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NYC CRIME

# Bronx politician Hector Ramirez busted on voter fraud charges

By **BEN KOCHMAN**  
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FEEDBACK



Hector Ramirez, who ran for State Assembly in 2014, was in Bronx Supreme Court on Tuesday, having been busted on voting fraud charges. Despite allegedly using fraudulent absentee ballots, he still lost the election by 2 votes. (Michael Schwartz /for New York Daily News)

A Bronx politician allegedly cheated — and still lost the election.

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Ramirez and his allies went door-to-door in his west Bronx district duping voters into letting the veteran pol's campaign staff vote on their behalf, a prosecutor charged as the 242-count indictment was unsealed.

"Victim after victim after victim testified to the grand jury that members of the Ramirez campaign knocked on their door, including Hector Ramirez himself, and said 'Hey, you don't have to go to the polls for this election, just sign here,'" Assistant District Attorney Pishoy Yacoub said in Bronx Supreme Court.

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Ramirez's staff tricked citizens in the 86th District into authorizing Ramirez aides to hand in their absentee ballots to the Board of Elections, prosecutors charge.

Prosecutors found the names of Ramirez staffers in the box marked "I authorize" on dozens of the duped voters' applications for an absentee ballot, Yacoub said.

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Those voters never got their ballots back, Yacoub said.

The Dominican-born pol then marked down at least 35 of the ballots as votes for Ramirez, who was locked in a tight Democratic primary against incumbent Victor Pichardo.

A campaign aide, Ana Cuevas, was also charged in connection with the alleged scheme.

Ramirez edged out Pichardo by a mere 11 votes in the original count — out of just over 3,517 total tallies in the largely poor district — but ended up losing by two votes after a hand recount.

The long-time political honcho had lost out on two previous bids for the Assembly seat, including a 2010 loss to Nelson Castro, who, ironically, became ensnared in his own indictment for lying to the Board of Elections.

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"This time, he made a decision that he was not going to lose, under any circumstance," prosecutor Yacoub said of Ramirez.

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The indicted pol, wearing a dark blue suit with a red tie, loudly pleaded "not guilty" Tuesday to a laundry list of felonies that include forgery and tampering with public records, and was released on his own recognizance.

He brushed off a Daily News reporter upon exiting the courtroom.

"He's looking forward to the date when he can vindicate himself at trial," said his lawyer Angel Cruz.

Pichardo said he was not surprised to hear of his former foe's indictment.

"The actions that led to Mr. Ramirez's arrest are reflective of the dirty and illegal tactics routinely implemented by his campaign during the last two elections and demonstrate both his contempt for the law and his lack of respect for the voters of the 86th Assembly district," the Assemblyman fired off in a statement.

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