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Passaic

Ex-Paterson councilman, wife banned for life from public office, avoid prison

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By [Jeff Goldman | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

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Rigo Rodriguez, 42, of Paterson, and his wife, Lisette Rodriguez, 34. The two were indicted on election fraud and other charges before today being accepted into a PTI program.

(New Jersey Attorney General)

TRENTON — A former Paterson councilman and his wife indicted on election fraud and other charges were accepted the Pre-Trial Intervention Program by a judge in Passaic County.

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Rigo Rodriguez, 42, of Paterson, and his wife, Lisette Rodriguez, 34 were also banned from working in the public sector or holding public office, the state attorney general's office announced. The pair, who agreed to the deal in front of Superior Court Judge Ernest M. Caposela in Paterson, will participate in the PTI program for a year, Acting Attorney General John J. Hoffman said.

Had Rodriguez, a Democrat, and his wife been convicted on the most serious charge, they faced five to 10 years in prison.

State authorities said the Rigo Rodriguez and his wife, who ran his campaign, had campaign workers illegally act as "messengers" and "bearers" for mail-in ballots despite not being designated by voters during the run-up to the 2010 Paterson City Council election.

The pair also allegedly had ballots submitted as votes for people who never received the ballots, completed them or authorized that they be cast. Once the State Police caught on to the scheme, authorities said, Rodriguez and his wife instructed campaign workers to lie.

Campaign volunteers allegedly asked voters to complete mail-in ballot applications but leave the line blank asking who was authorized to pick up the ballot. The volunteers then took the applications back to headquarters, where they designated their own person.

The campaign's "messengers" then picked up the ballots and, instead of delivering them to voters as required by law, took them back to campaign headquarters where others would take them to voters, or they would be filled out fraudulently, authorities said.

The two were indicted in March on second- and third-degree charges of conspiracy, election fraud, mail-in ballot fraud and witness tampering.

Rigo Rodriguez did not run for re-election to the Paterson City Council this year. Instead, he ran unsuccessfully for mayor.

He and his wife were arrested on Dec. 2, 2010.

NJ Advance Media staff writer Chris Baxter contributed to this report.

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