

Kimberly Zapata ballot fraud case; guilty as charged on all counts

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Kimberly Zapata guilty in ballot fraud case

A Milwaukee County jury has reached a verdict in the trial of Kimberly Zapata – and found Zapata guilty on all counts against her.

MILWAUKEE - A Milwaukee County jury has reached a verdict in the trial of Kimberly Zapata – and found Zapata guilty on all counts against her.

The jury started deliberations around 10:30 a.m. Wednesday – and the verdict was read just before 4 p.m.

Zapata is the fired [Milwaukee](#) Election Commission deputy director accused of illegally requesting military ballots and sending them to the home of State Rep. Janel Brandtjen (R-[Menomonee Falls](#)).

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The prosecutor in this case said Zapata used her position to commit fraud – while her defense attorney said she just wanted to expose loopholes in the election system.

"She was a whistleblower. She was showing with the truth, with an action, an imperfect action but a truthful action of what was going on," said Dan Adams, defense attorney.

Kimberly Zapata guilty verdict read in court

A Milwaukee County jury found Kimberly Zapata guilty of all counts against her on Wednesday, March 20.

"She brought to light the situation by lying on these applications. By having these fraudulent ballots issued. That's not blowing the whistle on the problem, it's aggravating the problem," said Matthew Westphal, assistant district attorney.

Zapata did not testify in her own defense. She was charged with election fraud. Prosecutors say in 2022, she ordered military ballots using names she made up. Zapata told investigators she was trying to prove there is fraud in our election system. She said she never intended the ballots to be processed.

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Claire Woodall, the Milwaukee Election Commission executive director, testified that in 2022, they received about 300 military absentee ballots – approximately five to seven of those were fraudulent.

"She was very adamant about following those procedures and making sure someone wasn't unintentionally registered as a military voter," Woodall said.

In Wisconsin, military voters do not have to show a photo ID to receive an absentee ballot.

Court documents say clerks sent three ballots to the home of State Rep. Janel Brandtjen – who then reported them to the authorities.

Reaction

Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson

"I often speak about accountability for wrongdoing. Today, a jury convicted Kimberly Zapata for crimes associated with the procurement of false absentee ballots, and that jury brought accountability for a serious error.

"At the time of Zapata's removal from the Milwaukee's Election Commission, I said it does not matter that this might have been an effort to expose a vulnerability that state law created. It does not matter that City of Milwaukee ballots were not part of this. Nor does it matter that there was no attempt to vote illegally or tamper with election results. Fundamentally, the actions were a violation of trust.

"At a time when election officials are subjected to false accusations and harassment, it is essential they act with the highest integrity. That is a standard Milwaukee will maintain."

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