
STATE COURT

FEDERAL COURT

LEGISLATION

CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS

ATTORNEYS & JUDGES

LAWSUITS

HOT TOPICS

REFORM

LEGAL ROUNDUP

OPINION ▾

DIRECTORY

Home » Stories » 2007 » October

Refugio County commissioner pleads guilty to election fraud scheme

By **The SE Texas Record** | Oct 9, 2007

REFUGIO — A sitting Refugio County Precinct 4 commissioner pleaded guilty to felony election fraud charges in Refugio County and will also plead to an associated misdemeanor charge next week.

On Oct. 9, Commissioner Raymond Villarreal, 57, admitted to tampering with governmental records during the March 2006 primary election. Last February, a Refugio County grand jury indicted Villarreal for violating state law as a candidate for the county commissioners court.

Under the plea agreement, Villarreal pleaded guilty to one count of tampering with a governmental record, a state jail felony. Villarreal will also plead guilty to possessing the ballot of another person, a Class B misdemeanor. He will serve 90 days in jail, be placed on five years probation, immediately resign his position on the commissioners court and pay a \$1,500 fine. He will pay an additional \$1,000 fine on the possession-of-ballot charge and may be obligated to pay restitution to the county for theft of services.

"Today, a county commissioner admitted to tampering with state documents during an election," said Attorney General Greg Abbott. "Texans will not tolerate candidates or activists who violate the law in order to illegally influence the outcome of an election. We are grateful to Refugio County District Attorney Michael Sheppard and Sheriff Earl Petropoulos for their assistance with this case."

Attorney General Abbott added: "Free and fair elections are critical to the success of our democratic system. We will continue to prosecute criminals who commit election fraud."

Villarreal was indicted after the Refugio County Sheriff's Office conducted an investigation and filed a complaint with the Texas Secretary of State's Office, which referred the case to the Office of the Attorney General.

The Attorney General's prosecutors determined from the initial sheriff office's investigation that Villarreal had developed a complicated scheme to influence the outcome of the 2006 Democratic primary in Refugio County. According to investigators, Villarreal obtained numerous mail-in ballot applications and took these to various residents around the county for their signatures. Villarreal then filled in the address block of these in-county voters with out-of-county addresses that belonged to his supporters.

As a result, when the county elections office mailed absentee ballots to those voters, the ballots were not mailed to the addresses where the voters would receive them during the mail in ballot period. Instead, the ballots were mailed to the homes of Villarreal's friends.

SOUTHEAST TEXAS RECORD

Then, Villarreal picked up the blank ballots, which he took to the "original" applicants inside the county. According to the investigation, those voters marked the ballots in his presence.

prosecutions. Last June, five Starr and Hidalgo County residents were indicted in Brooks County on various charges of voter fraud for their conduct during the 2006 election cycle. A grand jury returned felony indictments against the five defendants in an investigation that began with a complaint filed by Starr County Elections Administrator. That case is ongoing.



Want to get notified whenever we write about ?

Next time we write about , we'll email you a link to the story. You may edit your settings or unsubscribe at any time.

Sign-up

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

Sign-up and get latest news about the courts, judges and latest complaints - right to your inbox.

SIGN UP

By signing up you agree to receive email newsletters or alerts from Southeast Texas Record. You can unsubscribe at any time. Protected by Google ReCAPTCHA.



TRENDING



\$1M suit: 'Camouflaged' item on Target shelf injured woman; woman represented by attorney charged for recording co-worker in bathroom

Harris County sues AG Paxton, wants to keep County Clerk Hollins' legal time and expense records under wraps

Doctor sues Texas judge over guardianized mom's will

Houston contractor alleges seafood restaurant owes nearly \$40,000 for flooring project

Oct. 14: Jefferson County District Court docket for "judgment nisi" cases

Southeast Texas Record

f | GET THE APP

Other Publications

Cook County Record

Florida Record

Legal Newsline

Louisiana Record

Madison - St. Clair Record

Southern California Record

St. Louis Record

West Virginia Record

News

Filings

Lawsuits

Personal Injury

Contracts

State Court

Appeals

Attorneys & Judges

Medical

Class Action

Federal Court

Hot Topics

Elections

Asbestos

Campaigns & Elections

Discipline

Legislation

Reform

Marketing

Newsletters

iOS App

RSS

More Info

About

Contact

Directory