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## ection With Alleged Voter Fraud in May 2010 Paterson City Council Election *December 1,* 2010

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11 people have been arrested since yesterday in connection with alleged voter fraud schemes involving the May 2010 Paterson city council election. The following people were arrested on charges of second- and third-degree voter fraud and third-degree tampering with public record: Belkis M. Cespedes, 50, of Paterson; Ana Vely-Gomez, 47, of Paterson; Lucia A. Guzman, 41, of Paterson; Inocencio Jimenez, 55, of Paterson; and Jose Ramon Ruiz, 62, of Prospect Park. In addition, Dalila Rodriguez, 60, of Paterson, and Wilson A. Torres, 29, of Paterson were arrested yesterday on charges of third-degree voter fraud and third-degree tampering with public records.

The following people were arrested today and charged with third-degree voter fraud and third-degree tampering with public records: Octavio A. Dominguez, 47, of Elmwood Park; Juana A. Gil, 43, of Paterson; Jose E. Gonzalez, 42, of Paterson; and Loudes Inoa, 37, Paterson. In addition, Ricardo A. Fermin-Cepeda, 24, of Paterson, was charged with second- and third-degree voter fraud and third-degree tampering with public records. Fermin-Cepeda is currently a fugitive.

The defendants arrested today and yesterday, as well as Fermin-Cepeda, all allegedly acted as bearers/messengers for mail-in (absentee) ballots. The complaint summonses allege that the defendants tampered with mail-in ballots and/or voted mail-in ballots on behalf of voters who did not receive the ballots or who did not authorize them to vote for them. It is also alleged that Cespedes voted twice – once using her married name of Belkis Cespedes and once using her maiden name of Belkis Nunez.

Following the May 2010 city council election, the Division of Criminal Justice received complaints of possible voter fraud. The Division of Criminal Justice Corruption Bureau and the New Jersey State Police Official Corruption Unit launched an investigation approximately one week after the election. Clearly, this was a lengthy investigation and the question is, who knows what about whom? With 11 defendants, it will be tough for any of them to get PTI (for those not charged with 2nd degree). Those facing 2nd degree charges are looking at prison and the defendants must move right away to cut a deal or risk going to prison. Should be an interesting case.

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