



Prosecutor Matt Smid
Tarrant County District Attorney's office

Justice of the Peace convicted of tampering with government record

Russ Casey, Tarrant County Precinct 3 J.P., resigned immediately after his conviction Monday morning, April 23. He was accused of falsely witnessing all signatures on his petition for election. BY [ANNA M. TINSLEY](#) ✉

Tarrant County judge pleads guilty, resigns after using fake signatures to get on ballot

BY [ANNA M. TINSLEY](#)

APRIL 23, 2018 10:15 AM, UPDATED APRIL 23, 2018 05:12 PM



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"I apologize to the citizens of Tarrant County, the Tarrant County Republican Party, my family and friends for the way that I have ended my judicial career," Casey said in a written statement after the court hearing. "Today's proceedings have begun my transition from public to private life."

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Monday's legal action sparked criticism from some who say women convicted of voter fraud received much harsher punishment.

This case stems from [claims earlier this year that Casey turned in fake signatures to secure a place on the ballot.](#)

It was a controversial time for the Tarrant County Republican Party when a petition was filed to remove Casey — who represented Precinct 3 in Northeast Tarrant County — from the ballot amid the allegations of false signatures.

Casey withdrew his candidacy in January, ended his re-election bid and the case was turned over to law enforcers to investigate.

"In the end, having Mr. Casey not be on the ballot is a good thing for Tarrant County Republicans and residents," Tarrant County Republican Party Chairman Tim O'Hare said at the time.

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Part of the plea agreement calls for Casey to no longer frequent the Southlake Government Complex and Tarrant County Northeast Courthouse in Hurst, where he had judicial offices.

An investigation determined that many of the signatures on the petition Casey submitted were false and that Casey signed the form saying that he witnessed all the signatures, according to the Tarrant County District Attorney's Office.

"No one is above the law in Tarrant County," District Attorney Sharen Wilson said.

The Tarrant County Commissioners Court is expected to consider a replacement for Casey at their May 1 meeting.

Casey, first elected in 2007, has a history of making headlines.

Last year, he was reprimanded for having an "improper sexual relationship" with a former clerk [by the State Commission on Judicial Conduct](#).

ACCOUNTABILITY

It was a crowded race earlier this year for this Justice of the Peace post that pays \$125,911.76 a year.

Casey, whose term was to expire in January 2019, even filed a lawsuit seeking that his GOP challengers, Lenny Lopez and Bill Brandt, be thrown off the ballot for an invalid number of signatures.

Then Lopez filed the petition asking that Casey be removed from the ballot.

After Casey's name was taken off the GOP primary ballot, Lopez lost the race to Brandt. There is no Democrat seeking the post in November.



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This case comes after two high-profile court rulings regarding illegal voting that sent local voters to jail for years.

Last month, a judge sentenced Crystal Mason of Rendon to five years in prison for [illegally voting in the 2016 presidential election](#) while she was on probation from an earlier fraud conviction.

And in 2017, [Rosa Maria Ortega](#), a Grand Prairie mother of four, was convicted of illegally voting and sentenced to eight years in prison. Ortega, who has a green card, was sentenced for illegally voting in the 2012 general election and the 2014 Republican primary runoff.

Direct Action Texas, a political advocacy group, was among those to question Casey's sentence.

"Are we all equal or do different citizens enjoy special privileges and benefits?" asked a post — ["In Tarrant, it's good to be white, rich and Republican"](#) — by the group. "Here is a story about how one person, an elected official, gets privileges above and beyond the normal citizens."

When asked about Casey's sentence, as compared to the sentences these two women received, prosecutor Matt Smid noted that neither woman accepted probation offers that had been offered as Casey did.

"He pled guilty," Smid said. "He accepted accountability for what he did."

This article includes information from the Star-Telegram archives.

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