek case, voter fraud was a misdemeanor. The 2015 law changed it to a felony.

“It’s important to note this is just the tip of the iceberg,” Kobach said. “For this one prosecution, there may be hundreds of additional cases where we haven’t discovered the individual or we’re unable to prosecute because the statute of limitations has run (out).”

This is the eighth conviction Kobach has obtained since receiving the authority to prosecute voter fraud in 2015. It’s the first for a noncitizen voting at the time of the election.

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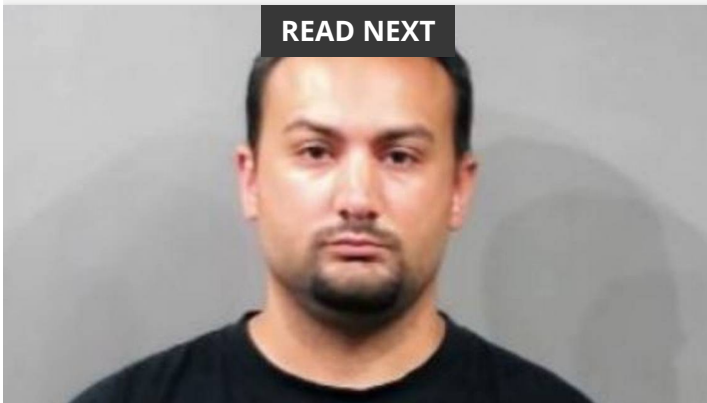
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