

News

## Essex County elections employee admits submitting phony absentee ballots

Updated Apr 01, 2019; Posted Mar 03, 2010

By [Philip Read/The Star-Ledger](#)



Orange resident fills out an application for the vote-by-mail ballot in October 2009.

Joe Epstein/The Star-Ledger

A West

TRENTON — A suspended Essex County elections worker pleaded guilty today to submitting phony absentee ballots while working for the 2007 campaign of state Sen. Teresa Ruiz, the first admission of guilt in a far-reaching ballot tampering case.

The state Attorney General's office said Gianine Narvaez, 36, of Belleville, who worked as a data processor, pleaded guilty in Superior Court in Trenton to absentee ballot fraud and tampering with public records.

"This public employee used her access to county computers and records in an attempt to corrupt the election process," said Paula Dow, the former Essex prosecutor who a week ago was sworn in as Attorney General.

The nearly year-long investigation has cut deep into the Essex County political machine, ensnaring 10 defendants, including Freeholder Samuel Gonzalez, Ruiz's husband; Carmine Casciano, the superintendent of elections; and aides to Democratic power broker Stephen Aduato and Newark Mayor Cory Booker.

Advertisement

Ruiz, who in November easily won election to the 29th Legislative District, has not been accused of any wrongdoing.

In a plea deal, Narvaez will be sentenced June 2 to a 3-year prison term, with a mandatory 2-year minimum.

Asked if Narvaez was cooperating in light of the plea, Peter Aseltine, a spokesman for the state Division of Criminal Justice, said: "That is the condition of this plea."

Frank Arleo, the West Orange attorney who represents Narvaez, could not be reached for comment.

In an Aug. 4 indictment, Narvaez was accused of submitting absentee ballots on behalf of nine voters who never received nor cast the ballots.

In another scheme, Narvaez used her access to computers in the county election office to add 10 fictitious voters to the rolls, granting absentee ballots for them and submitting the votes.

After the November election, officials said, she removed the fictitious names from the voter rolls.

In August, investigators spent several hours copying the contents of computer hard drives at Essex County's Hall of Records in connection with the probe. "Every computer we had, they wanted," said Casciano, who was later credited by Dow with bringing the irregularities to light.

But in January, Casciano himself was charged with official misconduct in a scheme to give paid days off to employees who worked on political campaigns. His case, destined for grand jury action, has not yet resulted in an indictment.

Stephen Taylor, director of the Division of Criminal Justice, said the investigation is ongoing.

"We will continue to investigate any allegations of election tampering in New Jersey and will follow evidence wherever it leads us," he said.

**Previous coverage:**

- [N.J. mail-in votes may be vulnerable to election-fraud schemes](#)
- [Essex County Freeholder Samuel Gonzalez charged with election fraud in wife's Senate campaign](#)
- [Essex County officials express support for freeholder accused in voter-fraud investigation](#)
- [Federal judge in Newark denies GOP request to end 28-year-old order to prevent voter intimidation](#)
- [Essex County officials express support for freeholder accused in voter-fraud investigation](#)



## Subscriber Exclusive stories...

timely, reliable, relevant journalism about our community.

[Read Now](#)

Note to readers: if you purchase something through one of our affiliate links we may earn a commission.

---

## Around the web

### 20+ Must-See Beautiful Towns In The Mountains

PensAndPatron | Sponsored

---

### US States Americans Are Leaving, Fast (Plus The States They're Moving To)

MoneyWise.com | Sponsored

### US Launches New Policy For Cars Used Less Than 50 Miles/Day

InsHunter | Sponsored

---

### Navy's New \$13 Billion Toy Finally Being Deployed

investing.com | Sponsored

---

## 'Flip or Flop' Contractor Led to El Moussa's Divorce

Fresh Edits | Sponsored

---

## New Senior Apartments in Washington Are A Dream Come True

Senior Living | Search Ads | Sponsored

---

## Man Who Predicted 2020 Crash Issues Next Major Warning

The Legacy Report | Sponsored

---

## Catholic school teacher who coaches lacrosse repeatedly sexually assaulted student, prosecutor alleges

NJ

---

## Man admits stabbing drug dealer to death at campground

NJ

---

---

**ADVANCE**  
**LOCAL**

Registration on or use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement](#), [Privacy Policy and Cookie Statement](#), and [Your California Privacy Rights](#) (each updated 1/1/20).

© 2020 Advance Local Media LLC. All rights reserved ([About Us](#)).

The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of Advance Local.

[Community Rules](#) apply to all content you upload or otherwise submit to this site.

[▶ Ad Choices](#)